



# LUMUNOS

FAITH & LIGHT FOR THE JOURNEY

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## *Me and We: The True Self and the Spirit that Connects Us*



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Doug Wysocky-Johnson

I'm on the board at a local nonprofit here in Burlington, VT. Like a lot of nonprofits our board terms are, shall we say, a little vague. My hunch is that unless I embezzle funds or become a raving contrarian, they will have me as long as I am willing to serve; which doesn't mean I should stay and serve.

I believe in the cause, and I know this nonprofit needs the help. The work load isn't oppressive, and nobody gives me a hard time when I miss meetings. Perhaps most importantly, the current chair always brings great muffins to the meeting. In other words, there are a lot of reasons to stay on this board. At the same time, I sense my energy starting to shift. I'm not as passionate or engaged as I once was. I find myself wondering if it is time to step down.

### The Individual and the Community

This issue of our newsletter focuses on community life. As we have all year, we are using the phrase "Me and We" to explore the natural tensions around our individual needs and the needs of the common good. These tensions often take the form of questions, such as:

#### Is it Time to Step Down?

In her classic book *Call to the Soul*<sup>1</sup>, Marjory Bankson writes about the importance of stepping away from something that has been an important call for you. She invites us to "... learn to release what has been dear—with faith that something else is possible." Our obligations to community do change. Throughout our lives we step in and out of commitments for

# Three Questions for Individuals in Community

a whole lot of reasons. Sometimes we end an engagement because our energy for the cause has diminished. Other times our values might not be in alignment with where the community is going. (But don't go too soon! We need places of divergent belief.) Sometimes there is some other obligation that is calling to us. We can't do it all. There are times we need to set something down so we have room in our life for the new thing.

#### Is it Time to Step Up?

Maybe the question is not about stepping down, but rather stepping up. Perhaps we have been part of a community and are now being encouraged to take a larger role. How do we know when the time is right to increase our involvement?

Sometimes it is the need that calls to us—perhaps it has always been there—but now it is taking up more space in us. Other times we see a connection between what the community needs and what we have to offer. In one such situation for me, I had the feeling that there were things from my past experiences and gifts that were grooming me for this new role. I felt that I had been prepared for this next step. Additionally, if we find ourselves naturally having ideas and thoughts about plans and possibilities for the community, that too can be a sign that it is time to step up, not step down.

#### Is it Time to Speak Up?

Life in community provides plenty of *should I say something or not* moments. There are times I have spoken when I shouldn't have—either to impress others, or when I was thinking more about myself than what's best for the organization. It is not always good to speak up. At the same time, communities are in trouble if its members do not speak often and with authenticity.

Author John Maxwell gives a few helpful questions when wondering whether to speak up, especially when dealing with the leader of the organization. He invites us to ask ourselves:

- \* *Will this benefit everyone or just me?*
- \* *Is my goal to communicate with my leader, or to coerce my leader into seeing things my way?*
- \* *Do I have "skin in the game," or does my leader bear all the risk?*
- \* *Is the timing really right, or is it just right for me?*
- \* *Am I asking too much?*<sup>2</sup>

Those may or may not be the right questions for you when deciding whether or not to speak up in your community. The point is to speak up—often, honestly, and thoughtfully.

#### Me and We Always Gets Messy

More than ever, community life is important. We need places of engagement, whether that is our houses of worship, clubs, politics, families or workplaces. All these are communities filled with individuals. God knows it gets messy.

God knows it gets messy because most religious traditions include stories of God entering the scruffiness of human life. In the Christian tradition, we celebrate God entering the disorder of community life through Jesus. He then had to address the same questions we do: When do I step up and in? When do I shake the dust off my feet and move on? When do I speak, and when do I remain quiet? These questions of individuality and community were not foreign to Jesus. Nor was the messiness.

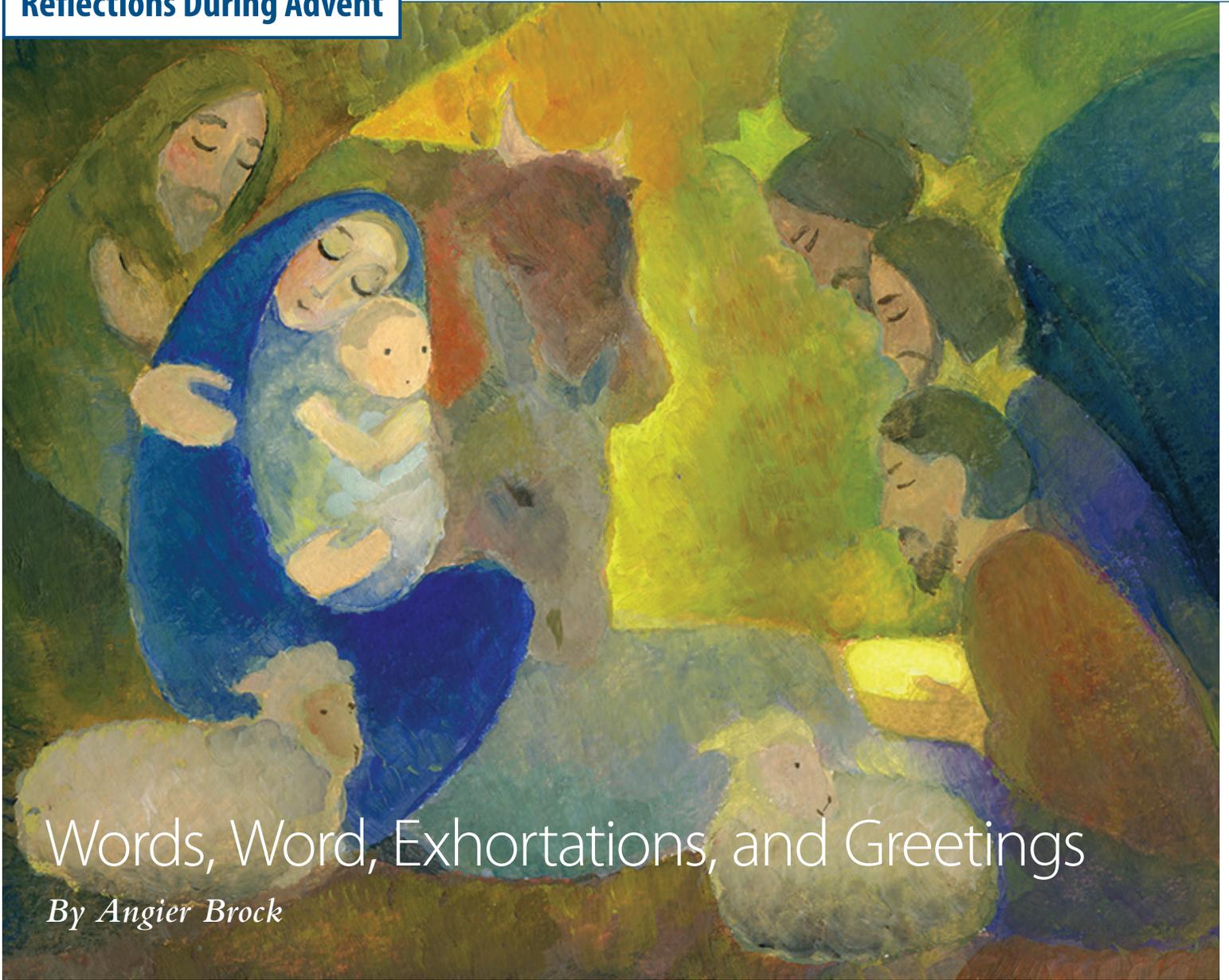
In this holiday season, blessings to you and to the communities of which you are a part. In the words of Brené Brown, may you bring a "strong back, soft front, and wild heart" to all your places of commitment.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Marjory Bankson, *The Call to the Soul*, 1999, Innisfree Press

<sup>2</sup>John Maxwell, *The 360 Leader*, 2011, Thomas Nelson Publishing

<sup>3</sup>Brené Brown, *Braving the Wilderness*, 2017, Vermilion Press

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# Words, Word, Exhortations, and Greetings

By Angier Brock

I love words, and my hope for language is always that it might elevate, inspire, and illuminate—not frighten, insult, and obfuscate. What draws my attention in this year’s gospel readings for Advent are the words *words*, *word*, *exhortations*, and *greeting*. I hope you will reflect on them too this Advent season as we move through our troubled times and busy days toward the lowly, the holy, and the hope of the Word-made-flesh that dwells among us.

### ADVENT WEEK I

#### *Lasting Words*

**Luke 21:33.** “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.”

I spent one recent day, a day when headlines were particularly partisan and vitriolic, mostly in my car, following the ongoing breaking news by satellite radio. The language and images were ugly, oppressive, demoralizing, and exhausting. It felt at times apocalyptic.

I stayed that night with my younger son in Richmond, gladly putting current events aside for a few hours to spend time with my

granddaughters. I expected that, after dinner, the girls would go off to do their homework, their parents would go about their own preparations for the next day, and I would retire to the guest room where I would again tune in to the day’s unfolding stories. That plan changed, however, when sixteen-year-old Jane asked to talk with me after dinner. She needed to interview someone for a class project about “The Meaning of Life.” Would I be willing? Heavens, what grandmother could resist an invitation like that?

For the next hour and a half, she and I sat on the soft carpet on her bedroom floor. I don’t know how she ultimately distilled all we covered for her report, but I found the conversation refreshing and heartwarming—and devoid of current events. We talked about maintaining connections with people we love, and with the earth that sustains us, and with our own selves. We talked about cherishing the natural world, and learning from it. We talked about creative expression through the arts and considered various

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## Advent: Continued from page 3

ways creativity can enrich friendships, family relationships, work, and leisure. We talked about the Divine Force—however one experiences and names it—that flows through us and all of life. We talked about “giving back” in gratitude for all that life offers.

What a different conversation it was from those I had listened to all day—different in tone, pace (we spoke slowly and thoughtfully, allowing silences for thinking), and vocabulary. The radio words had made me feel fractured, tense, despairing. The words Jane and I used were restorative, filled with gentleness, light, and hope. After we wrapped things up, I did not turn on the news again until the next afternoon, long after I had returned home.

Like that day, the gospel for this first Sunday in Advent (Luke 21:25–36) begins with apocalyptic images. Jesus is speaking of “distress among nations” and people who “will faint from fear and foreboding.” His words sound contemporary and feel familiar. But Jesus doesn’t leave us there. Rather he promises that redemption is drawing near. He uses images from the natural world as signs of hope. He promises, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” At the close of the passage he sounds a familiar Advent theme: “Keep awake.”

How shall we keep awake this year? How shall we be true to our own selves, while searching for the spirit that connects us all as one? One way might be to talk with someone about the meaning of life. I invite you to try that. Ask someone to meet you this week for coffee—or perhaps over Skype or Face Time. Agree, for thirty minutes or an hour, to put aside the seasonal rush as well as current events and politics. Consider doing this with someone of a generation different from yours. What values do you share? What thoughts do have in common? Where do your ideas differ? Pay attention to the words you use as well the ideas and questions you raise. What do you long for? What hopes and dreams endure for you? How do they shed light on the meaning of life? How might they lead you toward the stable?

## ADVENT II

### *Civic Words*

**Luke 3:6.** “All flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

The afternoon of the same family visit I mentioned last week, I helped my thirteen-year-old granddaughter Lucy prepare for a U. S. civics test. Her study notes included what citizens should do (for example, respect others, stay informed, vote, communicate with lawmakers) as well as what citizens must do (obey laws, pay taxes, serve on juries when called, and so on). The material also addressed the government’s promises to its people (such as public safety, protection from foreign and domestic threats, trial by a jury of peers). It enumerated qualities desirable in those wishing to become U.S. citizens (including good character, a passion for our democracy, and knowledge of our constitution) and set forth the steps necessary to apply for and attain American citizenship. Finally, the material included the first amendment rights of U. S. citizens—peaceful assembly, freedom of speech, freedom of worship (including freedom from any governmental establishment of religion); a free press.

The gospel for the second Sunday of Advent (Luke 3:1–6) says nothing about citizens’ rights and responsibilities, or even who was eligible for citizenship when Jesus was born. If it did, there would undoubtedly be a few similarities and some consequential differences between then and now. Luke does, however, offer a

civics lesson of sorts when he lists some of the rulers of the day, along with their titles and the territories they governed—including Tiberius, the emperor of Rome; Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea; and Herod, the ruler of Galilee.

Then, as the passage moves along, Luke hints at citizenship in an entirely different realm, the one announced by John the Baptist. I can almost hear an ancient grandmother helping her grandchild study John’s teachings. “Name two duties of a citizen of God’s kingdom.” To prepare the way of the Lord, and to make his paths straight. “And what is the promise in return?” That all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

I think of myself as a good American citizen, but helping Lucy study made me wonder: Do I take my citizenship for granted? I pay taxes. I vote. I try to stay informed. But is that enough? Given the pressing issues of our day, I cannot think of a time when well-lived-out citizenship is more important – when we might risk fitting-in, in order to stand up for what we believe. By definition, citizenship means you are in community with others, but good citizenship may involve standing alone. We need good citizens at all levels of government—local, state, and national. And then there is God’s realm. Not just our nation but all nations, and indeed, our entire planet earth, are in need of good citizens.

This suggests another possible topic for an Advent conversation. Perhaps this week you could invite a person or two to share a simple soup-and-sandwich meal over which you reflect on what it means to be a citizen in the realm of God. I often take that citizenship for granted, too. Moreover, I forget John the Baptist’s promise—his radical promise—to us humans who inhabit God’s realm, that salvation belongs not just to you and me and people who look or think or believe or live the way we do. Rather the promise is that ALL flesh shall see God’s salvation. What does that promise ask of me as a citizen of my city or county, my state, my nation? What does it ask of me as a global citizen? What does it ask of me as a person of faith? If I take the words of John the Baptist seriously, how does his vision shape how I act and what I say as I move toward Bethlehem?

## ADVENT III

### *Words of Exhortation*

**Luke 3:18.** “So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people.”

The third Sunday in Advent is sometimes called “Stir Up Sunday” after a traditional prayer appointed for the day: “Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us...” But “Stir up Sunday” is apt for any Sunday when today’s gospel (Luke 3:7–18) is read. Continuing from last Sunday, John the Baptist is certainly stirring things up as he preaches to crowds seeking him out, wishing to be baptized. At times his words sound angry and judgmental (he calls those in earshot a “brood of vipers”). At times his images sound threatening and violent (he warns that the ax is nearby and “every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down”).

His words get peoples’ attention. Even some who might in today’s culture be called public servants or members of the armed forces—tax collectors and soldiers—are attentive. “Bear fruits worthy of repentance,” John tells the crowd. When they ask what

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that means, he tells them to share what they have, and not to take more than their share.

The gospel writer lumps all of John's rhetorical moves—judgment, threat, guidance, and promise—under the heading of “exhortations.” An exhortation is intended to inspire, to encourage, to advise with great urgency. To move people from complacency to action. To stir them up.

Perhaps you feel, as I do, that you've been stirred up now for months, and not necessarily in a good way. We've only recently survived the 2018 election season, having voted just a few weeks ago after far too many months of listening to, and perhaps participating in, campaign rhetoric that was often negative and divisive. I wonder if the “stir up” words of John the Baptist have anything to say to us now, suspended as we are in time between the elections and the swearing in of those who will take up their mantles of public service. I wonder if John's words have anything to say to us as we live suspended in this holy time of Advent, preparing for the birth of God.

Of course, John was not speaking to people living in a democracy. Neither is conservationist and activist Terry Tempest Williams addressing people of John's era, or thinking about Advent, in her essay “Engagement” (Orion Magazine), in which she writes, “The human heart is the first home of democracy. It is where we embrace our questions. Can we be equitable? Can we be generous? Can we listen with our whole beings, not just our minds, and offer our attention rather than our opinions?” Nevertheless, similar themes appear in both John's exhortations and Williams' rhetorical questions. Using very different language, each speaks to issues of compassion and generosity. Using very different words, each stirs us toward becoming our better selves – living authentically and honoring the spirit that connects all human beings. Using very different images, each offers hope.

All of which suggests another topic to ponder, whether on your own or with a trusted friend: What is stirring in you this Advent season? How are you bearing fruits worthy of repentance? Where are you finding, or offering, compassion and generosity? When do you feel the power of the spirit that connects all humanity? Wherever you locate yourself this week on the Advent journey, who or what gives you hope?

## ADVENT IV

### Words of Greeting

**Luke 1:41.** “When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting... Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Season's Greetings. Merry Christmas. Happy Holidays. These greetings sound forth from our lips and show up in our mailboxes frequently these days. More than any other time of year, this is a season characterized by the sharing of good wishes. I cherish the tradition of exchanging Christmas cards with friends and family and of exchanging words of good will and joy even with strangers.

A greeting plays a role in the gospel for the fourth Sunday in Advent (Luke 1:39–45). The young Mary is visiting her older cousin Elizabeth. Both are with child. When Mary greets Elizabeth, the babe in Elizabeth's womb leaps for joy, and Elizabeth herself is filled with the Holy Spirit. What a moment it must have been, what ranges of emotions the two must have shared as they pondered their unexpected pregnancies. What a

comfort each must have been to the other as they lived into the mystery unfolding in and around them.

I was intrigued to hear a different sort of greeting story recently on *All Things Considered*. In a series called “Discipline and Women in Prison,” NPR reported that women in prison in the U. S. are disciplined more frequently—sometimes two or three times more frequently—for minor infractions of rules than are imprisoned men. Some states, working to change that, now train their corrections officers to be less reactive when women inmates break minor rules that pose no security threat—things like wearing a sweatshirt inside out or rolling their eyes.

For one segment of the program, NPR interviewed Lucinda Gillam. An inmate at a women's detention facility in Iowa, Gillam used to get into trouble for being “smart aleck-y.” Then the more recently-trained officers began interacting differently with her and the other women, speaking to the women more frequently and greeting them with things like, “How are you doing?”—not, she emphasized, to become their friends, but to recognize their humanity. “They're kinder,” she says. Being greeted in that kinder way, she says, has helped her mature and stay out of trouble. At the time of the interview, she was enrolled in college classes. When she gets out of prison, she plans to complete her degree and eventually to counsel people dealing with substance abuse.

Though Lucinda Gillam's greeting story differs greatly from the one in Luke, there is mystery in both. What the two have in common is the inexplicable transformation that can occur when one person's words touch another person's spirit. Probably for each of us there has been someone whose words have quickened something in us: courage, hope, insight, gratitude, faithfulness. Or perhaps someone's words planted in us the seed of a call, or gave us the impetus to overcome a hurdle. Perhaps someone's words helped change the direction we were headed, or helped us to discover new ways to think, or pray, or dream.

In the brief time left in Advent this year, pay attention to the greetings you receive. How do they make you feel? Which ones warm your heart or touch your spirit? Also pay attention to the greetings, written or spoken, that you pass along to others, whether they be family, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, or strangers. You never know what mystery might be at work in your words, or how the simplest kindness might touch another person's spirit, altering the arc of their day.

## CHRISTMAS:

### Do Not Be Afraid

**Luke 2:10.** “The angel said to [the shepherds], ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people.’”

**John 1:14.** “And the Word became flesh and lived among us....”

This year's reflections draw from the Revised Common Lectionary for liturgical Year C. Advent I presents the grown-up Jesus toward the end of his ministry. Advent II and III give us the adult John the Baptist. Advent IV flashes back to the meeting of Elizabeth and Mary when their sons are still in utero. Then on Christmas Eve (this year, by quirk of the calendar, only a day after Advent IV), we arrive

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# Permission to Explore

*Through the years, Faith at Work/Lumunos has remained vibrant in an ever-changing world because of the community of people who have been part of our work. We have been blessed by these “Lumunaries”. Lumunaries are people who embody the values of Lumunos – people who are using their gifts and living their call; people who value authentic relationships and continue to grow spiritually. Lumunaries are also people who have supported Lumunos and advanced our mission in one way or the other.*



Stephen Gehring lives in Omaha, Nebraska with his wife, Dana. They have been there for almost 30 years. Steve describes himself as a retiring lawyer, having been with the same firm for almost 50 years, but not yet able to head out the door. He describes his practice now as give-back time to friends, family and folks who cannot afford to pay for legal services. He served as a director of the Foodbank for the Heartland for 23 years and acts now as its legal counsel. Steve’s other significant involvement is serving as a director for a large travel management company in Omaha – a 34-year joyful association (you begin to get the idea that Steve can’t quit things). In his spare time, Steve loves to track a Porsche Cayman, which he acquired after 40 years of lusting. Steve and Dana love to spend some winter time in Sanibel, thanks to an introduction by Jim Haggart, a former FAW director and his wife, Nickie (Sam and Helen Shoemaker’s daughter). Steve and Dana have two sons and no known grandchildren.

We asked Stephen to tell us about his background with Lumunos/FAW and what impact it has had on his life. Here is Stephen in his own words:

“When my wife, Dana, and I moved to Lincoln, Nebraska in 1969, Dana wanted us to become involved in a church for the benefit of

our two sons. We joined a large and prominent Presbyterian church.

I was virtually unchurched growing up, having been maybe five times before we joined. To say that I was a spiritual neophyte is an understatement. Four or five years into this process, a Faith at Work national field representative, Heidi Frost, came to our church, and I had an opportunity to meet her. The FAW process was intriguing, but scary. Dana and I attended a local FAW conference, which ended up being a mind-warping experience for me. People were talking about small group experiences and sharing things publicly that I was raised never to share. We had several friends who attended a FAW Leadership Training Institute (LTI) and their transformational experiences convinced us to go to one in 1976. That was my deep dive into FAW and I have been hooked ever since.

After that, I became involved in the Nebraska FAW team and remained active in that team until nine or ten years ago. I was privileged to be asked to join the National Board and served for about 17 years. After my Board service, I was asked to be a part of the committee that transitioned Faith at Work to Lumunos. It was a fascinating and scary time for FAW, not knowing whether the old guard would accept the new name and new direction.

More recently, I was a part of a Lumunos Senior Citizen Initiative started by Doug, called the Elder Council. To the dismay of some, I renamed it the Geezer Patrol.

I have had so many delightful, funny and memorable experiences with FAW/Lumunos that I can't recount them all. In the early years of my involvement, FAW gave me permission to explore the funny, creative and silly side of myself. One particular incident involving Marjory Bankson, the longtime President of FAW, stands out. We were at a National Board Meeting and were celebrating the birthday of one of our longtime and much-admired board members who was a prominent lawyer from Chicago. Marjory and I were both into clowning. Marjory had a wonderful clown, "Cheap Grace" (the best clown name I ever heard), and I was (the much less creative) "Bobo". For this event, Marjory lent me her "Cheap Grace" getup – the green fright wig, a slinky blue velour pantsuit, sparkly stockings, and strappy heels (my feet hurt for 2 weeks). Several of the women on the Board did my makeup and found a couple of small balloons to insert into the dress to make up for certain anatomical deficiencies. When I slinked into the room, doing my best breathless Marilyn Monroe "happy birthday" song to our lawyer friend, the look on his face was priceless. For a few short moments, getting into the costume and having the women do my makeup allowed me to experience a little bit of the other gender. It was magical, but my initial tears made my mascara run.

Fun times aside, FAW/Lumunos really shaped my whole approach to life and had a dramatic influence on my legal career. Through the LTI, I realized that I could hone my newly realized leadership skills as the first administrative partner of our law firm. Trying to get lawyers to do anything that was remotely "touchy feely" was difficult, but I did manage to institute an annual partners' retreat utilizing as many small group principles as I could. I think my greatest legacy to our firm is that the annual partners' retreat is still going after 40 years. FAW also taught me that I needed to be a collaborative professional, not an adversarial one. While, ethically, I am always obligated to advocate for a client, I think my greatest service to my clients was looking for win/win rather than win/lose outcomes.

Faith at Work/Lumunos has had an impact on every relationship I have had. The basic small group principles that I learned in FAW of listening, being inclusive, trying not to judge, and employing collaborative teamwork seem the bedrock of good relationships today as well as 2000 years ago when Jesus taught them. Although my spirituality has evolved, the rock upon which it is built is comprised of FAW principles.

There are two principles that are paramount to my spiritual development and how I try to live out my life in relationships. One, be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle. And, two, beware of the temptation to believe that you have been unfairly treated. When I can live into these, life is good for me and those around me. I think the 76-year-old me would tell the 30-year-old me that we have absolutely no regrets about the life that was shaped and formed by FAW/Lumunos and its people. It has been and continues to be a wonderful journey."

## Advent Moon

Let the coming of the One  
who arranges Orion and the Pleiades  
begin in darkness.  
Let the night be cold, with drifts of snow.  
Let there be one lily blooming,  
and whispered messages, and kneeling.

The fierce earth spins in expectation  
beneath the long night's moon.  
Like the restless fox crossing frosted meadows,  
the silvered owl in focused, silent flight,  
each of us is hungry.  
In rooms of untold longing,  
we sing our seasoned carols.  
We watch. We wait.

Let the coming of the One  
who kindles fires of hope,  
whose faithfulness runs far beyond our sight,  
be like the coming of a child.  
Let there be milk, forgiveness, quiet arms.  
Come quickly, Love, our dearest deep  
and sweetest dawning.  
Come, fill us with your light.

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# Persistent Provocation

*By Dale Davis*

**M**y call to become a pastor never came from a burning bush. Those Bible stories my mother read to me probably helped. But mostly it came from a less predictable place, something I call “persistent provocation.”

The memories are vivid. As a young, sensitive, and overweight boy the voices of persistent provocation came too often. Words such as fatty, pig, garbage pail, and whale often took direct aim at my soul. Those voices brought a wake of self-shame and self-hatred. And in the midst of that maelstrom the only one I felt completely free to call upon was God, the One I knew from those stories of deliverance and love my mom had read to me. I wanted more than anything to be part of the world, to contribute to the health of the world; to both give and receive; to serve and experience joy. But I wasn't sure I could.

The story of Hannah in the Hebrew Scriptures (I Samuel 1:1–27) is a story of persistent provocation. In the language of ancient times, Hannah was considered “barren;” her womb was “closed.” Peninnah was Hannah's rival wife, and she became a source of persistent provocation to Hannah. Peninnah's insults were like arrows at Hannah's soul. Like me, Hannah was keenly aware something was

amiss in her life even as she wanted to give something to the world. Giving that precious something to God from our deepest selves is something faith often stirs within. But for Hannah and for me there was a Peninnah, something or someone provoking the wound, a reminder that what we want for ourselves and God isn't going to happen or isn't really possible. We feel barren.

For years the various “Peninnah” voices kept my sense of call to parish ministry a distant dream, banished to some desert place or to some dungeon where it could never see the light of day. I worked in an auto parts store and drove a truck around the area refilling snack machines because those seemed like more reasonable vocational options. Any work can be a real and faithful call. But it wasn't mine.

That's the power of the Peninnah voice—it can move us away from our sacred center, from the thing we are really called to be and do. The Peninnah voice is the voice of the other, that someone who is close by, the voice we live with every day, and the voice we can't escape. It tries to tell us we're not worthy or that God doesn't want us or need what we really want to be and to give. It gets into

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## *Persistent Provocation: Continued from page 8*

our heads and messes with us. We despise that voice and yet it has a certain control over us. It tells us to settle for something less than our calling. The Peninnah voice can be that of a colleague, a family member, or member of a faith community. The Peninnah voice can also come from within.

Like Hannah in the story, I cried out to God. I cried of loss, cried that I'd been forgotten, overlooked, misplaced. Crying became my prayer. I'm not sure how it happened, but in the midst of my inner distress and sense of hopelessness people noticed. I don't know how they noticed. It may have been similar to the way Eli, the priest at the temple where Hannah was crying her eyes out and murmuring, noticed something was amiss. That's the beautiful thing about call. Other people get involved. Without them, call seems incomplete. My inner call, it seems, needed some outer help. And all the time God was at work.

What happened then is as miraculous as birth itself. My call to work in the church slowly grew, getting stronger and stronger. By the time I began attending college the call began to take form, my ear within more attuned to what poet, mystic, pastor and theologian Howard Thurman has called "The Sound of the Genuine." Over time that call began to fill me and take form. I saw that I could study

the scriptures, and help people connect those scriptures to their own lives. I could help them deal with their own Peninnah Provocations.

People in my church have to make complex and sometimes painful decisions. They have frustrations and aspirations. I see them often hungering in the desire to exercise "faithful presence" wherever they find themselves on life's way. (Even if it really means being a parts store clerk or vending machine supplier). My role is to help them explore what that faithful presence looks like.

During the very earliest years of my life I had the urge to give something to the world. But I didn't think it was possible. Like Hannah in the ancient Hebrew story there were other voices at work. But eventually Hannah did conceive. Her baby Samuel became Israel's prophet, priest and judge. Like Hannah, my call also began to grow, in the womb of God's love and people. Oddly enough, the persistent provocation helped me find my call.

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## *Advent: Continued from page 5*

at the stable in Bethlehem in time for the shepherds, the angels, and the birth. In other words, like the babe in Elizabeth's womb, the readings take some leaps.

Holy time is like that. The kingdom of God is coming. The kingdom of God is here. Holy time is moveable and collapsible and oddly simultaneous, making past and present and future all one—all contained in God, and all true. "Do not be afraid," the angel says, "for I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people." The angel is talking to the shepherds. At the same time, the angel is talking to you and me.

The theme of inclusion, sounded back in Advent II, shows up again here. The angel's words are not just for people of a particular time, place, or occupation. Neither are they only for those who look, live, or believe a certain way. Rather the words are for ALL people. Do not be afraid. We would do well to ponder, to savor, and to share these

words with one another—especially when fear threatens to divide us, encourages us to withhold rather than to share, or tempts us to make enemies of those who seem "other" than us.

The prologue to the Gospel of John proclaims that "the Word became flesh and lived among us ... full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). May that Word find its place in your heart, banish your fears, and fill you with grace and truth. Merry Christmas!

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**NOTE:** These weekly Advent Reflections will be posted on our website. If you sign up for our newsletter on the website, these will be sent to you via e-mail. The online reflections will include music and videos.

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**Angier Brock** is a former long-time Board member of Lumunos, songwriter for retreats, and women's ministry leader. These days she is doing some freelance writing and editing, playing in a hand bell choir, being a Virginia Master Naturalist, and grandmothering.



## Please consider becoming a monthly donor.

When donations come in monthly, that helps us manage our day-to-day operations and cash flow. It's very easy to set-up - go to the "Donate Now" button on our website, or give us a call at 802.860.1936. Thank You!

## Why I Support Lumunos

**W**e are truly grateful for the support provided by our community. For a long time Lumunos has been bringing people together and facilitating conversations that go deep. We lead group process that helps people understand themselves better, understand others better, and understand their relationship to God better. If you've been to a Lumunos event, you know what we're talking about.

Over the past year we've been blessed with feedback from many of the people who took part in our retreats and "LumZoom" calls, as well as those who stay connected simply by reading our newsletters and following our Facebook page. If you feel as they do and would like us to continue providing these opportunities for new people, please consider donating to Lumunos this season. We promise to honor your contribution by continuing to provide the kinds of resources and opportunities that change people's lives.

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*I cannot imagine NOT contributing to Lumunos, both financially and any other way I can be of value. The principles of this organization and the modeling of the hundreds of wonderful people with whom I have been associated have become a part of me. As long as I can do some small part to help others have similar experiences in their lives, I would love to do so.*

– Stephen Gehring

---

*The Fall 2018 Lumunos Colorado retreat was my first - it will definitely not be my last. I met a great group of guys and am grateful for the time to reflect, rest, and reset. Spiritually I left the retreat with more than I had brought. Thank you.*

– Ned Rule

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*Our gathering completely exceeded my expectations. This was such a healthy experience!*

– John from Colorado

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*Thank you for planning a wonderful weekend! I have been thinking of so many saints and friends who have left us, but whose memories linger on vividly. It was a relaxing and wonderful process, from start to finish. And we ate very well, too!*

– Carol Thornell

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*Thank you for an inspiring weekend. Much to think about, and I loved hearing and sharing stories plus all the other good conversation. Much work, done with love!*

– Rena Zeller

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*Lumunos brings quality people together with other quality people, so that together we can grow, reflect & enjoy the wonderful gift of life in community. The welcoming inclusive environment is a blessing, wherever you are at in your journey spiritually.*

– Joel from Illinois

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### **Here are some comments we received about our online E-Newsletter and monthly "LumZoom" calls:**

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*This is very meaningful content, thank you.*

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*What a wonderful, meaningful, and important issue! Thank you.*

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*This is lovely. Thank you all!*

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*Enjoyed reading your article. Thanks for sharing!*

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*Your description of a child's wonder at small things brought back a treasured memory from a time when my daughter was three or four years old... Isn't it a gift to be able to see the world through the eyes of a child?*

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*Thanks for doing this! The time of silence was rich.*

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*Thank you for your wisdom and thoughts amidst the hurry-scurry of the [Holiday] Season.*

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*After our meeting on Tuesday I found an ad in our local paper asking for volunteers... [and] I decided okay this is something I can do.*

## Upcoming Events

### Monthly LumZoom Call: The Science, Spirituality, and Practice of Gratitude

November 29, 2018 at 8 PM ET

### Monthly LumZoom Call: Change, Being Alone, and Connection during the Holidays

December 19, 2018 at 8 PM ET

### Crossing the River: Staying Resilient in Times of Change and Transition; a half day coed retreat in Winnetka, IL

January 12, 2019

For questions about these or other  
future Lumunos events, please email  
[becca@lumunos.org](mailto:becca@lumunos.org).



### Vero Beach Men's Retreat in Vero Beach, FL

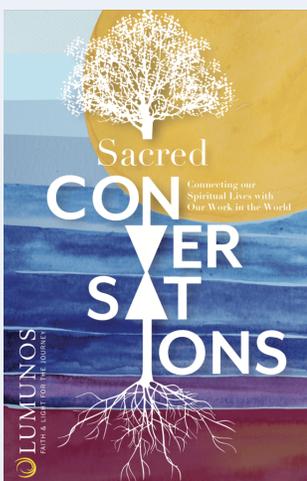
February 1-3, 2019

### Chicago Area Men's Retreat at the Covenant Harbor in Geneva Bay, WI

March 15-17, 2019

### Appalachian Area Women's Retreat in Newland, NC

April 26-28, 2019



## Sacred Conversations

Recently a team of “Lumunaries” created a resource called *Sacred Conversations: Connecting Our Spiritual Lives with Our Work in the World*. It is designed as a guide for small groups to use as they discuss how to connect their work in the world with their spiritual lives. That primary work might be in an office, as a parent or grandparent, or as a volunteer. It is also designed to help people have authentic conversations about their work. What brings them joy? What do they find challenging? How does their work use their gifts, and what potential for harm is there in the work they do?

Want to learn more about *Sacred Conversations*? Check out our short video online at [www.lumunos.org](http://www.lumunos.org). To order a copy, email [alice@lumunos.org](mailto:alice@lumunos.org). The cost is \$10 per copy, which includes shipping.

Lumunos is hosting an online Sacred Conversations group starting in January. To learn more, contact [becca@lumunos.org](mailto:becca@lumunos.org).



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**802.860.1936**

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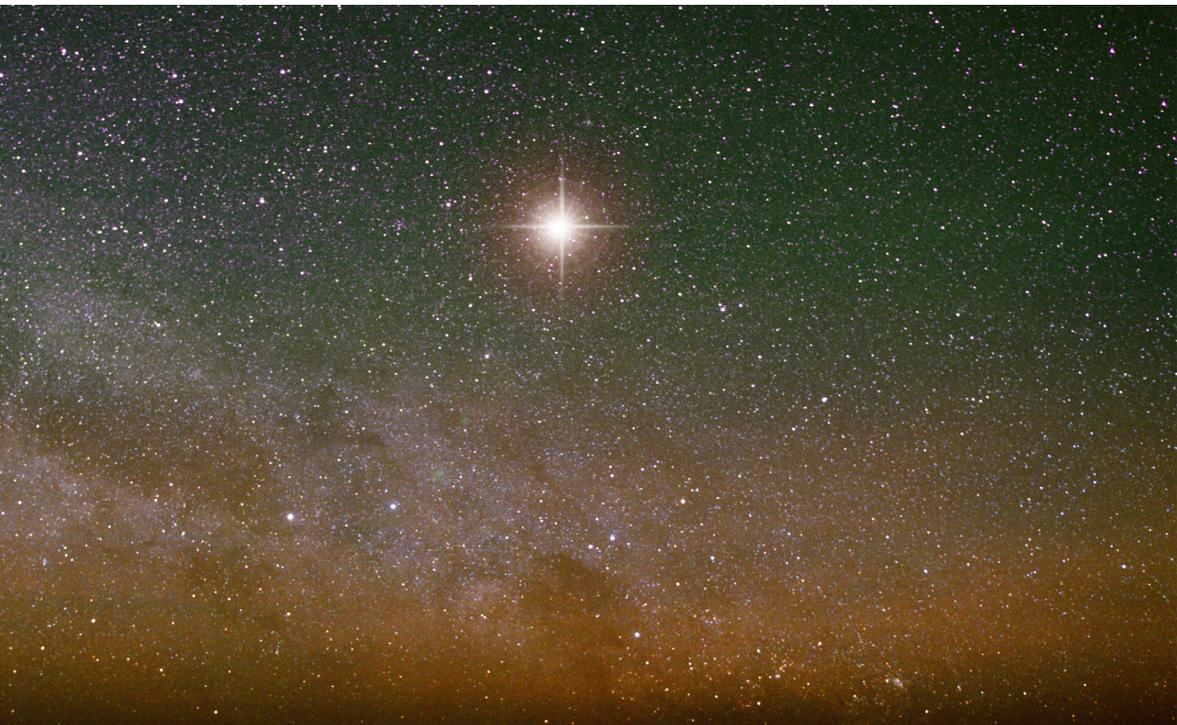
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***“By letting our true selves shine like the morning sun  
into our families, our communities, and the world,  
we awaken the best in others.”***

*- Kevin Anderson, Divinity in Disguise*