



belly of the whale
SPIRITUAL DIRECTION & RETREAT MINISTRIES



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november 2015

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Spouting Off



November begins with All Saint's Day, journeys through Thanksgiving, and steps into Advent. Overall it is a season of gratitude. We are grateful for those who have walked this journey of life with us and are now resting in eternal peace. We are grateful for those gathered with us around the Thanksgiving table. And we gratefully anticipate the birth of Christ. Gratitude; however, is not always easy. Relationships are challenging. Work is challenging. Family is challenging. Yet, somehow through it all, we are profoundly grateful that God walks with us-encouraging us to have eyes to see and ears to hear the divine spark in every person we meet. Thanksgiving blessings to all!

With gratitude,

Pastor Sharon, Director

Contemplate This: *The advent of Advent*

Advent begins on November 29th. With eager anticipation, we await the birth of Christ, Emmanuel, God with us, the Prince of Peace. Yet somehow this season of peace easily morphs into a flurry of activities and obligations. This year, rather than fussing over a traditional **Christmas 'to-do' list**, I invite you to lean in to this **Advent 'to-be' list** instead:

- Be the light (instead of put up lights)
- Spend time together (instead of spend money)
- Donate holiday treats (instead of eat holiday treats)
- Wrap someone in a hug (instead of wrap boxes)
- Be present (instead of buy presents)

May the blessed season of Thanksgiving help us prepare for the advent of Advent. Peace be with you...



SDFAQs

How do I find a spiritual director?

A spiritual director is trained to help you develop and maintain spiritual practices that “direct” your attention toward a deeper relationship with God. Because the nature of spiritual direction is confidential and can be deeply personal, it is important that you take time to find a spiritual director with whom you feel comfortable. I suggest that you meet for an initial consultation with several folks. Share why it is that you feel drawn to spiritual direction and pay attention to how comfortable you feel when sharing your story. You might also ask a potential spiritual director how they nurture their own prayer life, where/when they are available and what is their standard fee. Prayerfully reflect on these conversations and follow through with the spiritual director that feels like the best match for you. It would be a privilege and a blessing to meet with you to talk more about possibilities for spiritual direction. There are also helpful listings of local spiritual directors on the websites for Spiritual Directors International and the Fellowship of United Methodist Spiritual Directors & Retreat Leaders.

Retreat Suggestions

There are a few copies of *Praying with Mandalas: Contemplative Coloring for Contemporary Christians* still available. *Praying with Mandalas* is a simple method that blends the resurging interest in coloring with the traditional prayer practices of centering prayer, intercessory prayer & lectio divina. It includes specially designed prayer mandalas that can easily be used for personal devotions or small groups. If you are interested, email me at spiritualdirection@att.net and I will drop one off or pop it in the mail for you. The cost is \$15 (+\$3 shipping).

Thanksgiving Prayer

Bountiful God, you know that giving thanks
is often a joy and sometimes a challenge.

Thank you for the joys that fill my days –
laughing with friends, walking the dog, holding hands around the table,
warmth from a fire and nourishment for my body.

In the face of life’s inevitable challenges, remind me that you are present –
relearning to swallow after a stroke, making ends meet when work is scarce,
sorting through treatment options in the face of cancer
or saying good-bye.

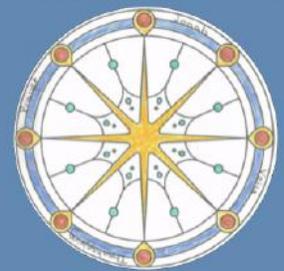
You know all my joys and challenges unspoken
and you hold me tight in your warm embrace.

I give thanks for the gift of this life
and the privilege of living it.
Amen.



Praying with Mandalas

Contemplative Coloring for Contemporary Christians



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