



# Whale Spouts

*inspiration & information  
to nurture spiritual vitality in everyday living*

A monthly newsletter of Belly of the Whale  
Spiritual Direction & Retreat Ministries LLC

**November 2014**

## **Thanksgiving blessings to one and all!**

As I look back over the past year, I am overwhelmed by the many reasons to give thanks. I am deeply grateful for your ongoing prayers of support and encouragement as this ministry of spiritual direction & renewal continues to grow.

Many of you have asked for more information about what spiritual direction is all about and how one goes about finding a spiritual director who is a “good match.” Check out the FAQ section (on page 2) for what I hope will be some helpful guidance.

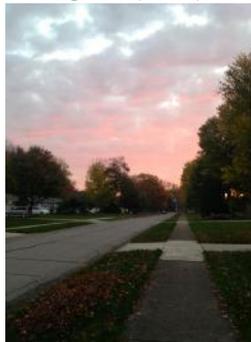
May this month of November be full of daily **Thankgivings!**

Peace,  
*Sharon Seyfarth Garner*  
Director

## **Walking Bear**

Every morning I go for a walk with our dog, Bear. Up until about a week ago, I treated these walks as exercise, so Bear and I would speed-walk as quickly as we could around the block. However, recently I have begun walking more slowly, more prayerfully. As much as I need the exercise, I also need time each day to slow down and pray. Bear and I are now taking a more leisurely stroll in the mornings. Instead of looking down to make sure I don't stumble on the uneven cracks in the sidewalk, I am looking up to see the birds in the trees and the beautiful sunrise at the end of the block. Instead of listening to NPR on my headphones, I am listening to geese honking and leaves crunching. Instead of constant motion, Bear has time to sniff the yards and fire hydrants along the way (pure joy for a dog!). Slowing down is waking us up – opening my eyes to see, my ears to hear, and for Bear, his nose to sniff God's glorious creation. The peace with which I return from walking Bear starts my day from a space of much needed calm rather than hurry. I invite you to give it a try. Enjoy a prayerful, leisurely walk (with or without a dog) so that you can see, hear (and maybe even sniff) God's presence in your daily life.

Many of you have heard the observation that God is dog spelled backwards. Well, my dog is certainly a source of divine inspiration for me. I am grateful for the opportunity to slow down and enjoy these sacred moments of walking Bear.



## **Our mission**

is to nurture spiritual vitality  
in everyday living through  
personal spiritual direction  
& small group retreats.

## **Our name**

is a reminder that, just as Jonah  
encountered God in the  
**“belly of the whale,”**  
we also long for  
a safe space  
to encounter God –  
space where we can  
express our spiritual longings,  
ask the challenging questions and  
nurture a genuine relationship with God.

## **Spiritual Direction and Spiritual Formation Retreats**

provide just this sort of safe space  
-amidst our often stormy and busy lives-  
to nurture a deeper and more meaningful  
relationship with God.



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# Whale Spouts



## FAQ

### How do I find a Spiritual Director?

Spiritual direction is an opportunity to reflect deeply on God's presence in your daily life. 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.

It would be a privilege and a blessing to serve as your spiritual director. However, because different folks connect best with different types of people, I will gladly pass along the names of other highly qualified spiritual directors in our area. 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.

In order to find a spiritual director who is a good match for you, I suggest that you meet for an initial consultation and share why it is that you feel drawn to spiritual direction at this time - 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 their standard fee is.

*"Be still and know that I am God."*

*Psalm 46:10*

In my own practice, there is no fee for an initial consultation where we share a bit of our faith stories and I can answer any questions you may have. After this session, I invite you to take some time to discern where the Spirit is leading you. If you feel so led, we would then set up several spiritual direction sessions together and see how it goes. Typically, I meet with directees for bi-weekly or monthly sessions that last about 50-60 minutes. The standard fee is \$45/session. Because I want this meaningful opportunity for spiritual growth & wellness to be available to all, I will gladly work with you to determine fees that fit within your personal or organizational budget. Some folks may have access to continuing education funds that can be used for the purposes of spiritual self-care. I also have access to limited scholarships as may be needed.

If you are interested in a more intensive experience of spiritual formation, you may want to consider meeting weekly with a spiritual director for the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. This 32-week program (also known as the 19<sup>th</sup> Annotation Retreat) involves daily lectio divina, spiritual journaling and close attention to Christ's presence in your daily life. The Spiritual Exercises have been a meaningful part of my own faith formation and it would be a blessing to accompany you on this journey. The fee for the full retreat is significantly less than the fee for individual sessions and is determined on a case-by-case basis.

I hope you will prayerfully consider whether you are being drawn to spiritual direction at this time. Please feel free to contact me with any questions. ~ Sharon



### Spring Sneak Peek 2015

#### spiritual renewal retreats

Step away from the noise of daily demands  
and into the sacred silence  
of a quiet guided retreat.  
\* \* \*

Meet daily with a spiritual director  
who will guide you through  
meditation, prayer & discernment  
of the still small voice deep within.  
\* \* \*

Tentative 2015 dates:

March 9-10  
March 17-18

Location: River's Edge Retreat Center  
Cleveland, Ohio

Cost: \$150 (includes lodging, meals  
& daily spiritual direction)

#### creative pray-dates (prayer workshops)

Enjoy hands-on prayer activities  
that you will make and take.  
\* \* \*

Gift yourself with an opportunity  
to experience God's presence  
in new and creative ways.  
\* \* \*

Tentative 2015 dates:

February 1  
March 1  
May 3

Location: Belly of the Whale Office  
@ University Circle UMC  
Time: 1:00 - 3:00pm  
Cost: \$20/session

*Please let me know if you would like  
additional information about  
these preliminary dates.*

Listen to yourself and in that quietude  
you might hear the voice of God.  
Maya Angelou