



**belly of the whale**  
 SPIRITUAL DIRECTION & RETREAT MINISTRIES



# Whale Spouts

january 2016

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## Spouting Off



Dear friends,

Blessings to you as we step into the New Year.

May 2016 be a year of spiritual renewal, simplicity and hope.

In the light of Christ,

*Pastor Sharon, Director*

## Contemplate This: Celebrate Epiphany

Epiphany is too important for just a single day. Although not “liturgically correct,” I like to consider the time all the way from January 6 to Ash Wednesday as the season of Epiphany when we remember that God’s light shines in the darkness. Because of this, I leave my Christmas/Epiphany lights up all the way to Lent (yes, you read that correctly!). On Ash Wednesday, the bright lights come down and purple Lenten light bulbs go into the fixtures at all our doors. My gracious neighbors are familiar with my odd ways and haven’t yet run me out of the neighborhood!



Why do I go through this liturgical lighting ritual? Because in the middle of a cold and dark winter, I need a little extra light. I want to claim and proclaim the message of Epiphany – that the bright light of a star guided people to an encounter with Christ, that each and every one of us has a gift to offer the baby Jesus, that light overcomes darkness. I realize my winter lights are a bit counter-cultural, but that’s okay with me. Jesus was a little counter-cultural himself in the way he welcomed the outcast, dined with sinners, and taught us to love neighbors and enemies alike.

So, a blessed season of Epiphany to you all! May the light of Christ shine brightly in your life today and always.



## SFAQs

personal trainer meets spiritual director

As we move into the New Year, we often resolve to make changes that will help us to be physically healthier – i.e. more exercise, less dessert. However, you may also be searching for ways to be spiritually healthier in the year to come. Meeting regularly with a spiritual director can help you focus on your spiritual wellness in much the same way that a personal trainer helps you focus on your physical wellness. A spiritual director is a trusted companion on the journey of faith who listens deeply to your story and helps you see God's ongoing presence in your daily life. I invite you to prayerfully consider spiritual direction as you look ahead to 2016. For more information check out the website for Spiritual Directors International. [sdiworld.org](http://sdiworld.org)

## Retreat Suggestions

Are you interested in learning more about contemplative coloring?  
Join us for either of these upcoming retreat opportunities:

**January 29 (7:00 pm) - 30 (3:00 pm), 2016:** The Avon Lake UCC women's group is holding their annual retreat at the Jesuit Retreat House and all are welcome. Retreatants will learn about and experience three different types of prayer through the practice of contemplative coloring. Breathe new life into your spiritual life with this creative new way to pray. [avonlakeucc.org/womens-retreat-january-29-30/](http://avonlakeucc.org/womens-retreat-january-29-30/)

**April 26, 2016, 7-9:00:** Praying with Mandalas: an Invitation to Contemplative Prayer through Coloring will be held at the Jesuit Retreat House in Parma, Ohio. Join us for this time of learning and spiritual renewal as you are introduced to the prayerful practice of contemplative coloring. Contact the Jesuit Retreat House to register. [jrh-cleveland.org](http://jrh-cleveland.org)

## Prayer for the Season

*Holy One,  
as a new year approaches  
I seek to become not a new person but more myself,  
more aware of what is infinitely good in me,  
more attentive to you in me,  
who you become in me to be.*

*I am grateful for your presence,  
in awe of your glory,  
open to your grace  
in me.*

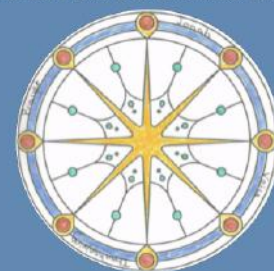
*Unfold your light in me  
and I will become you.  
Unbind your compassion in me  
and I will shine with you.*

*Be in me;  
I will be in you.  
~ Steve Garnaas-Holmes ~*



## Praying with Mandalas

*Contemplative Coloring for Contemporary Christians*



Sharon Seyfarth Garner



Painting by  
Sunny Seyfarth



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