

# Chrysalis

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*Newsletter of  
The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World*

“The recovery of Western civilization from its present addiction to use, as our primary relation to each other and the world about us, must begin with the discovery of the world within, the world of the *psyche* as designated by the Greeks, a word translated by the term *anima* in the Latin world or by the term *soul* in the English world.”<sup>1</sup>

~ Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts*

Dear Reader,

The world within, as a beginning place for the recovery of Western civilization, is foreign to a culture that rewards the outer activities of knowing and doing to such an extent that we scarcely recognize that we have bypassed the inner activity that must truly precede them. But where else to begin to heal the separation that distances us from the world and from ourselves? Where else to begin the slow work of inner transformation that will lead us beyond our addiction to use?

At the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World, we recognize a deep longing for such a recovery in the adults who are drawn to our “Inner Life of the Child in Nature: Presence and Practice” program, as revealed in the following self-reflection:

“... my heart is longing to connect the deeper spiritual encounter with the day-to-day existence of this particular threshold in time, this culture, this civilization, and to move more consciously into creating work that accomplishes an expression of a deep and ever-awakening spiritually guided care for the Natural World, care for all living beings, care for one another. A work informed by intentional presence and acknowledgement of our interbeing.”

In our programs for educators at the Center, we are preparing for a deep change of heart, a deep psychic shift in the culture at large – one educator at a time. We recognize that the change that is needed at this moment in time cannot be achieved through sweeping movements, curriculum change, or further exchange of information. Following Thomas Berry’s indications, we begin with the world within – the world of the *psyche*, the *anima*, the *soul*.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflections on Earth as Sacred Community* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006), p. 39-40.



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This is a new social form for working with educators based on the assumption that a shift in consciousness within the educational realm will come only through an inner transformation of the educator, through an honoring of the soul/spirit of the educator as a core value, and through the creation of a community of educators who support and inspire one another on the threshold of a new consciousness for our time – a consciousness that moves us beyond a view of the natural world as a collection of objects into an experience of the natural world as a communion of subjects.

We begin, therefore, with a practice of beholding the natural world, a “practice of communion.” Through the inner activity of beholding a blue heron in flight, a wood violet on a woodland path, a tulip poplar in spring, we gradually lift each being before us from a fixed idea or label to a living picture – to an inner experience of life. In this way, we begin to move away from our addiction to objectifying the world toward an experience of intimacy and oneness with world becoming. Through an inner attitude of receptivity and openness, we begin to dissolve the separation between ourselves and the world.

Beholding in this way involves a letting go of the personal and social layers of our preoccupations and distractions. It is a daily practice of learning to listen, free of personal projections and desires, as a schooling in compassionate presence.

Thomas Berry offers us a poignant description of this process:

*As we recover our awareness of the universe as a communion of subjects, a new interior experience awakens within the human. The barriers disappear. An enlargement of soul takes place. The excitement evoked by natural phenomena is renewed. Dawn and sunset are once again transforming experiences, as are the sights, sounds, scents, tastes, and feel of the natural world about us – the surging sea, the sound of the wind, the brooding forests. All this could be continued in a never-ending list of experiences that have been lost to large segments of the human community in recent centuries – not because the phenomena do not surround us constantly, but because we have become locked into ourselves, as though large segments of the human mind have been paralyzed.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>2</sup> Berry, p. 18.

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Through a practice of beholding and communion with the natural world, we hope to offer a way out of the confinement and paralysis that we experience subliminally every day. We are guided by the thought: “The spirit that abides in you abides in me.”

As we begin to experience ourselves as participants in a living world, the creative faculties within us also begin to come to life. The awakening of compassionate presence to the natural world awakens our own formative powers as well. Midway through the program, our wayfinding therefore leads us into the realm of human encounter where we create a vessel for listening to what lies dormant within each other.

Working in “I and Thou” dyads, we are guided by the following questions:

- ~ Can we practice a way of listening that awakens what is emergent in the other?
- ~ Can we meet the other with reverence and interest?
- ~ Can we become the birthplace of understanding for someone else?

As we enter the second year of the program, each participant takes up a practice that is revealed to him/her as a way forward. A practice of communion permeates the whole program, from a practice of communion with the natural world, through a practice of communion with each other, to the realization of an individualized practice of communion with the world.

For some, this takes the form of a renewed way of working with children or young adults in the natural world. For others, the second year is a continuation of a personal practice of beholding the natural world. Every once in a while, the second year marks a significant turning point in the life of an educator.

Recently, I read a book called *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future* by Peter Senge, C. Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski and Betty Sue Flowers that mirrors the Inner Life program in remarkable ways. They present a threefold process of “sensing (become one with the world), presencing (allow inner knowing to emerge), and realizing (act swiftly with a natural flow)” – a process through which you “discover who you really are as a servant or steward for what’s needed in the world . . . Then, once you see what’s needed of you, you act spontaneously.”<sup>3</sup>

In this issue of *Chrysalis*, we introduce you to the stories of four Inner Life participants who deeply engaged the process of sensing, presencing and realizing, through which authentic next steps were revealed to them. Taken together, they give us an indication of why Thomas Berry pointed to “the discovery of the world within” as the locus of recovery. For here lie hidden, deep within the human soul, the creative and compassionate forces that are waiting to unfold in the world through us, in harmony with the whole.

With warmest regards,



Peggy Whalen-Levitt  
Director

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<sup>3</sup> Peter Senge, Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski and Betty Sue Flowers, *Presence: Human Purpose and the Field of the Future* (New York: Crown, 2004), pp. 88-91.

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# The Practice of Listening

by

Stefanie Anderson



To begin to understand the practice I chose for the Inner Life of the Child in Nature program, it is relevant to know that I have always been content when I was busy doing the many activities that one does in one's life. I am restless when I have free time and no plans in which to fill my time. I find that staying busy is a means of finding contentment. I also like interacting with other people. It has always been very natural for me to be doing something with someone. I was happiest when I was busy and I had someone close by to talk with. I first noticed my need to stay busy when I was in college. When I was not studying, I was riding in the mountains, looking for the next beautiful perch to watch the clouds or catch a sunset or gaze upon the shadowy blue mountains. If I was alone, I enjoyed these moments for short periods of time but if I was with a friend, I could be content for hours. I never understood how one could sit and ponder by oneself for more than a few minutes. The activity of sitting quietly and listening patiently to what the universe has to teach was not natural to me.

I have given much thought to this tendency to avoid silence and opportunities for quiet thought. I wanted to be content when I was by myself, but this has not come easily to me. When thinking about a practice that I wanted to engage in, it didn't take much thought to decide that this was the time to address my reluctance to be still. I have tried meditation on several occasions, but never felt that it was natural to me and I gave up on the idea quickly.

I began this journey with the thought of learning to find comfort, insight and spiritual awareness in my own being. I would listen to my thoughts and glean what I could from them. I quickly learned that the practice of listening could not be accomplished without also practicing silence and focus.

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I began to think through problems that I had previously avoided. I asked questions and was given answers in my stillness and quiet thoughtful moments. I became aware of insights that seemed to be coming to me. I was learning and growing spiritually by simply listening and being still. I began to know that without a doubt, there was a divine influence and power in this awareness that I was feeling. I spent more and more time alone, outside, listening to my thoughts. My enjoyment of these times increased as I lingered longer each day, listening. I found myself avoiding the car radio and instead becoming interested in my thoughts.

Certain patterns began to take shape in my thoughts and I felt that the message was important to pay attention to. The knowledge was clearly revealed to me one day. I should become a Master Gardener.

I had often thought of becoming a Master Gardener but had dismissed it as requiring too much time and effort. The fifty hours of classroom study with an additional fifty hours of volunteer work seemed overwhelming. I spent time arguing with myself and I finally knew it was best to go forward with the effort to accomplish this goal. I became a Master Gardener this April.

For many years, I have been troubled by the absence of the natural world in the lives of children. In my work with children, I see very little connection between the child and the elements that exist in the natural world. Many children don't seem to enjoy being outside, with complaints of climate, insects or general boredom. This saddened me since I yearn to be outside whenever possible. The joy of nature is available to all and to miss this seems tragic. This concern led me to participate in the Inner Life of the Child in Nature program.

As a Master Gardener, I have many opportunities to work with children in the natural world. We go outside and plant flowers, weed gardens, care for vegetables, examine insects, breathe fresh air, and find beauty in nature. Many questions are asked by the children and much excitement is generated by just being outside in the gardens. I realize now that I was purposefully led down this path. My practice during the Inner Life of the Child in Nature program has created a new purpose in my life. The self-awareness that I found while listening has directed me to this work with children. I am in awe of how I now find myself doing the job that I feel I was meant to do. I have found a way that I can contribute to awakening a child to the wonders of nature. I am not sure that I would have been aware of how to accomplish this goal if I had not listened to the whispers that guided me. By following the practice of listening, I have been given what I was seeking.

**Stefanie Anderson** completed a BS and MS in Nutrition at Va Tech. She has worked as a nutritionist, a children's Christian education director and a school and community volunteer. She presently substitute teaches at the Blue Ridge Montessori School. Recently, she has become a Master Gardener and this enables her to combine her love of the natural world with the desire to share this with children. She volunteers as a Master Gardener in the public schools and at the Boys and Girls club. Stefanie is married to David and has two children, Evan 26 and Laura 23. She is an avid gardener and enjoys being outside. Hiking, camping are her favorite activities. She spends most of her weekends at their property on the New River near Blacksburg, where they have a camper.

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## “Among Things That Change”

by

Renee Eli



### The Way It Is

There is a thread you follow. It goes among  
things that change. But it doesn't change.  
People wonder about what things you are pursuing.  
You have to explain about the thread.  
But it is hard for others to see.  
While you hold it you can't get lost.  
Tragedies happen; people get hurt  
or die; and you suffer and get old.  
Nothing you do can stop times unfolding.  
You don't ever let go of the thread.<sup>1</sup>

~ William Stafford

*There is a thread you follow.* The words themselves arrest my next out-breath. It's as if they suspend air itself. I know there is a thread, not in my mind alone. Rather the knowing and the thread intertwined are of my essence born.

I am not a teacher. Or am I? The past two years and today shake this notion of what or who I believe I am or am not. If I am honest, I recognize I did not come to the Inner Life Program to teach about the Natural World. I came following a thread. I had no idea where it would lead. I am here coursing the curves and twists of a force within and without that knows the work of this life I am living.

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<sup>1</sup> William Stafford, *The Way It Is* (Minneapolis, MN: Graywolf Press, 1998).

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I could go on about my synchronistic encounter with the work of Thomas Berry, about the fact that this work gave language to what belief already lived within. I could go on about how I can't even remember how I learned of the Inner Life Program, but presence and practice teach me now to listen beyond the story details to the life in the story. Looking back, not on the details, but on what lives in me about those moments pre-Inner Life Program, what remains is that feeling I get when the thread is urging the inner yearning to pay attention. This feeling offered the no-way-of-saying-no push that made sure I would apply to the Inner Life Program.

*It goes among things that change.* I am standing in the mist, a cold, heavy, thick mist, that hangs droplets of water, frozen rain and crystals of snow on eyelashes and leaf-tips all around me. I am watching Carolyn Toben invite our group to behold what is before, around and within us, as one. *Behold.* She pauses, and the pause draws out the sacredness of the meaning in our beholding. She wants us to draw a circle around the space of the moment with our arms – that which our eyes hold before us, the sounds we hear, the presence of our peers. This moment is this moment alone. Beholding sacralizes it – stamps its imprint on all meaning of purpose in life in a moment, and then we move on. We leave the cul-de-sac of the trail we are slowly walking. We step deliberately on the snow-wet carpet of leaves slipping beneath our feet. I am wearing boots that offer little tread for gripping the ground. But beneath sole on wet leaves, the earth herself has a final say on traction, and I'm able to stay apace Carolyn and the group. The trail takes us into a clearing, and beyond it a gravel drive, then a cleared board-fenced pasture. We disperse a bit. I come upon two cows. In stillness and silence, the cows and I meet with our eyes. I soon realize we meet one another behind and beyond our eyes. There is a thread between us, and if I am pure in my presence, I apprehend that we meet on the thread of existence. I realize I must leave behind what I know to be the worldly things in order to meet the cows, my fellow creatures, on this plane of essential presence to a universal belonging that lives, breathes, and moves through and between us by our physical existence alone.

My mind drifts to thinking, thoughts, wondering what this is that I am experiencing. The encounter shifts. Something changes. I become again other. The cows move on. First the younger calf, then the more lumbering, slower to locomote, older cow, whom, in my mind, is the mother. My mind, working at spinning thoughts and tales, and trying to make meaning of seeing and experience and more thoughts, sees me apart from this jumble, and beckons me back to beholding. I lament the cows' leaving. I desire a return to that stillness and opening that was lost to thinking.

*But it doesn't change.* I am at a monastery in Mississippi nearly a year after the beholding ritual. Buddhist Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh is guiding us to "Cultivate the Mind of Love." The morning air is so cold that only the oatmeal in my bowl and the steam from the black tea in my cup provide a reprieve from the shiver that has taken hold of my body. I want both to take in the warmth and to keep it at the same time in the bowl and mug so that I have something warm to hold onto. People around me walk like the cows I saw at Timberlake – slowly, eyes fully engaged, bodies at seeming ease. I meet the eyes of one retreatant who has joined me, palms wrapped around her bowl and cup. We pause, dare I say, behold one another? And in our encounter, I am aware of that purity of openness and physical grounding in my body that I have come to know since the encounter with the cows at Timberlake. Each time, I'm aware of the ease given way in the body and the immediate seeming melting of what in the rush and hurry outside of these slowed existences, has come to feel like a cage around my heart. Though I have long since finished my breakfast, I linger here. The temperature has not changed. But I am aware that the shiver has eased.

*People wonder about what things you are pursuing.* The sun is lifting in the sky this October morning at the monastery in Mississippi. I am making my way around the meditation hall to the outdoor dishwashing area.

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I have no need to hurry. No one around me seems hurried. The sun's line of light and warmth moves unhurriedly too across the grassy field in front of me so that where there was shade only moments ago, now there is sunlight. People move deliberately through the dishwashing line – scraping bowls of the little bits of oats left on the sides into a compost bin, dipping scraped bowls and spoons in one basin, then another and another half-full of sudsy water, or clear, then clearer water – a gentle process of cleaning the few vessels we need to provide our bodies nourishment. Drying racks at the ends of the tables make for the last dishwashing step. One-by-one, retreatants leave the line and make their way to the expanding field of sunlight. They stand there in the sun like egrets on a pond-side. Stillness becomes them. I watch some people smile as they lift their faces to receive the sun's warmth. Others close their eyes and appear to be sleeping while standing. Mothers reach toward their children's hands as if by instinct. I see pure joy. Utter peace. Gentle love. There is nothing to do.

*You have to explain about the thread.* I've tried to explain what is next because next is certainly me following the thread. Next is a leap. I've tried to explain it to myself – the old self, the person pre-Inner Life Program, asking all the rational questions. In my mind's eye, I'm standing at a precipice. I'm looking out over a wide expanse. The next step is groundless. I can't say I know where I am going or what will hold me. I know only that this is where the thread is taking me. So I follow.

With each attempt to explain, I come closer to stumbling less. So much has changed since that first Saturday back in 2010, when we all gathered together at Timberlake. *Dismantled* bumps into *equipoise* to give me a fragmented telling of what it means at this moment to attempt to explain about the thread. I say this when people ask about this program, and about the seeming leaps I am making now in my life: "The Inner Life Program has transformed every thought and notion I had about the Natural World and about myself in it – and I had previously considered myself a Naturalist!" It is the practice of presence outside of that which I had believed to be the Natural World, *into* the Natural World of silence (referring to Robert Sardello's book by the same name), my home, a crowded city, a human encounter, the unexpected whiff of a mélange of flowers, a cardinal who shows up at my screened porch as seemingly curious as I am – these experiences have transformed in me my existence on this planet. This practice, daily and essential, has dismantled what I believed to be true about myself and the world around me. And it continues to offer a sense of grounding wherein I find trust, both in myself and in the natural order of things.

*But it is hard for others to see.* I'm careful when I tell him that I'm going back to school. I don't tell him it is a Transformative Studies Program. That would mean even more to explain. I've known for weeks, and still I have preferred to wear the news quietly, on the inside. When I do tell him, finally, I'm careful. And still he asks the question, "Well, what else are you going to do, Mom?" What he means by this question is this: "Well, how are you going to make money?" And he likely wants to know if I am going to be OK financially. He likely wants to quell his own worry. I'm guessing he wants to know if I am going to support him through his undergraduate education. It's a reasonable consideration on his part. He is the oldest of three sons, a sophomore in college.

Another voice, the one I hear inside my head, tells me I should find a different job, or worse, stick with this one, that my children need an education now, that this decision on my part is superfluous, irresponsible. This voice asks what's wrong with me for not being able to be happy with what I have. This voice sees a different path, and my chest tightens every time I look that way.

There is a thread I follow. This thread is more urgent now than ever before. It nudges and draws, pushes when I resist. What does it mean to transform self? Society? Thomas Berry refers to the Great Work of our

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time as the work of the interior landscape – transformation of self. I want to know more, not by mind alone, but by my very being.

I understand that we live on a planet on the brink. I understand that nothing less than transformation of human consciousness will affect the future of ours and all other species on this planet. I understand that the planet itself will survive – changed from the majesty that precedes human-mediated industrialization, no doubt, but it will survive, and over eons return itself to an altogether renewed splendor. But is the earth not our thread of existence? Are we all, earth and all beings, not standing together on the same precipice? Even my children, don't I owe them a different kind of responsibility than convention insists? Finally, I come to understand this: that my children too, are following their own threads, and as I watch them do so, I am made more honest.

*While you hold it you can't get lost.* I am inspired. He's eighteen, and he's making his first steps out into the world as his own person. He spent a month in a monastery. He went there to be still, and he learned some things about presence – with self, with others, a cup of tea, a blade of grass, a falling oak leaf. He's walking now, every day on the earth, for 2500 miles up the Appalachian Trail from Georgia to Maine. He started the journey in his bare feet, because he wanted to walk slowly and feel the earth. Three hundred miles of shedding as much pack weight as possible, he's donned shoes now, and still walking with the ease of no place to go. He calls each time he stops in a town to re-supply with food. He's happier than anyone I know. He asks, how could he not be happy? He gets to wake up every day in the woods and just walk. He gets to meet people week after week who are doing the same thing. He is the second of my three sons.

In two weeks the job I came to three months into the Inner Life Program comes to an end. In two weeks and a day there is no promised salary to wake to in the morning. It may be that I wake to this new day because I tended to the unvoiced but fully lived ache of my third son. It may be that my tending to him rendered me ready to listen to my own ache and to take this leap of faith. Coming to its close, this job, though it offers broad positive social impact, falls short of a truer yearning to address deep ecology. It has taught me that the purpose of my work going forward must have deeper human and planetary implications in order for it to fulfill what calls and urges from within. I am no longer able to resist the thread that is the course of my life bringing me here and taking me to waters I feel but cannot yet see. When I am open to it – the thread – even standing on a precipice, knees trembling in the fear of past believing, I am calm at my depths, at ease with the Universe. I trust.

*Tragedies happen; people get hurt or die; and you suffer and get old.* I am barefoot and walking on the grounds of the home of a dead man I never encountered in the living flesh. I am following a long string of people in front of and behind me stepping one foot mindfully, then another, on the packed earth that encircles the gardens he cultivated with his wife. Broccoli plants with dark green leaves look close to flowering. Peas climb a trellised arch. Soon they too, will flower, then bear fruit. A rosemary plant fills the corner spot. Are those strawberry plants in those terra cotta pots? Promise lives here. But I can't help feeling the brokenness of it hanging thick like a breath stolen from a full gasp of fresh air.

Inside we listen to stories. One friend, acquaintance, family member after another share about a man who lived freely by proclaiming “Be Here Now.” And in story after story, his presence to life is revealed time and again. He sailed the globe not once, but twice. He loved life. He worked to play. He greeted morning after morning in meditation overlooking the tidal marshes that blew fresh salt breezes into a sun-lighted room. I realize I don't even know what he looked like when he lived and breathed for seventy years on this planet. I don't know the colors of his eyes, whether he had fair skin, as does his wife, or skin tones that warmed like

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copper in sunlight. I don't know his stature, but I see his daughter in a corner alcove of the room where people are sharing, a room constructed by his hands. I see her mourning the insistent void of his sudden physical absence.

We leave the evening, all of us in our own time. We go back into our homes, our lives, our work. Something has changed. In a man's dying, we are each given a fresh breath with life. I wonder, will I receive it?

*Nothing you do can stop times unfolding.* Night falls. And the work of another week leaves me tired. I feel emptied. Sleep comes over me while I'm sitting. I wake to thunder claps in the darkened sky of a waning moon. Brilliant flashes of lightening illuminate my bedroom. Light dances briefly on the walls, then disappears, then dances again, in a rhythm declared by nature that I am not privy to anticipate. I follow along in a silence I have learned to invite. Rain washes the outer walls and roof of my home. It washes in surges. I ride the storm, its unfolding, its multiple declarative crescendos, its seeming retreat, then insistent return, and finally, its waning. In moments I am afraid. Others I am awed. Still others I am soothed. At last, the gentler falling of rain ushers me back to a deep sleep.

*You don't ever let go of the thread.* For the first time in my life, I am (in most moments) not holding on. Moments flash an interesting image in my mind's eye: my mouth and eyes fully open, head dropped all the way back, chest expansive, shoulders wide, back and legs straight, feet firmly grounded bare on the earth, my body and being a vessel of the *Way* (referring to the Taoist concept), I am receiving and gleaning a brilliant light, nourishment and direction – care – from the Universe. I admit I haven't physically assumed this posture, but the image of it depicts a certain conscious act of opening and receiving sacred meaning. Perhaps the Inner Life Program, through beholding, presence and practice, has awakened or deepened an awareness of this *Way* within. A truer language seems beyond my grasp at the moment. I am rather, sensing through my life more fully lived, through the most essential physicalness of my existence, the interconnectedness, indeed the interdependence, of all of us, all of life, which is the thread of William Stafford's exquisite poem. I am grateful for the thread. I am grateful for yearning and awareness of yearning.

Today I wake to a prayer. It's a wordless prayer to a formless God. I wish I could tell you this prayer. I believe its utterance is whispering the all-at-onceness of the following to all beings across all lands, across tall mountains and deep water-filled gorges, on the backs of tiny insect exoskeletons, beneath and within the soil that feeds all life: *I am not lost. I am peace. I am joy. I am love. I am cared for. I am never alone. I wander the quieter tributaries of a deep truth. This truth belongs to all living beings. Listen.* The prayer, in its wordless essence, insists: *Listen.* I must.

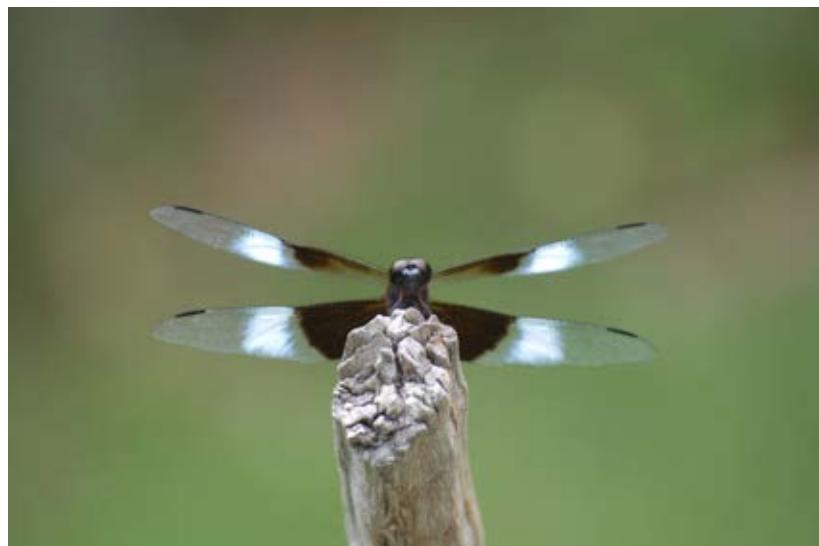
**Renee Eli** humbly sees her lived days as a transformative process of deepening engagement with healing – a process she has come to believe begins with self – body, mind and spirit, but is simultaneously integral with healing in relationship with others, healing of society, and healing of the Natural World. She seeks to experience the interdependence of all beings, and to live the experienced understanding that absent the health of one, the health of other is surely compromised. Over a year and a half, a deepening call to minister to the healing of the Natural World informed her spiritual practice, her relationships and her work. In May, 2012, she leapt: launching a new program that supports transformative change. She returned to school in August, 2012, to pursue a PhD in Transformative Studies from the California Institute of Integral Studies.

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# Finding Joy in a Dying Era

by

Marti Kane



For me, one of the most difficult aspects of being an environmental educator has been, as Thomas Berry puts it, living at the end of the Cenozoic Era. I am acutely aware of the great beauty and irreplaceable biodiversity being destroyed by humans, including myself, and the challenge of mid-wiving the birth of a new era, the Ecozoic. Our Great Work, Thomas says, is "...the task of moving modern industrial civilization from its present devastating influence on the Earth to a more benign mode of presence."<sup>1</sup>

When I was much younger, the challenge of the Great Work was energizing, but as I approached mid-life, I ran out of gas. My grief at watching the Cenozoic pass and the weight of that Great Work felt so heavy; I was often overcome with feelings of helplessness, even depression. In my 30-year career in environmental education, I could see no progress, nothing tangible I had done to advance the Great Work. I saw myself as a lowly servant on the Titanic who had done everything possible to warn the crew of impending disaster. No one had listened; worse yet, some people laughed and told me I was crazy. I peered out of my lonely porthole at the great ocean and contemplated the death and destruction to come.

In *The Great Work*, Thomas Berry reminds us that we did not choose to be born at this time; rather, we were "chosen by some power beyond ourselves." He says, "...we must believe that those powers that assign our role must in the same act bestow upon us the ability to fulfill our assigned role."<sup>2</sup> And so it was, at just the right time, these "powers" pulled me off the Titanic and plopped me down at The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World at Timberlake Earth Sanctuary. Through the Inner Life of the Child in Nature program, I began a healing process and came to see my "assigned role" with greater clarity. I met "Sister Joy" in my beholding practice and that has made all the difference. But I am getting ahead of myself in my story . . .

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Berry, *The Great Work* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Berry, p. 7.

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When I first came to Timberlake Earth Sanctuary, I was impressed, like many others, with the beauty, peace and joy that permeated the place. I wanted to lie down on the ground and absorb every bit of the life-giving energy that radiated from everywhere and everyone. My poor parched soul had found an oasis in the desert. While the Titanic was a pretentious, sterile, steel-hearted beast, Timberlake was wild, green and fertile with a mother's heart.

On my first "solo" I discovered the bamboo forest near the Marsh Bridge. At first I was horrified: oh no, an invasive species perched like a predator inside all this native beauty. But some loving power (a Muse no doubt) urged me to make friends with the bamboo. The bamboo silently welcomed me to sit, be sheltered from the cold breezes and enjoy the stream. While digging in the ground with a stick to find the bamboo's "feet," I unearthed a tiny treefrog with dark stripes along the sides of his face. I held him for a brief moment, then carefully returned him to his hibernaculum and covered him with a blanket of sycamore leaves. What fun to be a treefrog and live in this great bamboo-sequoia, I thought.

On my next solo, I walked the Keyhole Trail and found a magical field of quartz boulders. They looked like dirty snowballs nestled against the beech and oak trees at the edge of Lake MacIntosh. Quartz makes its own electricity when stressed (piezoelectricity) and these boulders surely looked like they had experienced a rough life inside Mother Earth. I could imagine little glowing balls of electricity emanating from these rocks – fairy lights that would dance along the hill and follow the breezes across the lake. Soon the urge to build a fairy house overtook me. Not having time to actually make a house, I placed bits of quartz on a carpet of moss and made a fence with sticks peeled by beavers. Here the fairies could have a picnic or their own little Woodstock. Then I noticed the trash that had floated in from the lake. It seemed to be everywhere. I decided the fairies would be very appreciative if I removed the ugly plastic containers, glass bottles and rusty cans from their beautiful spot. I didn't have a trash bag with me, so I piled the trash in the hollow of an old root ball and promised the fairies I'd be back to collect it next month. (I came early on my next visit to remove the trash.)

On each visit, I wondered what turned on my "imagination switch" as soon as I entered Timberlake. Was it the beauty of the land and the earth energies contained within? Was it the artwork sprinkled around the place that always surprised and delighted? Was it the whimsy of the green man and the raccoon bus stop that made me laugh out loud as I hiked the trails? Was it Sandy's flute playing and the beautiful, wise voices of Carolyn and Peggy? Was it the Chapel and the sense of the sacred it embodied? Was it the authenticity and unwavering acceptance shown by my classmates in the program?

Whatever "it" was, my heart wanted to re-create it for others, in other places. But, I still struggled with overwhelming sadness whenever I looked at environments outside of Timberlake. The death of the natural world seemed always on my mind. During our June retreat, Carolyn suggested that *Nature and the Human Soul* by Bill Plotkin might have some insights for me. (I had already read his earlier book, *Soulcraft*, and loved it.) I borrowed Carolyn's copy and was drawn to chapter 9, "The Artisan in the Wild Orchard." In this section, Bill, a Jungian psychologist and nature guide, tells about his encounter with Death as a "personal and embodied presence" in Grotto Canyon in southern Utah. High on a canyon wall, in a very deserted, out-of-the-way place, was a large alcove that was difficult for even experienced hikers to reach. The alcove seemed creepy and foreboding to those who found it, so it became known as the "Alcove of Death." Bill's objective in entering this alcove was ". . . to look Death in the eye – if he was really there – and make a solemn declaration of my soulwork, and ask him to take my life anytime my commitment should falter."<sup>3</sup> Bill surely was a serious fellow!

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<sup>3</sup> Bill Plotkin, *Nature and the Human Soul* (Novato, CA: New World Library), p. 373.

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When Bill finally climbed up the canyon wall and peered into the depths of the alcove, he saw “. . . a thin, ten-foot-tall humanoid figure in high relief, apparently formed from minerals leaching from water seeps in the soft sandstone.”<sup>4</sup> Heart-pounding, Bill told Death about his soulwork and commitment to it, but Death seemed disinterested. Death said: “You can make whatever promises you want, but they’re of no interest to me until you make a commitment to her.”<sup>5</sup>

Bill looked to the left of Death and noticed a smaller figure on the alcove wall. Death explained: “This is my wife, Joy . . . She is as much a presence in eternity as me . . . You have some awareness of mortality and a beginning relationship with me, but you have little affiliation with Joy. Your soulwork will not progress further until you surrender to her. Don’t come back until you have.”<sup>6</sup>

The way Bill explained what happened to him that day spoke directly to my soul:

*An embrace of joy truly had not been my strong point. I tend to be overly earnest. I had expected Death to help me become even more assiduous, but in fact he directed me toward what I now see was my least developed virtue – the capacity for light-heartedness, playfulness, and simplicity, the capacity to surrender to joy . . . Since that first visit to the Alcove of Death, I have come to think of it as, in truth, the Alcove of Love, a celebration of the alchemy between Death and Joy who, joined, exit as Love.<sup>7</sup>*

So, on the last day of our June retreat, I crossed over the Marsh Bridge and made my own commitment to Joy. I pledged to get to know her better and learn all I could from her. This required only a slight alteration of the beholding practice we had already learned in our Inner Life of the Child in Nature program. I wasn’t sure what to expect from Joy and, to tell you the truth, I was a little afraid of her. Later that evening, I decided I’d feel safer if I went to one of my favorite places in Raleigh, Blue Jay Point Park, to make Joy’s acquaintance. Here’s what I wrote in my journal that day:

*Shyly I approach Joy, waiting for a welcoming glance, some signal, I know not what, that will let me know I can get closer and gaze longer. I feel awkward, like some kind of voyeur. I sit in a beautiful garden by a human-made pond with cascading water. A turtle runs up the sidewalk and kerpllops into the pond. Nearby, a Fowler’s toad talks to himself, “waaah, waah.” I ask the toad if he knows Joy.*

*“Joy is a pond filled with bugs,” says the toad, “and the sound of flowing water. Joy would also be a mate, but so far tonight, I’ve not found one. Waah.”*

*“No, I mean Sister Joy, the spirit.”*

*“Oh,” says the toad. “Joy likes to sit here by the pond and play with dragonflies. Do you hear the calls of the titmouse? Joy’s voice sounds something like that when she is playing.”*

*“So Joy likes to play?”*

*“Yes, she recommends regular play,” says the toad. “She also likes to look into the pond to see her reflection and make funny faces if there is nothing else to laugh about.”*

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<sup>4</sup> Plotkin, p. 374.

<sup>5</sup> Plotkin, p. 374.

<sup>6</sup> Plotkin, p. 374.

<sup>7</sup> Plotkin, pp. 374-375.

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*“This Joy is a strange spirit child.”*

*“Yes,” says the toad, “But we all love her. You will see in due time.”*

The day after the Marsh Bridge Crossing, the universe presented me with an opportunity and tested my resolve. I was offered a job as park manager of the Wilkerson Nature Preserve. I gulped and resigned my position with the Wildlife Commission. I left 25 years of state government behind and began my understudy with Sister Joy in earnest. Joy spoke to me that day, but as a mother rather than as a playful child. “I am proud of you, daughter,” Joy said, “for you have chosen me over Death. You have stepped out in faith and honored me. You will be rewarded.”

As I continued my beholding practices, I began to see that Joy animates all movement in nature, whether making a nest, looking for food, playing or walking or flying about. Whenever I saw movement, I looked for Joy. I found her in the bluebird flying around my yard, a young rabbit rolling in the dirt, a leafhopper springing off my arm, and the hummingbirds at my nectar feeder. Joy is energy in one form or another, I wrote in my journal. Plants move, too, but their movement is slower and more difficult to detect.

One summer night, I sat with Joy shortly after sunset. We listened to the male katydids and pretended we were the female katydids deciding which singer we liked the best and might choose for our mates. Joy liked the passionate, high-pitched fellow in the hickory tree, while I favored the lower-pitched, steady one in the sweetgum. “How boring,” cackled Grandmother Joy. “You’ve got to be willing to take risks.” That night, Joy was a very earthy crone as we giggled together on my front porch in the growing darkness.

When I began to set up the Wilkerson Nature Preserve, I came to know Dr. Annie, who deeded her farm to the City of Raleigh for the preserve. Dr. Annie was an obstetrician who delivered at least 8,000 babies in her 53-year medical career. The more I read of her life and the more I heard stories from friends and family, the more I saw Joy working in this great woman of medicine. Today I feel like a true partner to Dr. Annie and Grandmother Joy as we go about making the preserve a sacred place where people can connect with nature. Whether park visitors are flying a kite, walking a dog, catching bugs or playing in a teepee made of sticks, they experience Joy. “Nature Play” activities have become the heart of what we do at the preserve. Imagination is truly honored here.

I don’t know where this will ultimately take me in my soulwork, but I finally feel at peace with my “assigned role.” The Titanic rests peacefully on the ocean floor and I am skipping joyfully through Dr. Annie’s pastures. I would like to say to all my Inner Life classmates and like-minded friends: Welcome to the Ecozoic! Our soulwork and the Great Work are intertwined. Pay attention to your soulwork and, rest assured, you’ll truly be performing your “assigned role” in the Great Work. I wish all of you much Joy!

**Marti Kane** has a master’s degree in natural resources management and environmental education from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. She has been working in environmental education in North Carolina since 1980. Work assignments included outreach educator for Catawba Science Center, 8th grade science teacher for Alexander County Public Schools, wildlife education specialist for N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, the lead interpretation and education specialist for N.C. Division of Parks and Recreation, and director of the Centennial Campus Center for Wildlife Education. Marti is now having the time of her life as manager of the Annie Louise Wilkerson, MD, Nature Preserve Park for the City of Raleigh Parks and Recreation.

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# Hanging on to the Thread: A Collection of Poems

by

Rinnah Rachel Galper



At the end of our first year with the Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World, we were asked to create and commit to a practice that would deepen our connection to the Sacred. I sincerely doubted I could commit to anything regular in my hectic life, but decided to try spending quiet prayerful time outdoors each day. I would then listen, observe, record, and share the stories which emerged during these times of daily communion with the Earth and all who live in Her. I hoped that telling sacred stories would in some small way engage me more fully in tikkun olam – repairing the world – by awakening me and perhaps others to our oneness.

There were lots of peaks and valleys in my practice – days when I felt plugged in and days when I was just plugged up. I learned that being in relationship, however imperfect, is everything. What I practice is what I have. For the first time in my life, I began to journal on a regular basis. I poured onto paper my conversations, dreams, wisdom teachings from all quarters, wrestlings and questions, joy and gratitude, fear and pain, and my countless journeys on unfamiliar terrain, both internal and external. Two journals later and still writing, I honestly never knew how much I needed to say. I am finding my voice.

Many stories have emerged over the year, and they continue to befriend me and quench my thirst. The stories are like Miriam's well, moving with me wherever I go. They are not the stories I thought I would or should be telling. I don't know why I am surprised, but I am. I was raised to be big, and never saw much value in the small. It certainly never occurred to me that big and small were really the same. What I have learned

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is that needing to be large is really about needing to know and be known. My brand of large feeds off of my perceived and hoped for past and future. I miss a lot this way, particularly the small things. Much of my life so far has been spent searching for stories that I could hold onto and be sustained by. Now they are arriving at my spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical doorstep, perhaps because I have learned that my story is in every story and every story is in mine. I am also slowly letting go of my expectations and judgments, leaving more room for closer encounters with the Divine. A mentor of mine told me recently that I must learn to listen to others as if I were sitting at the feet of my master drinking in his or her last words. I am learning that this attentiveness does not extend only to humans. My circle of masters is widening the more I see the Divine in everything.

The stories I have and continue to receive are gifts, and I treasure and share them often. They can be healing and defining in deep and powerful ways. I also find them confining. Some of the stories I tell have a shelf life. Some can be dusted off; others need to be let go when they've outlived their usefulness. I am beginning to suspect that the spaces in between stories, the spaces in which I can just be in relationship rather than in translation, may be the greater story.

What follows are some of my stories in poetic form. I do not consider myself a poet, but I found myself unable or unwilling to write in complete sentences. It seems dishonest or arrogant somehow. After all, nothing is finished. These story poems are my small way of reminding us and myself of our shared story, ancient and new, and beyond all separateness.

### **Turtle Yoga**

On one of my Saturday walks  
I notice a turtle soaking up the sun  
head and neck stretched out.  
I need to stretch too  
so I get down on all fours  
for my first turtle yoga session.  
We look at each other  
out of the corners of our eyes  
to make sure  
I have the pose correct.  
After a few minutes  
she takes a plunge into the river  
and suddenly  
I see a baby behind her  
head and neck stretched out.  
I sit as still as I can  
so as not to disturb,  
unable to suppress my delight.  
Obviously this was a group session.  
Moments later  
my teaching turtle reemerges and moves a bit closer to me  
for a good long look.  
We stare.  
Yes, I say.  
I will keep coming to class.  
Satisfied  
she swims away.

## Teshuvah

At our last gathering,  
we passed around a ball of yarn  
to create a circle.  
We closed our eyes  
and held onto our portion  
as we listened to a poem  
about holding on to the thread  
of the Sacred.  
Just when I feel I am losing the thread,  
I am given a thread.  
Funny how the universe gives me exactly what I need.  
Since that day I have been wrapping  
this soft hand woven reminder  
several times around my wrist  
before I venture out into the world.  
Sometimes people ask me why I wear it  
and I tell them the story.  
I have other threads I hold or just keep close,  
wear and dream with—  
threads of my ancestors and vaguely remembered stories,  
threads of Hebrew priestesses,  
threads braided with time and holy intentions,  
threads of Spirit, tradition, miracles and thankfulness,  
threads gifted after dancing and praying with children  
our ears to the ground to hear the heart of the Mother.  
You would think that with all these threads  
it would be easy to remember that I am connected.  
Not so.  
There are times I weave and am woven,  
times I unravel and am unraveled.  
I have learned that life is like this sometimes.  
Life, death, and rebirth weave and unravel  
to rhythms  
infused with memory and forgetting  
sound, silence, and scent  
taste, texture and time  
season and shadow  
joy and grief.  
Living in these rhythms  
I learn the art and practice of Teshuvah—  
turning and returning to my Source  
again and again and again.  
What I practice is what I have.  
And there are delicious days,  
so much more frequent now,  
when teshuvah reminds me  
I never left.

## Washing Ruth

A couple of weeks ago  
I am asked to help with a tahara –  
a ritual cleansing and preparing of the dead.  
Ruth was a wife and mother,  
college graduate,  
career woman,  
and probably so many other things the obituary left out.  
Now she is laying before me  
Cold, frail, and peaceful.  
She is a stranger  
And yet I've known her forever.  
Today it is me caring for her.  
One day, I will be on the table.  
I feel this very deeply  
and am humbled.

We ask for forgiveness  
Before we begin  
to wash and dress her.  
With great tenderness  
we comb her hair and wrap her in white  
careful to tie the knots into a Shin (Hebrew letter).  
Finally we lift Ruth into her simple pine box  
humbly fastened without metal or plastic.  
We sprinkle in dirt from the holy land  
and close the lid.  
Feet first we birth her into the next room and say our  
goodbyes.

I am changed forever because I know  
the holy land is here in this place and time.  
In the presence of the Sacred  
I decide to be really present.

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## Cutting the Cord

I attach my thread to an asherah (tree post)  
and weave my way to a sacred spot  
by the still water.  
I think it is my spot  
but it turns out to be better suited  
to my deceased father –  
may he rest in peace.  
My sacred spot is in a grove of pines  
dripping with sap  
guarding a nest of boulders.  
I lay down and melt into them,  
caressed by gentle breezes,  
and am drawn into the mandala of moving clouds above.  
When the time comes to weave my way  
back to the asherah with my thread,  
I find myself stuck in the brambles  
with stickers in my hair  
hopelessly trying to untangle  
my thread from everyone else's.  
We are all working hard to help each other  
but time is running out  
and panic is flooding in.  
Suddenly I step back and begin to laugh –  
the full belly kind.  
I start to break my thread and pull it loose.  
I am exhilarated by the severing  
and weave my now broken threads,  
born of the one,  
around my 12 notes of love and blessings from my sisters.  
Back at the asherah  
in the place of beginning and ending  
I am told our threads will be burned in a sacred fire.  
Not wanting to burn my blessings,  
I try to extract them  
but quickly realize I will have to cut them out.  
There is no delicate way.  
So I surgically free the blessings –  
Laughing to myself at the irony of it all.

We burn the threads in a blaze of flame and color  
Like the sparks that fly and crackle homeward  
I feel free as I disappear into the night.

## Small things

The children make delicate strands of picked wild flowers  
to decorate  
and maybe even hold up  
both sides of this little bridge  
between path and park –  
created more from imagination than necessity  
I think to myself.  
Someone has left their bouquet  
Held together with a piece of grass  
leaning against the handrail.  
After the children weave their flowers through the bridge  
they make garlands for their hair  
and one very lucky grown-up.  
The children know the mundane is Sacred.  
It is not even a question.

On the way home we pick  
and taste honeysuckle.  
For some it is a shehechianu moment –  
the first time they have tasted such strange and sweet  
nectar.

The children have been snacking on it  
for days now.  
I remind them to say please before picking  
and thank you after eating.  
Later I discover they have shared their sweat treasures  
with the hungry and the curious  
without ever being asked.

Bellies full,  
the children pile in to take a ride  
in a doorless car with rubber tires  
surrounded by sand castles.  
They know it's moving.  
It's we who are standing still.

Others are in a boat,  
Steering with brooms,  
until it tips them over  
(with help from their friends of course)  
to spill them out.  
Seamlessly they glide to the slide  
which they climb up  
and slide down  
head first  
even though they know it's against the rules.  
I remind the children to be safe,  
but secretly I love how they make everything an adventure.  
They revel in small discoveries and treasured moments  
because they know  
the mighty power of the small.  
I learn from them that this is all any of us really have.

## Widening Circles

A dear friend said recently,  
“Rachel, anything you need to know, the Earth will tell  
you.”

I am not used to asking Earth questions  
and really listening for answers.  
But I am changing.  
One day I just take a blanket outside  
and lay belly down.  
Can you let me feel your heartbeat? I asked.  
For a moment I felt her throbbing pulse  
Rising up from the ground  
And into me.  
Question answered.

Another day I went into the woods for hours  
just to be  
and be healed,  
to behold  
and be held  
to listen and speak  
to feel and smell  
to taste and touch  
to look very closely with my imaginary binoculars  
at the wild flowers and trees and stones  
so exquisitely arranged.

Beauty has always been my proof test for God.  
And being in nature has always restored me.

But this day was different.

I went from witness  
to beloved.

Separations disappeared  
and suddenly my circles widened  
to embrace unseen canyons,  
sea and sun,  
stars and galaxies,  
and the dark deep of space.  
Finally I am gently returned back  
to the sounds of the river  
and the cool moist dirt beneath my bare feet.  
I revel in the knowing  
that I can widen my circles anytime.

## Tikkun Olam

Yesterday I heard a woman speak about immeasurable  
love.

She said that separations between victims and offenders  
disappear

when we love deeply with our broken hearts  
and remember that people do violence  
because they have forgotten the Sacred.

She tells us that being present  
with people in times of unimaginable grief  
and saying to them,  
I am here for you –  
This is Sacred.

Today in a meeting we try to imagine  
what peace could look like in Israel-Palestine.

I think to myself –  
we cannot even imagine peace here at home.

Then someone shares that there is a group of Israeli  
women

who go to the checkpoints  
in occupied areas  
to witness and record abuses of Palestinians  
by the Israeli army.

In Durham, there are people who cross the color line  
To bear witness and  
hold vigils with the families of murdered Black men and  
women –

One sacred being dies every 11 or 12 days.

Today I gathered the children  
after they carelessly broke the limb of a sapling  
and tore leaves off a bush.

I tell them, this is like breaking a friend’s arm  
and pulling her hair out.

We do violence because we have lost the thread  
of the Sacred.

We have forgotten we are connected.

Repairing the world is often done  
in small, tender and courageous ways.

It begins with witnessing.

Witnessing turns to beholding,  
reminding us what is true.

Knowing truth helps us speak it.

Speaking truth gives it a home.

What we practice is all we have.

What we have is what we must share –

Shalom

**Rinnah Rachel Galper** is an ordained Maggid (Jewish storyteller and spiritual guide), educator, artist and writer, healer, mikveh guide and hospice companion. She is a founding member of Yavneh and is active in various interfaith, social justice, and healing initiatives throughout the Triangle (North Carolina) and across the country. Rinnah Rachel has a Masters in Education and an Associate Degree in the Arts. She is currently pursuing ordination in Kohenet: The Hebrew Priestess Training Institute and is a passionate advocate for earth-based spiritual practice and sustainable living. Rinnah Rachel is dedicated to helping all people, including herself, reconnect with the Sacred.

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Margaret Berry for funding the Thomas Berry Tribute  
Sam & Anne Hummel for their Capacity Building Gift to the Center



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## About The Center

We live in an historic time of deep disconnect from the earth, our home. The natural world has become polluted and the human diminished. Reduced to a mere physical entity seen only through physical eyes, we “see” the earth and one another as a “collection of objects, not as a communion of subjects,” as cultural historian Thomas Berry warns us. And yet, something within us tells us it is also a time of great transformation - a moment of grace if only we can learn to discern the signs.

In the Fall of 2000, a non-profit center was initiated at Timberlake Earth Sanctuary in the foothills of North Carolina that gave evidence of that transformation and hope for the future. From the beginning, the Center created programs through which children participated in a real, living communion with plants and animals and all living things of the earth. These moments of communion were not stories of disconnection from the earth. They were moments of deep bonds of intimacy that exist between children and plants and animals and trees, moments of connection to all living things.

As we created these programs for children, we asked ourselves, “What is this mysterious bond of intimacy that is almost palpable between children and the earth?” And, “How can it be understood in such a way as to offer approaches to educating children that allow them to affirm the feeling that humanity and the natural world are indivisibly one?”

The Center began to explore the implications of this view of the universe as an interdependent whole for the education of children. On the one hand, we were witnessing an increasing estrangement from the natural world in the lives of both teachers and children. On the other hand, we were encouraged by the ways in which teachers and children responded to our programs designed to affirm the interior binding force of the universe that holds all, human and non-human, in a deep bond of intimacy.

In the Fall of 2003, the name of the non-profit was changed to “The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World” to better reflect the focus of our work. We gathered together leading thinkers as adjunct faculty to help develop this new approach to education.

We consistently sought to deepen our consciousness of the earth and our relationship to it, inspired and encouraged at all junctures by the presence of Greensboro native Thomas Berry who was known both nationally and internationally as a cosmologist, eco-theologian, geologist and who we knew at the Center as a dear and personal friend. His books *The Dream of the Earth*, *The Universe Story* (co-authored with Brian Swimme), *The Great Work*, *Evening Thoughts*, and *The Sacred Universe*, affirm both an ancient and a new understanding that human beings and nature are one . . . that we are all part of the one story of the universe itself. Thomas Berry urged us to enter into a truly human intimacy with the earth, and it is to this new mode of human presence to the earth that our programs point.

For a full description of the Center’s programs for adults and children, please go  
to our website at [www.beholdnature.org](http://www.beholdnature.org)

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*There is a different way of knowing. The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World is about this other mode of consciousness. What you are doing at the Center is fundamental and deeply important at this time in history. The children of the twenty-first century will determine the fate of this planet. The twentieth century was a century of death and destruction. The twenty-first must be a century of life. The Center is giving children integral experiences, validating experiences to give immediacy to the natural world in the course of their own human development as an emerging consciousness in our time.*

~ Thomas Berry



The Center for Education, Imagination and the Natural World is a leading advocate and model of a view of educational practice in which intuitive, imaginal and contemplative ways of knowing, in all their unifying capacities, are seen as central to the development of a mutually enhancing relationship between the human being and the natural world. Such a view, if practiced at all levels of learning, can begin to change our understanding of the role we play within this life-bearing process we know as “nature.”

Through its programs for educators and children, the Center is a national resource ~ a remarkable gestating environment ~ for reflection and practice that is leading to practical outcomes affecting the child, the natural world, and the culture at large.



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