

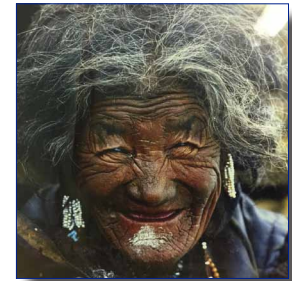


# Center Community News

Newsletter of the Center for Sacred Sciences

## Special Newsletter Edition(s)

**Note from the Editor** – Sometimes when it rains it pours; and sometimes the water’s salty, not sweet; and sometimes the gift of impermanence manifests in such a way that, try as we might, we just can’t evade it. It seems to me that these have been some of those times... brought home to me most strongly during Jan Staff’s Celebration of Life. And, based on numerous conversations, it appears I’m not the only one observing death all about us. So, among the many offerings from our sangha, this newsletter edition (and the next) will be devoted to the topics of death & dying, impermanence, grieving & acceptance of what... just is. I hope you find value in this dedicated format, and welcome all comments and contributions.



~ *Mark Hurwit*

## 2015 Spring Retreat Relinquishing Conditioning



This past April, Fred led a stalwart group of seekers — long-time CSS practitioners and Foundation Studies students — through a gradual but progressive path to freedom... not via acquiring but, rather, letting go.

Smattered throughout this edition are expressions (Spiritual Charity) of what people received. I hope you enjoy and are “enlightened” by what you find.

**3rd row:** *Dave Bove, Raymond Blalock, Sharry Lachman, Jay McCandless, Sandy Itzkowitz, Amos Burr*

**2nd row:** *Mark Hurwit, Betty Vail, Laura Betty, Lorraine Boose, Marijke McCandless, Karen Svenson, Dagmar Maston, Michael Eldridge*

**Front row:** *Eleanor Parsons, Shirley Chase, Fred Chambers, Sally Snyder, Matt Sieradski*

Photograph by Mark Hurwit / Tripod by Jim Zajac

## Excerpts from **Through Death’s Gate: A Guide to Selfless Dying**

by Joel Morwood

**Facing Death**— In reality, there is no death because there is no individual ‘self’ or ‘I’ who could die. In reality, there is only that Primordial Consciousness or God which, though appearing in myriad forms, is Itself empty of all forms and therefore without birth or death. This Consciousness is who I am. This Consciousness is also who you are. Thus, whether you Realize it or not, your sense of being a separate self is a delusion, and ultimately, so is the death of that ‘self.’ Until this Realization is attained, however, the delusion of self, and therefore of death, will persist. Indeed, within the world of delusion, nothing is more certain than death. Everyone who is born is, by virtue of that very fact, doomed to die.

— *continued on page 2*

— *Through Death's Gate, continued from page 1*

Although we all know this to be true, rarely do we know the actual date on which our death is to take place. This ignorance allows most of us to live out our lives under a comforting but dangerous secondary delusion, namely that death will not come to us any time soon; that it is something which will happen only in some distant future; and that, consequently, there is nothing we need do to prepare for it now. Thus, when the legendary Hindu king, Yudhishtira, was asked, "What is the greatest wonder in the world?" he replied: "All around us people die every day and yet no one believes it will happen to them."

To be suddenly deprived of the comfort this delusion once offered no doubt seems like a devastating thing. But for those who are willing to learn from it, having to face one's own death can also be a blessing in disguise. This, as you may recall, was just what happened to Prince Siddhartha, the future Buddha. As a young man growing up in his father's palace, surrounded by worldly delights, Siddhartha was utterly oblivious to the existence of such things as disease, old age, and death. Then, one day while venturing beyond the palace walls he encountered a sick person, an elderly person, and a corpse. Realizing that this was the fate of all sentient beings, and that he, too, would someday die, the anguished Prince exclaimed,

*O worldly men! How fatal is your delusion! Inevitably your body  
will crumble to dust, yet carelessly, unheedingly, you live on.*

Now, the Buddha was a human being no different from you. Like you, he was born into delusion, and like you he suffered from the same anxieties and fears which delusion generates. If anything, as an over-protected child, his suffering was even greater than most people's. The only difference between the Buddha and everyone else was his willingness to accept the reality of his own impermanence. It was this simple but profound insight that transformed him from being a person concerned only with worldly happiness into a fully committed spiritual seeker intent on finding that Happiness which is beyond time and change, the only Real Happiness there is. Thus for the Buddha, coming to grips with his own mortality, although emotionally devastating, turned out to be a great blessing indeed. And it can be for you, as well.

The important thing is not to look away from death but, like the Buddha, face it squarely and take courage. Remember that death is not something that is going to happen to you alone. Think of the vast ocean of beings who have been washed up on this life's shore before you, like so many bubbles of foam, only to be dissolved back again into the deep by death's inexorable tide. Whether insect or reptile, fish or fowl, animal or human, whether strong or weak, rich or poor, ruler or servant, sinner or saint, wise one or fool, not one of us in the whole chain of being, stretching back to the beginning of time, has escaped this sea's relentless rhythm. Birth and death, creation and destruction, form and formlessness are all equally indispensable to that Ecstatic Cosmic Dance in which Consciousness constantly Realizes Itself in all Its Infinite possibilities.

But, although none of us can choose not to die, we can choose how to die. The real question, then, is: When the Angel of Death knocks at your door, how will you greet him? Are you going to receive him as a venerable teacher, or resist him as you would a thief in the night? Are you going to force Death to drag you off to the gallows like a condemned criminal? Or are you going to take Death's hand willingly, as you would that of a Divine Lover who beckons you to one last dance before your present life is over and a new one dawns?

Those who choose the latter course will, in fact, find that death has a second great blessing to confer. Not only does it awaken us to the futility of all worldly pursuits, but, as Christian mystic Simone Weil wrote:

*[Death] is the instant when, for an infinitesimal fraction of time,  
pure truth, naked, certain, and eternal enters the soul. I may say  
that I have never desired any other good for myself.*

Indeed, if you think about it you will see that, as a spiritual practitioner, you have actually been trying to 'die' all along. For it is only by dying to your separate self that you can discover the Truth which, as Jesus said, *makes us free from all suffering and death forever*. And while this spiritual death is not the same as physical death, nevertheless, the passage through Death's Gate will bring you to the very threshold of that other Gate — the Gate of Gnosis — which leads from form to Formlessness, from the finite to the Infinite. Here, stripped naked and standing between two worlds, as it were, you will find that literally nothing bars the way. At this point, it is simply a matter of recognizing this 'nothing' for what it truly is — Pure Consciousness Itself. This is why all spiritual traditions have considered physical death to offer a supreme opportunity for attaining the ultimate "death of deaths" provided, of course, you are properly prepared. ❖

This is an version of Vip's full (better) write-up. The complete text, along with link to three of Matt's dharma talks from the retreat and trip, can be found at [www.centerforsacredsciences.org/index.php/Practice/summitting-the-inner-mountain.html](http://www.centerforsacredsciences.org/index.php/Practice/summitting-the-inner-mountain.html)



**3rd row:** Kathy Duvall, Savitri Burbank, Jack Shipley, Jay McCandless, Susan Stumpf, Michael Rolf, Linda Wylie  
**2nd row:** Lisa Jaeger, Tamara Cohn, Sally Snyder, Matt Sieradski, Hiromi Sieradski, Marijke McCandless, Vip Short  
**Front row:** Robin Retherford, Luke Weiss, Darla Heil, David Mason, Clivonne Corbett

## **The Great Space Retreat – Summiting the Inner Mountain** **Lone Pine (and points north), California: July 13-21, 2015** by Vip Short

### **Phase I**

Twenty of us gathered in Dr. Wolff's living room on Monday July 13 for a retreat entitled, *The Nonduality of Energy and Space*. Five local participants, five other dharma friends from various parts of California, and the remaining ten (Oregon) CSS members. Emphasizing compassion as a reliable gateway to the "vast space of Awareness," Matt shared his Yogi Tea fortune with us: "When there is Love, there is no question!" and encouraged us in our practice of tong-len (sending & taking). The Kleenex boxes circulated as old pieces of practitioners' deluded prison bars started to fall away.

Later, we spent time in Choiceless Awareness while Matt noted that simply looking at perceptions and thoughts, as they arise, is enough to cause their manifestations to self-liberate. All worked dedicatedly to burn through what my Mayan friend calls "unmetabolized grief." The Great Space that we found ourselves abiding in vibrated with immense liberated energy, and the chronic fears for the fate of poor little me began melting away in the vastness of our collective undertaking.

Wednesday evening, we meditated while perched on the lip of the cliff overlooking Lone Pine and the Owens Valley (more than a half-mile below). With Matt's reminder that "The World is Love," we sat silently with bats swooping and coyotes howling in the distance. On the following solo day, fifteen of us hiked up to Dr. Wolff's Ashrama (built up in a nearby mountain portal at about 9,000 feet). After circling up and reciting Dr. Wolff's version of the Boddhisattva vow, we shared an hour of qigong led by Luke. And on Friday, during our usual group sharing of experiences and insights, one of our Eugene sangha shared a huge breakthrough, with unleashed emotions reverberating throughout the reverential Great Space!

— continued on page 4




## Phase II

Months ago, Matt dreamt up the magnificent idea that, following the meditation retreat, a group of us could attempt to summit Mt. Whitney (at 14,500 feet... the highest mountain in the lower 48 states of the US)! And so, over a two-month period prior to the retreat, a half-dozen of us turned out for regular practice climbs... gradually increasing the distance, elevation, and strenuousness.

Whitney is a much sought-after climbing destination, and it was something of a miracle that our group managed to win a lottery for 14 permits. The original plan was to spend the day after the retreat in the White Mountains — the short hike up to 11,000 feet elevation would be good for those of us who lived at only a few hundred feet above sea level. But as we took in the vistas, we saw weather rolling in from the south, and by the time we descended back to the Owens Valley floor there was a huge dust storm and a 36-hour flash flood warning. Our Plan A, Mt. Whitney, dissolved with the arrival of snow, hail, floods, and wild winds. So while a full-scale cyclone (dubbed “Hurricane Dolores”) was hitting Los Angeles, our group hunkered down at Darla’s place in Bishop, working out a suitable Plan B.

The following morning, we caught another lucky break and scored 10 permits for a wilderness area 60 miles north of Whitney, where the weather was less rambunctious. Studded with dozens of 13,000 and 14,000 foot peaks (dubbed the “Western Himalayas”), we were blessed with good weather and miles of beautiful alpine lakes. And our training paid off: everyone kept pace and the mood was joyful. By late afternoon our 10 pilgrims had settled into a dazzlingly beautiful campsite.

The next morning (after a session of qigong and another talk by Matt), we all followed our urge to proceed upwards. But at the Bishop Pass overlook (12,000 feet), the weather exacted its final challenge, and we were pelted with hail and freezing rain. However, crowded there beneath a large boulder (along with a few marmots), we felt at peace. In a period of ten days, we accomplished far more than any of us had imagined. And, while disappointed that we were unable to summit Mt. Whitney, there was yet another moment of insight as I remembered the flustered monk who, caught unintentionally urinating on a statue of the Buddha in the dark night, cried out, “Where is NOT the Buddha?”

Indeed, where is *not* the mountain? Coming home, I suspect we all felt like kissing any part of this Sacred Earth that presented itself. Our real ascent takes place on that Inner Mountain we all traverse throughout our lives... traveling the path, step by small step, taking in the view and savoring the accomplishments. — So, do I recommend a combination of silent meditation, daily qigong, gourmet food and high mountain drama? I most certainly do! 

## Todd Remembers Jan Stafli



My practitioners groups were blessed with the presence of Jan Stafli and his wife Liba over the past couple of years. With a diagnosis of multiple myeloma, he was given the opportunity to look deeply into the prospect of death over a four-year span, ultimately bringing its wrath and mystery into every experience; transforming him and transforming those who loved him. This knowledge of impending death, when seen deeply, holds the key to Recognition itself. In the words of Zen Master Hakuin:

*Among all the teaching and instructions, the word death has the most unpleasant and disgusting connotations. Yet if you once suddenly penetrate this “death” koan, you will find that there is no more felicitous teaching than this instruction that serves as the key to the realm in which birth and death are transcended, where the place in which you stand is the Diamond indestructible, and where you have become a divine immortal, unaging and undying.*

This precious nonconceptual knowledge is available to all of us since death can occur at any time. But out of fear and because our minds are skilled at hiding away the reality that we are on our deathbed right now, we may easily believe we are aware of our impending death when, in fact, such belief serves mostly as a veil to it. So, when repeatedly faced with an abiding, absolute certainty about death, “penetration of the death koan” is at hand.

I was recently asked to share my limited experience of being with Jan during his final days, but most of what I would love to share escapes both words and thought. Nevertheless, I will describe some observations.

A couple of weeks before his Celebration of Life event, I visited Jan and Liba in their home, at which time Jan read a few passages from a book he had come to love. This book, he told me, had become foundational to the way he was living his life; offering him solace in the process of the illness. The book, *To Bless the Space Between Us*, by John O’Donohue (available in the CSS library), offers a collection of lyrical blessings and wisdom/heart advice for a wide range of life experiences. In the introduction of this book, O’Donohue conveys the spirit of his overall message with these words:

*There is a quiet light that shines in every heart. It draws no attention to itself, though it is always secretly there. It is what illuminates our minds to see beauty, our desire to seek possibility, and our hearts to love life.*

And indeed, Jan’s gentle presence in those final days seemed to more and more naturally imbue him with these qualities of discerning and loving appreciation. As we were parting that day, he enthusiastically expressed the wish to share and celebrate life in a “formal” gathering with the CSS sangha, and in less than two weeks, on April 21st, despite a rapidly deteriorating condition, and before a packed house with Joel hosting, he succeeded in sharing his joyful heart in a truly beautiful Celebration of Life.



On the day before his passing (a few days after this Celebration of Life event), I was blessed to be able to spend some time with Jan in his bedroom for several hours as he sat up in his recliner. During that time, there was a palpable underlying peace in the room. He was drowsy, yet arousable, with signs of occasional discomfort, yet with what seemed a total absence of struggle or restlessness. When the paramedics arrived to carry him downstairs to the hospital bed, within that calm, he suddenly opened his eyes, smiled and introduced himself to them. In that moment, Beauty filled the room. And of course, words do little to convey this. ♦



Below are web links to the two O'Donohue's verses that Jan read to me. If you were present for his Celebration of Life event, you may recognize this second one, which was read aloud by Liba.

**For Death  
For a Friend, On the Arrival of Illness**

<https://kingdomstrider.wordpress.com/2012/04/23/for-death>

<http://www.monkeyswithwings.com/cfsodonohue.html>

## **Aikido on the Path**

by Mark Hurwit

Inspired at Cloud Mountain Retreat Center – April 24, 2012

*Hakama unfurling in  
centrifugal force  
giving way to intent*

*or worse yet, flung  
by magnets*

*we do  
we do, even  
when we don't*

*like the ocean approaching  
the shore, and receding  
the timing of each moment...  
perfection  
no waves crashing here  
only lovely driftwood*

*Swirling  
hand to wrist  
blade to mind  
shoulder to the unseen,  
we are glued together with  
a force we hardly suspect*

♦

*There is only harmony...  
even before the smile  
or grimace*

*But wait... back up.  
there is also  
the tide's embrace  
and further yet  
the seasons'  
and further...*

*"Perfectly Messy"  
some called this practice...  
alright, perhaps a bit  
of litter among the driftwood*

*Like moths gliding  
or in chaotic flutter  
each is drawn  
to that light  
naturally  
in their time*

♦

*We so want  
to choreograph our own  
dance, not skim  
like iron shavings  
across a vibrating table*

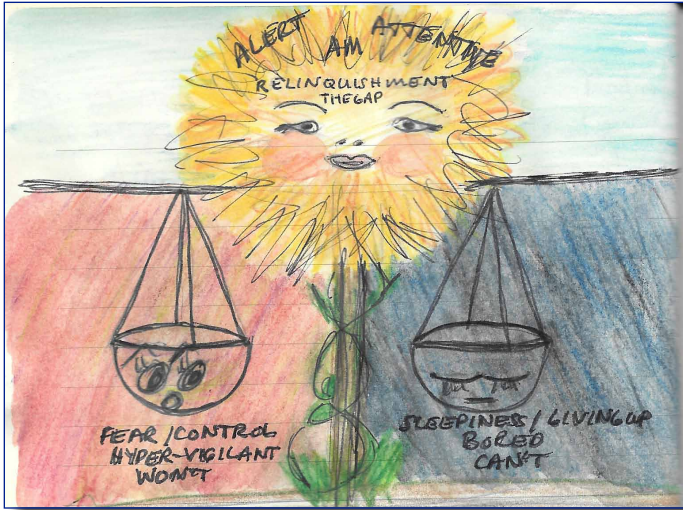
*It's still okay... perfect  
onegashemasu  
ready or not  
here I come*

*A Great Centripetal Force!  
Who knew?*

*Approach  
approach, recede  
blend blend*

*Blending with that  
riding it into the end.  
irimi... enter!  
You can feel the intent  
but whose is it?*

# Spring Retreat Offerings



## **Pivot Point** by Marijke McCandless

(drawing from my spiritual journal)

During morning meditation, I was working on noticing subtle excitation or subtle laxity, then applying the antidote. I focused attention on the breath in the belly, then refined that focal point further to a particular spot in the belly. I was following my breath as if it was the breath of another and allowing attention to remain on that one spot, which I noticed came into focus for shorter intervals, leaving a gap sooner and longer. In that gap, I noticed that the mind suddenly panicked a little and wanted to control the breath — fear came up with the thought “can’t breathe.” I remembered Fred’s guidance to relax more, to loosen that subtle excitation/thought. I relaxed the body and immediately noticed a desire to lie down and sleep; that spot in the belly breath was acting like a pivot point between subtle excitation/fear/control and subtle laxity/sleeplessness of consciousness/giving up.

Later I reflected further that there is a tendency, when thoughts are noticed, to put more effort into meditation — to sit straighter and admonish myself to “focus better,” but really what is needed is to *relax* effort.

Mind is not comfortable in the gap so it either leans to fear and worry or to going to sleep. Mind is either distracted/asleep or judging/controlling.

So what *is* comfortable in the gap? Presence. Beingness. Joy. Stillness. Transparency. Relinquishment. Attention. Alertness. ♦

## **Silent Retreat** by Karen Svenson

*Racing, jumping mind  
Learned concentrated practice  
Stillness, clarity*

---

## **Ripples** by Laura Betty

*The teachings  
like a jewel in the pond  
serenely rippling in the sunshine*

---

## **Anonymous**

*Everything in the universe is subject to change,  
and everything is on schedule!*

---

## **Noticing** by Shirley Chase

*I hope it’s like this tomorrow – grasping*

*Yesterday’s coffee – pushing away*

*Enjoying the naked experience  
of the river – priceless*

*Five more minutes – grasping*

*It’s dark in there – pushing away*

*The breeze on my face – a miracle.*

---

*Spring Retreat offerings — continued on page 10*

## **What Is...** by Erich Fried

*It is madness – says reason*

*It is unhappiness – says caution*

*It is nothing but pain – says fear*

*It has no future – says insecurity*

*It is ridiculous – says pride*

*It is foolish – says doubt*

*It is impossible – says experience*

*It is what is... says love.*

## — Sita de Leeuw & George Clement Heaton — **In Memorium** by Mora Fields

This year, Sita and George — devoted partners for 35 years — passed on from this life within weeks of each other: Sita on May 18, at the age of 86, from complications of acute myeloid leukemia and a broken shoulder; and George on July 10, at the age of 89, of natural causes following pneumonia. Both left peacefully and surrounded by family in the San Francisco Bay Area.

**Sita** was a dear friend and guiding light for me for over 30 years. We met while studying massage in Palo Alto, CA, and she shared many aspects of her life with me: her family's escape from Nazi Germany when she was 12, and their journey to England and later to the United States; how she met and married Karel de Leeuw, a mathematician at the University of Chicago, in 1951; their family life, travels, and move to California, where Karel accepted a position at Stanford University. They built a house on the Stanford campus, where Sita lived for the rest of her life.

The de Leeuws had three children and enjoyed many years of teaching, raising their family, traveling, and academic assignments at other universities around the world. Sita loved working with children, teaching at a Montessori school in East Palo Alto where she soon became director.

They later became students of Swami Muktananda and, at his ashram, were given the names "Sita" and "Ram." Sita loved the chants and often swayed and danced to bajans. Her love of music and dance never left her. Tragedy struck, however, in August of 1978, when Karel was murdered at his office by a deranged graduate student in the mathematics program, while Sita was away on retreat at the Esalen Institute in Big Sur. Sita spoke about this time to me, communicating how entirely her world had been shaken, and the huge grief her family shared.

Fifteen years later I accompanied her back to Esalen, her first trip there since that time. We walked the small path she had been walking when someone came to find her with the news. She relived the drive back to Stanford, with a woman who later became a lifelong friend, and I saw that going back to Esalen was an important rite of passage for her.

Sita was nothing if not forgiving; she forgave the people who caused her to lose her school, and she forgave her husband's murderer, whom she later visited in prison and presented with a spiritual book. She had an amazingly charitable outlook on the world, able to see that people do the best they can with the tools they have. In this way she was a wonderful model for me. I was often on the receiving end of her forgiveness, or perhaps she never blamed me for my transgressions in the first place.

Sita was also known among her friends as an intuitive (perhaps psychic) networker. She was uncannily able to hand many people exactly the right book, recording or piece of information at exactly the right time, even if she had no knowledge of it herself. It was Sita who handed me *Naked Through the Gate*, Joel's first book, when I was looking for I-knew-not-what back in the '80s. Sita dragged me off to hear Steven Levine speak, as well as Ram Das, Ramesh Balsekar, Gangaji, and many others. At the time, I had no clue who any of them were. She also introduced me to the person who has become my dearest friend.

Sita and George met in 1979, and together explored many spiritual teachings. Both attended several CSS retreats (many years ago), and hosted Joel many times in their home to give weekend talks. Sita was a great cook and a generous hostess, remaining in the background but always seeing to everyone's comfort.

Sita also hosted satsangs by many other teachers in her home, and for a time provided a space for Adyashanti to give dokusan. She attended Adya's satsangs for many years and volunteered in his organization. Adya came to visit her a week before her death.

Sita was devoted to her children and grandchildren, as well as George's, and was always willing to do what she could to help out. She had dear friends from all walks of life... from her spiritual sanghas, massage clients, the Quaker community, and her time serving meals to the homeless. She often provided lost souls with a place to stay, and hosted many of Adyashanti's out-of-town visitors.

— continued on page 9



— *In Memoriam, continued from page 8*

Sita wrote her memoir, self-publishing it as a book called *The Mystery of My Life*, which is available in the CSS library. I miss her deeply and am so grateful to have known her. I felt she always had my best interest at heart, and I'm sure many others felt the same.

**George** was also a dear friend. I used to love sitting around the living room discussing spiritual ideas with him. He gave me my first book by a spiritual teacher, *I Am That* by Nisargadatta Maharaj. He was a student of Franklin Merrell-Wolff for many years, and visited him over the years at the Great Space Center near Lone Pine, CA. Dr. Wolff visited their house shortly before his death in 1985, and it was through George's connection with Dr. Wolff that they met Joel. George, with Sita, also studied the Diamond Approach for 5 years at A.H. Almaas' Ridhwan School in Berkeley, CA.

George was born in England and educated at Oxford University. Before that he attended English boarding schools, which he always maintained were as draconian as portrayed in films; in fact, he felt he never fully recovered from those painful experiences. He also never lost his charming English accent.

George spent much of his career employed as a mechanical engineer, initially in the aerospace industry and later for private industry and academic research laboratories. In his later years, he loved being a general handyman who could fix anything.

An artist at heart, George created whimsical sketches along with more serious drawings, made glass ceramic art (for which he developed a patented process), and played around with video. He made the first several CSS videos of Joel for the Center, some of which are still in the library. Known for his keen intellect and dry wit, he was a spiritual seeker interested in all things metaphysical, and was a faithful member for three decades of the Friends of Palo Alto Quaker community. He leaves three grown children and two grandchildren. ✧

---

## Poem to Sita

(penned by Mora and received appreciatively a couple of months before her death)

*My friend I want to tell you  
my full gladness  
for this dance along the pathless path;  
crisscrossing each other's tracks,  
or side by side,  
stopping and starting.*

*My friend I want to tell you  
my full gratitude —  
how when I came to the fork in the road,  
taking stock and needing a way forward,  
there you were, a gentle guide,  
even tho it was never you,  
or me.*

*My friend I want to tell you  
my full love,  
for you, and for what unites us;  
me looking from your reflection  
and you from mine.*

*All of this, and still,  
the miracle it is  
to be loved by you*

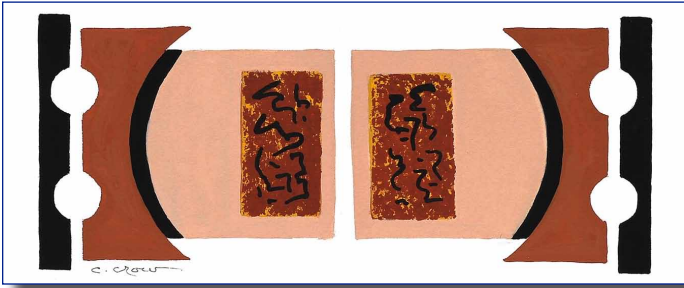
---

## Inspired Artwork by CARLA CROW

### Gates

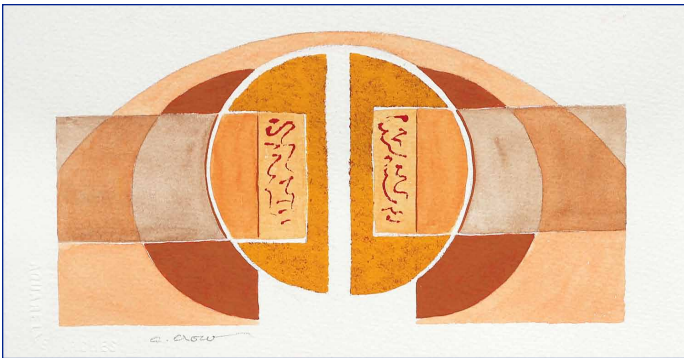
I served as my mom's caregiver for the last three years of her life. Her passing deeply changed the content of my work. I was deep in the study of meditation, practitioners groups and retreats as I passed through the grieving and reorientation process. That year I made 64 paintings, which illustrated my journey. I offer seven to you here.

#### Inspired by Joel's book, *Through Death's Gate* Gate of Emptiness



*In passing through its Gate,  
our minds are finally made "empty."*

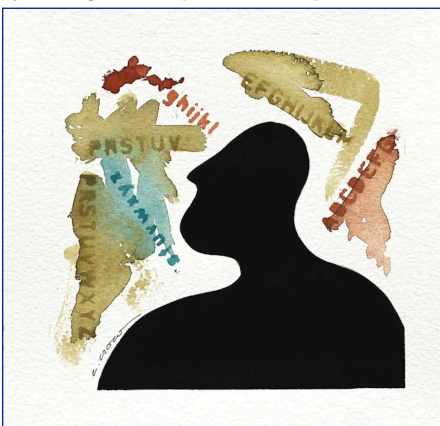
#### Gate of Gnosis



*"...which leads from form to Formlessness,  
from the finite to the Infinite."*

### Thoughts Dissolving

*When you no longer perpetuate the movement  
of thoughts, they dissolve by themselves without*



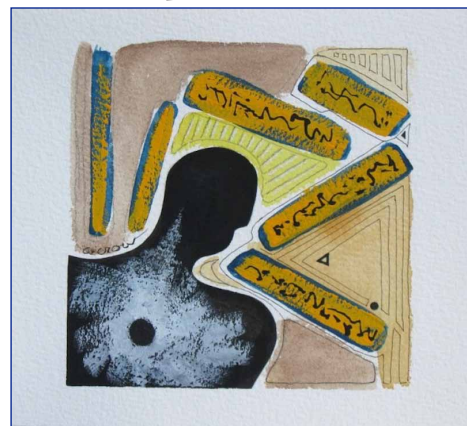
*leaving any trace.  
When you no longer  
spoil the state of  
stillness with mental  
fabrications, you  
can maintain the  
natural serenity of  
mind without any  
effort.*

—Dilgo  
Khyentse

### Prayer Writing

#### Prayer in the Heart

*With upright body, head and neck, Lead the  
mind and its powers into the heart; and the OM*



*of Brahman will  
then be thy boat  
with which to  
cross the rivers  
of fear.*

—The  
Upanishads

*Carla's Artwork  
continued on  
page 12*

Spring Retreat Offerings — *continued from page 7*

### INSIGHTS by Jay McCandless

#### On Abandon

A few months ago, during our weekly phone conference with a group of Quakers, the story came up about a woman whose car got stuck on the train tracks. Instead of leaving the car, she stayed in it until it was hit by the train, and she died. Someone in the group mentioned that a similar thing happened when she was a child, and that her dad taught her to "abandon it if you have to," so that she'd have something to remember in that moment of panic. I think this applies to many things.

#### Opening

There was no place I'd rather have been than at the Spring Retreat. My life was at peace, and it seemed easy to rest in choiceless awareness. Many times, I saw that the difference between choiceless awareness and my everyday mind was a belief that I had a job to do. On the morning of solo day, as Fred described the practices we were to do, I did them all easily in my mind as he went along. Suddenly I was super-present with intense mental and visual clarity. I just seemed much bigger than my body, and everything in the room seemed funny spatially — like it was too small. Then I had the *thought* that I should relax, which created a contracting. This gave me an insight about effortlessness which has helped everything make sense: when effort ends, there you are! It was bigger than I could've believed! *Grace* seems a good word for my effort-stopping, but really... I just stopped.

I'm feeling on the right glide path, and am already planning to attend both the Summer and Fall retreats. Thanks CSS for everything. I look forward to seeing you all soon.

— Love, Jay

## Board of Directors & Active Staff

[www.centerforsacredsciences.org/index.php/about/staff.htm](http://www.centerforsacredsciences.org/index.php/about/staff.htm)

# Thanks for all that you do!

### Board of Directors

Fred Chambers  
*Activities Director*

Todd Corbett  
*Special Projects Director*

Barbara Dewey  
*Fundraising Director & Secretary*

Jennifer W. Knight  
*Library Director & Treasurer*

Thomas J. McFarlane  
*Publications Director*

Joel Morwood  
*Spiritual Director & President*

Michael Strasburger  
*Facilities Director*

**Spiritual Director**  
*Joel Morwood*

**Spiritual Teachers**  
Fred Chambers  
Todd Corbett  
Thomas J. McFarlane  
Annie O'Shea  
Matt Sieradski

**Distance Studies Course Mentors**  
Fred Chambers  
Todd Corbett  
Thomas J. McFarlane  
Annie O'Shea  
Vip Short

**Library Director**  
Jennifer W. Knight

**Senior Library Assistants**  
Camilla Bayliss  
Shirley Chase  
Barbara Dewey  
Wesley Lachman  
Peggy Prentice  
Sally Snyder  
Jack Yousey

**Library Assistants**  
Mona Bronson  
Mora Fields  
Barbara Goldberg  
Oriana Kahn Hurwit  
Sharry Lachman  
Nancy Miller  
Barbara Perrin

**Library Carpenter**  
Michael Augden

**Audio-Video Engineer**  
Damien Pierce  
Mark Hurwit

**Publications Director**  
Thomas J. McFarlane

**Newsletter Editor**  
Mark Hurwit

**Proofreading**  
Karen Fierman  
Sheila Craven

**Website and Holos Editor**  
Thomas J. McFarlane

**Special Projects Director**  
Todd Corbett

**Sunday Introductions**  
Cathryn Cardellino  
Barbara Dewey  
Mark Hurwit  
Aileen McNamara  
David Mason

**Activities Director**  
Fred Chambers

**Retreat Coordinator**  
Shirley Chase

**Event Coordinator**  
Heather Howard

**Publicity**  
Mora Fields

**Facilities Director**  
Michael Strasburger

**Facilities Engineers**  
Eugene Gibbs  
Michael Augden  
Steve Jonas  
Deanna Cordes

**HVAC Engineer**  
Jack Yousey

**Fundraising Director**  
Barbara Dewey

**Fundraising Assistants**  
Hiromi Sieradski  
Mora Fields

## CSS Online Practitioners Group

by Matt Sieradski

With the help of a score of CSS practitioners, we've completed a 6-month trial run of an online course for those who have finished Distance Studies or Foundations, but are either unable to attend one of our regular practitioners groups or are interested in another option. We studied Anandamayi Ma's *Matri Vani II*. I posted video commentaries to the text on our blog, and then participants would comment or ask questions if they so desired. It was an interesting experiment, but we learned enough to change a few things.

The next online practitioners group, which begins in November, will be limited to 12 people and will involve monthly group video conference classes. Reading will be assigned and each participant will be expected to post a fresh thread and at least one comment on the blog monthly. Contact me if you're interested in more information. The topic for the next course will be announced shortly.

---

## LIBRARY CORNER

Please note the **NEW** Library hours!  
1st & 3rd Sundays: 1-3:30 pm  
Tuesdays: 6-8 pm

---

### Samples of some of our great offerings!

**Life in Relation to Death** (2nd ed.)  
by Chagdud Tulku Rinpoche

An accessible Tibetan Buddhist booklet offering practical instructions for preparing for death, including meditation and prayer practices. He describes the physical/mental dying process, and includes notes on opportunities for enlightenment to the true nature of reality.

---

**Confessions of a Part-time Seeker**  
by J. Walter Dickson

The author writes about the personal, practical experience of solace and wisdom gained during a four-month stay in India. An authentic bumbler who gained moments of gnosis that helped guide him to “a peace that is everyone’s birthright,” he offers a succinct and fascinating book which offers good final advice for fellow seekers.

---

**The Unconsoled**  
by Kazuo Ishiguro

A renowned pianist returns to an unnamed Central European city for the most important performance of his life. Mora describes this as a spiritual book, and “perhaps the best work of fiction I’ve ever read!” It shows in an amazing way how stories, characters, events and all appearances arise and pass. How do they seem to be so real? Ishiguro hands us a model of how this might transpire.

---

**Teachings on Love**  
by Thich Nhat Hahn

In his typically beautiful and simple style, Thich Nhat Hahn offers a collection of teachings and meditations on metta, broken down into easy parts that can be practiced on and off the meditation pillow.

---

### Library Blog

Up-to-date and archived reviews of CSS library books  
<http://centerforsacredscienceslibrary.blogspot.com>

**Friendly Review-writing Instructions**  
and link to the Review Form

<http://centerforsacredsciences.org/index.php/Library/library-review.html>

---

—Carla’s Artwork, continued from page 10

*The Four Principles governing our spiritual practice*  
**Attention / Commitment / Detachment / Surrender**



### Self Dissolving

*Form comes out from Formlessness.  
Then it returns,  
For unto Him we are returning.*

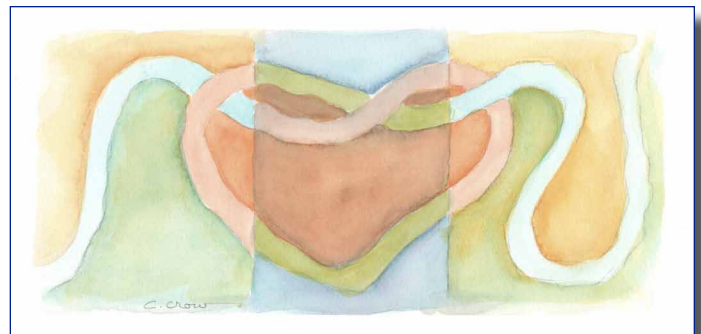
— Rumi



### Unravel the Heart Knot

*The Knot is resistance that gives rise  
To our assumption of separation...  
Our delusion of separation.*

— Matt Sieradski



*Final Spring Retreat offerings on page 14*

# CSS Calendar: September 2015 – January 2016

Please check the website for the most updated schedule information:

<http://centerforsacredsciences.org/calendar.htm>

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Public Talk 11 am–1 pm  Video on 1 <sup>st</sup> Sundays  Library open 1–3:30 pm 1 <sup>st</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> Sundays	Practitioners Group (Matt) 7–8:30 pm	Metta Circle 10–11:30  Practitioners Group (Todd) 3–4:30 pm  Practitioners Group (Fred) 7–8:30 pm  Library open 6:00–8:00 pm	Practitioners Group (Todd) 3–4:30 pm  Foundation Studies (Todd) 7–8:30 pm  Community Nights Sept 30 & Jan 27	Book Club 1 <sup>st</sup> Thursdays 2:30–3:30 pm  Hunyuan Taiji & Chan Si Qigong, with Luke 6:00–8:00 pm, (Alternating with Fridays)	Hunyuan Taiji & Chan Si Qigong, with Luke 6:00–8:00 pm, (Alternating with Thursdays)  If in doubt, please check online calendar.	Full-day Meditation 10 am–4 pm  October 3 (Fred) November 7 (Todd) December 5 (Annie) January 2 (Tom)  Light of Love Celebration December 19, 5 pm

## Schedule Notes

- Library closed Tuesday, September 29 for cleaning party.
- There are no regular practitioner group classes on the weeks of Community nights: September 30 and January 27.
- All CSS activities will be suspended from October 18–27 for the Fall Retreat, November 23–29 for Thanksgiving, and December 21–January 1 for the holidays.
- All classes and meetings to be held at the Saratoga address unless otherwise specified.

## Sunday Videos planned for this calendar period:

### OCTOBER 4 — Halifax and Malidoma: Zen and the Art of African Initiation

This video documents a fascinating conversation between Zen Buddhist teacher and author Joan Halifax and African shaman and diviner Patrice Malidoma, held during a lunch hosted by Bokara Legendre. [dvd- 0105, 34 min]

### NOVEMBER 1 — Rabbi Gershon Winkler: Wheel of the Four Winds

In this video-taped lecture, Rabbi Gershon Winkler gives us a rare glimpse into the rich and profound symbolism of the Kabbalist worldview, which dates back to ancient times. [dvd-0321, 1 hr 15 min; cut off at 45–50 min]

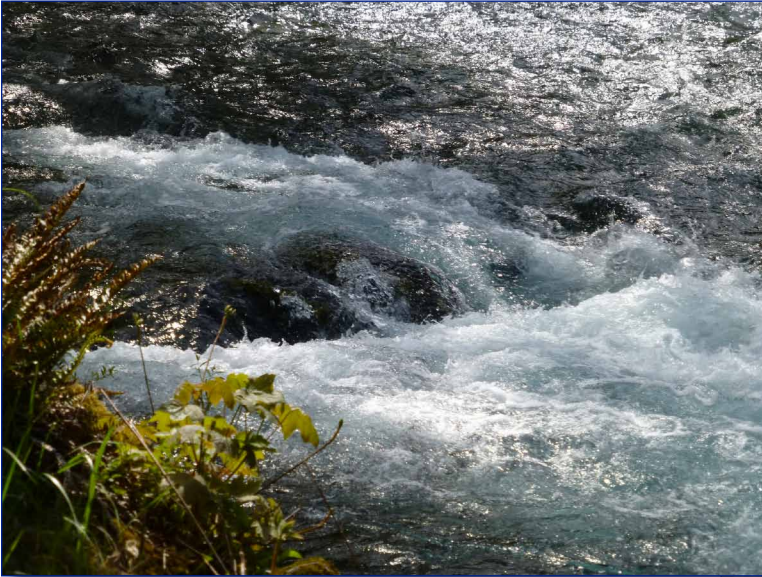
### DECEMBER 6 — Irina Tweedie: Spiritual Training

In this highly personal video interview, the Western-born Sufi teacher Irina Tweedie describes the spiritual highs and lows of her intense training under the direction of an Indian Sufi master. [dvd-0685, 30 min]

### JANUARY 3 — Merton: A Film Biography

A comprehensive documentary about Thomas Merton, the famous 20th century Christian mystic and monk who reached out to bridge the gap between Christianity and other faiths. [dvd-0180, 57 min]

# Internal Spring Retreat Images by Betty Vail



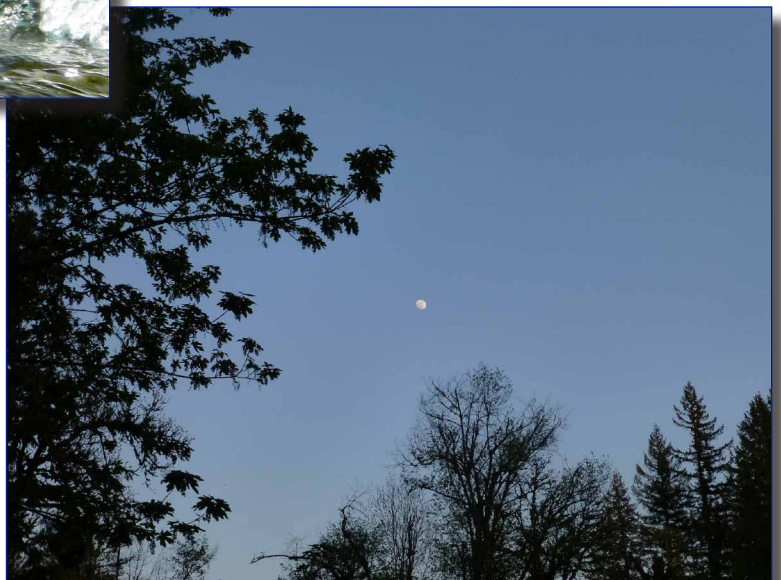
*Gross Excitement*



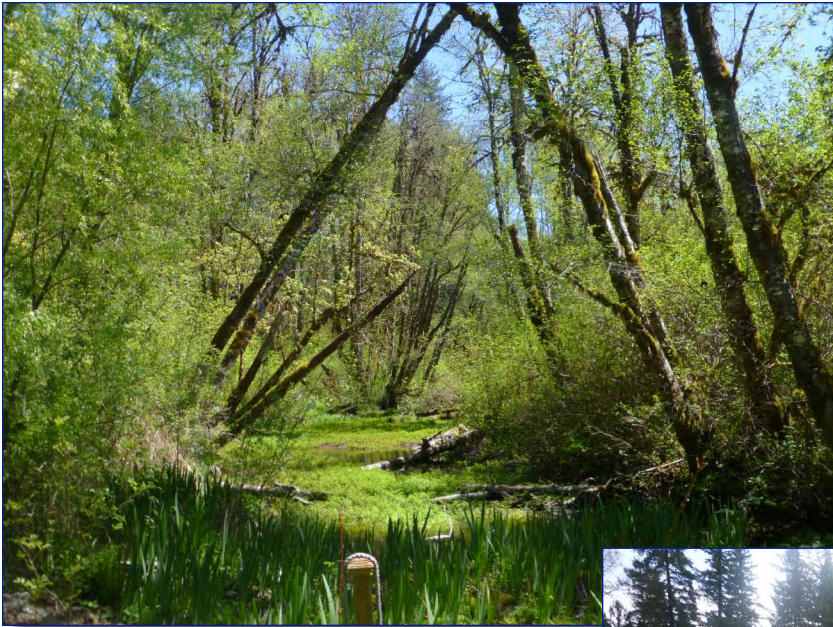
*Subtle Laxity*



*Subtle Excitement*



*Single-Pointed Meditation*



*Calm Abiding*



*Clarity Arising*



*No Thought*



## Our Folken



### CONTACT THE CENTER

Phone #: (541) 345-0102

Website: [www.CenterForSacredSciences.org](http://www.CenterForSacredSciences.org)

Mailing Address: 1430 Willamette St., #164  
Eugene, OR 97401-4049

Meeting Address: 5440 Saratoga St.  
Eugene, OR 97405

### MISSIONS AND PROGRAMS

The CENTER FOR SACRED SCIENCES is dedicated to the study, practice, and dissemination of the spiritual teachings of the mystics, saints, and sages of the major religious traditions. The Center endeavors to present these teachings in forms appropriate to our contemporary scientific culture. The Center also works to create and disseminate a sacred worldview which expresses the compatibility between universal mystical truths and the evidence of modern science.

Among the Center's ongoing events are Sunday public services, with meditations and talks given by the Center's spiritual teachers; monthly Sunday video presentations; and—for committed spiritual seekers—weekly practitioners groups, and monthly and semi-annual meditation retreats.

The Center also maintains an extensive lending library of

books, audios, videos, and periodicals covering spiritual, psychological, philosophical, and scientific subjects. In addition, the Center provides a website containing a great deal of information and resources related to the teachings of the world's mystics, the universality of mystical truth, and the relationship between science and mysticism. The Center publishes this newsletter providing community news, upcoming programs, book reviews, and other contributions and resources related to the Center's mission.

The CENTER FOR SACRED SCIENCES is a non-profit, tax-exempt church based in Eugene, Oregon, USA. We rely chiefly on volunteer labor to support our programs, and on public donations and membership pledges to meet our operating expenses. Our spiritual teachers give their teachings freely as a labor of love, and receive no financial compensation from the Center.

*CENTER COMMUNITY NEWS* is published three times a year. Submissions, comments, and inquiries should be sent to: [newsletter@centerforsacredsciences.org](mailto:newsletter@centerforsacredsciences.org), or mailed to CENTER FOR SACRED SCIENCES, Attn: Newsletter Editor, 1430 Willamette St., #164, Eugene, OR 97401-4049. To update or change your subscription preferences, please visit our website and select the subscription form under the Publications Menu.