

The Threshing Floor

November 2016	Newsletter of the Guild for Psychological Studies	Web site: www.guildsf.org
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Guild Vision: The Guild envisions a world in which the significance of each person's truth, authority, and inspired purpose finds fulfillment in life and community.

Guild Mission: Guild seminars offer a way of psychological and spiritual transformation that inspires individuals to live their purpose, expand consciousness, and discover and create meaning in their lives and community.

Jesus, the Person

by Dean Olson

I have a deep sense of gratitude for what I experienced at Four Springs in the '80s, specifically the Seminars on the Life of Jesus. At that point I was still a Lutheran minister, coming to the events because of my previous involvement in Walter Wink's week-long studies and his encouragement, "If you want to go deeper, attend a Guild event." I did. Several. And he was right.

Since then, I've left parish ministry, then realized I could no longer say I'm a Christian, and throughout this transition realized I was throwing the bath water out but keeping the baby. As Jesus came more into focus, what had been made of him flaked off and fell by the wayside. The Jesus Seminar, out of Santa Rosa, set the image for me: "The church creeds have a big hole in them. They begin with the virgin birth and immediately proceed into his death and glorification. What is left out is the person." I came to realize what was left out is what is central for me.

It's now thirty years later and I mourn what died with the death of the three founders. Yes, I read the follow-up evaluations on why and am aware of Hal Child's assumption that even Jesus did not exist, but fragments of someone unique do and that is what the Four Spring's Seminars helped separate out. Even though the old Seminar focus is outdated and no longer of interest to many, what those Seminars unearthed and lifted up and made ample opportunities for those of us who saw with new eyes and heard with new ears to work and interact with and hold close and carry with us through out those weeks, that material is a treasure trove stumbled upon and still available.

Just as psychology never stands still and has continued to evolve and open up in myriad directions, so, too, has biblical scholarship concerning what is central, the pay dirt, in the Synoptic gospels (the Records). And one main group that has carried this work forward is the home of the Jesus Seminar, the Westar Institute located in Santa Rosa. And if you are wondering whatever has happened to all this earlier work with the Records that Sharman began and the founders and early leaders of the Guild carried on in an expanded form, check out what this evolving group is writing. What was set down by the Guild and overshadowed now by psychology still is there and thriving in other environments. At one time, it had a significant place in the Guild identity. I'm not privy to why Four Springs is now separate from the Guild, but it feels like a divorce, a separation, a parting of ways, between what once was central for the Guild and where it now finds itself.

"To venture causes anxiety, but not to venture is to lose one's self.... And to venture in the highest is precisely to be conscious of one's self." — Søren Kierkegaard

November Birthdays

- | | |
|--------------------|--------|
| Lela Noble | Nov 1 |
| Judith Collins | Nov 3 |
| Irene Scholtens | Nov 7 |
| Sally Blackburn | Nov 11 |
| Shirley Fritchhoff | Nov 11 |
| Marilyn Watson | Nov 14 |
| Helen Saul | Nov 16 |
| Ray Flachmeier | Nov 19 |
| Eleanore Stanton | Nov 21 |
| Louise Miller | Nov 22 |
| Deborah Bowes | Nov 23 |
| Dian Greenwood | Nov 26 |
| Gene Sandretto | Nov 26 |

A Response to Harry Henderson's Invitation

by John Petroni

Harry:

You have initiated a very needed exploration of the nature of Truth as realized in our culture. I accept your invitation. My acceptance, however, comes with two (at least) reservations.

1) You state in your invitation that the focus will be on "allowing the ideas to 'think themselves through us' and the phenomenon under discussion to 'speak about itself.'" My understanding is that "ideas thinking themselves" and the "phenomenon under discussion" speaking for itself is of a very different order from the way we have learned to think about thinking. How do you propose that we learn this different form of thought? How do we learn to practice what Bishop Berkeley describes as "soul always thinks"?

2) You say that the focus "would not be on our individual growth." I accept that: it is not about individual growth. The question then is: what does one do with the impact on the individual as he/she attempts to let the phenomenon speak for itself?

(At this moment I experience this issue urgently. Viewing the movie "Snowden" is deeply disturbing to me. To look at the reality of technology's capability of gathering information and invading the privacy of individuals around the globe is unbearable.)

You state that the "ideas think themselves through us." Apparently I am needed and I am impacted. Facing the current reality of technology and artificial intelligence and economics produces strong reactions in the individual, among them confusion, fear, despair, resistance, anger, helplessness. As I understand Jung and Geigerich, "homo totus," the whole person, needs to be present to this process of thought. How then are these personal reactions to be held by the individual and won't they impact how the group reflects?

Ignoring the individual's personal reactions, if that were possible, would prevent us from being totally present to soul's thinking. Without including awareness of these reactions I fear the group's reflections would take place only in the heavens.

Before signing on the dotted line, I need some clarification on these issues.

Best wishes for you and your project.

"To hear the phrase 'our only hope' always makes one anxious, because it means that if the only hope doesn't work, there is nothing left."

— **Lemony Snicket**, *The Blank Book*

Response to John Petroni

by Harry Henderson

John Petroni's questions probe for greater clarity about the nature and purpose of such a group as I proposed in the last issue of the *Threshing Floor*.

John's first question is "How do you propose that we learn this different form of thought?"

The approach I take is from Wolfgang Giegerich's repeated insistence that psychology ("the soul's," or consciousness's, discourse about itself) is something that is not "natural," but must be *created* through a process, if we really want a phenomenon to be *thought*.

However, if we remain only with the point of view of our ego, or even the point of view of the human being in us, we've lost, before the game has begun. The ego, as it were, hides behind our eyes, shaping and limiting how we see and think. This is where so much thought and analysis about the driving forces of our time end. The effort may be to help us cope better with change, but it is necessarily limited, because it doesn't get to the inner truth, the "logic" of such phenomena as the Internet, modern media, or the battle over privacy.

It follows that, if we want to go deeper, we can't afford to "ignore" the impact of the changes in the world on us as individuals. If we can't bring articulation to our emotions (anxiety! see our summer seminar), we are stuck. On the other hand, simply letting those emotions drive our responses (as to technology) means that the truth (of technology), its inner logic, has no opportunity to display itself. No, the beginning of the work is to create the necessary space by identifying and working out the assumptions we have inherited, and the emotions that are bound up with them. The intent is not to disparage these but to be mindful of them, in the light of what Giegerich calls the "psychological difference" between the ego/human point of view and that of soul.

The goal of the process, which might be compared with the "analysis" (breaking down) of the prime matter in alchemy and its subsequent refinement, is to allow the phenomenon to speak about itself. One might call that the soul point of view, or the point of view of consciousness itself.

The final part of our meeting would be similar to what we often ask on the last day of a seminar: "OK, what might this mean for my life? What kind of stance can I take toward it? How can I carry the tension, the pain, the uncertainty that this means for me as a human being?" As I stated, the process is not *about* our individual growth,

but in this process it is likely we *will* grow--perhaps in our ability to reflect, to use tools of thought, and to live in the future that is already in this moment.

Plants Have a Place. . . Part of my Home

A plant-lover's personal reflection

by *Maris Pravata Helfrich*

Many years ago, I was introduced to an exotic, quirky plant called the Night-Blooming Cereus, when a friend invited me to a "See the Blooms" party for her plant. It was close to midnight when we gathered to see her plant's blooms. Wow! How exquisite, we thought.

Many years later, I was given a cutting of the Cereus plant and had it in a pot out in the yard under a tree where my Christmas cactus plants passed the time, in Lacombe, LA. The ugly, gawky plant slowly grew and put out its cactus type's long green leaves, but over a period of 3--4 years never had any blooms.

When I moved to Texas, a little over 5 years ago, I brought my plants along and, yes, they included the gawky Cereus plants. I placed them surreptitiously here and there under the collection of potted sago palms in the back yard--and, yes, they were kind of forgotten.

As time went by, and all my plants adjusted to the Texas air and climate, much to my surprise, the Cereus started putting out buds--in Houston in the back yard, and in Galveston by the Bay! Just as the plants' care-giver Maris began to adjust and get acclimated to her new home in Texas, these plants seemed to settle in and thrive!

Now, it needs to be noted in this account that the enjoyment of the blooms is anything but ordinary or routine! As an example, the last blooming was in September of this year and the 4--5 plants by the Bay started putting out buds. After a week or two, I observed the maturation of some buds that were nearing the time to bloom. Over the next week or so, the nightly observation routine began! (Because we live a couple of blocks away from the Bay, I would get in the car with my flashlight and camera phone and set off down to the Bay in the dark, a few times at midnight and a few other times at 6 a.m., before dawn.)

These hardy plants proudly showed off their exquisite bursts of white blooms--much to my delight--and they smiled at me as I took their pictures. One night there were 6--8 blooms, the next night only one blossom, the next 4--5 blooms, and on the last evening there was even a double flower on one stem. Congratulations to you, my plant pals! You did great and I was happy to be present for your show, albeit I had less sleep. I wouldn't have missed it for the world!

When thinking of my "plant pals" like the Night-Blooming Cereus, I find myself saying, "Ah, sweet mystery of life"--yes, this little plant in its unpredictability offers to us one of those "sweet mysteries" in life for which I am grateful--for the gifts of creation, of beauty, joy and wonder.

Anxiety is the dizziness of freedom."

— *Søren Kierkegaard*, [*The Concept of Anxiety*](#)

Anxiety and Joy

By *Patricia Calcagno Stenger*

Anxiety visits me sometimes - perhaps in the middle of the night, or when a news article returns to my mind long after I've read the newspaper. The thought that a catastrophe will befall someone I love causes my stomach to summersault, often even before I know what I was thinking! Like many in my age group, there is agitation when I wonder if I will live longer than my financial retirement plans will cover or if my body will "break down" bit by bit until living is a misery rather than a gift. These "worries" and many others usher me into the experience of anxiety. But what is anxiety, really, and what does it want? There are dozens of books written about how to treat this common issue, and more being printed all the time.

Like other uncomfortable experiences, the inclination is to find some way to get away from anxiety. It's a natural human response, but wishing anxiety would go away increases one's anxiety vulnerability. Turning toward anxiety with curiosity and respect may be a path toward wisdom and joy. That sounds counterintuitive, doesn't it? What if anxiety has its own intention, and one that wants to be known?

Next June the Guild is offering a seminar on anxiety and joy. Together and individually we will experience ways to work with anxiety - ways that can lead to deep joy and expanding freedom.

Consider joining us!

a Guild for Psychological Studies seminar

June 27 - July 2, 2017

Location: Angela Center, Santa Rosa, CA For more information, please contact Patricia Stenger at pstenger@Comcast.net

Anxiety and Joy
June 27 - July 2, 2017

Anxiety is no stranger to many of us. It can steal the breath. It can disorient in the middle of the night or overwhelm in the midst of normal daily activities. We may feel powerless in its presence or embarrassed that it compels us toward unwanted behaviors. What is anxiety and what does it tell us about itself? What is required of us to face it and its multiple manifestations?

Jakob Boehme says, "The Holy Spirit leads us by anxiety to a new birth." What might this mean? Perhaps anxiety itself is the push of something new that wants to come into being. What orientation of heart and mind might be needed to explore the creativity that is hidden within anxiety? How might the disturbing symptoms we experience lead to greater freedom and joy?

In this seminar, we will use discussion, art, play dialogues, movement, music, silence and above all our own experience and self-reflection to explore what Soul/Life/Self has to teach us about the many sides of anxiety.

Leaders:

Manuel Costa, MA MFT

Jennifer Larson MA

Patricia Calcagno Stenger, MA MFT

Location:

The Angela Center, Santa Rosa CA

Fee:

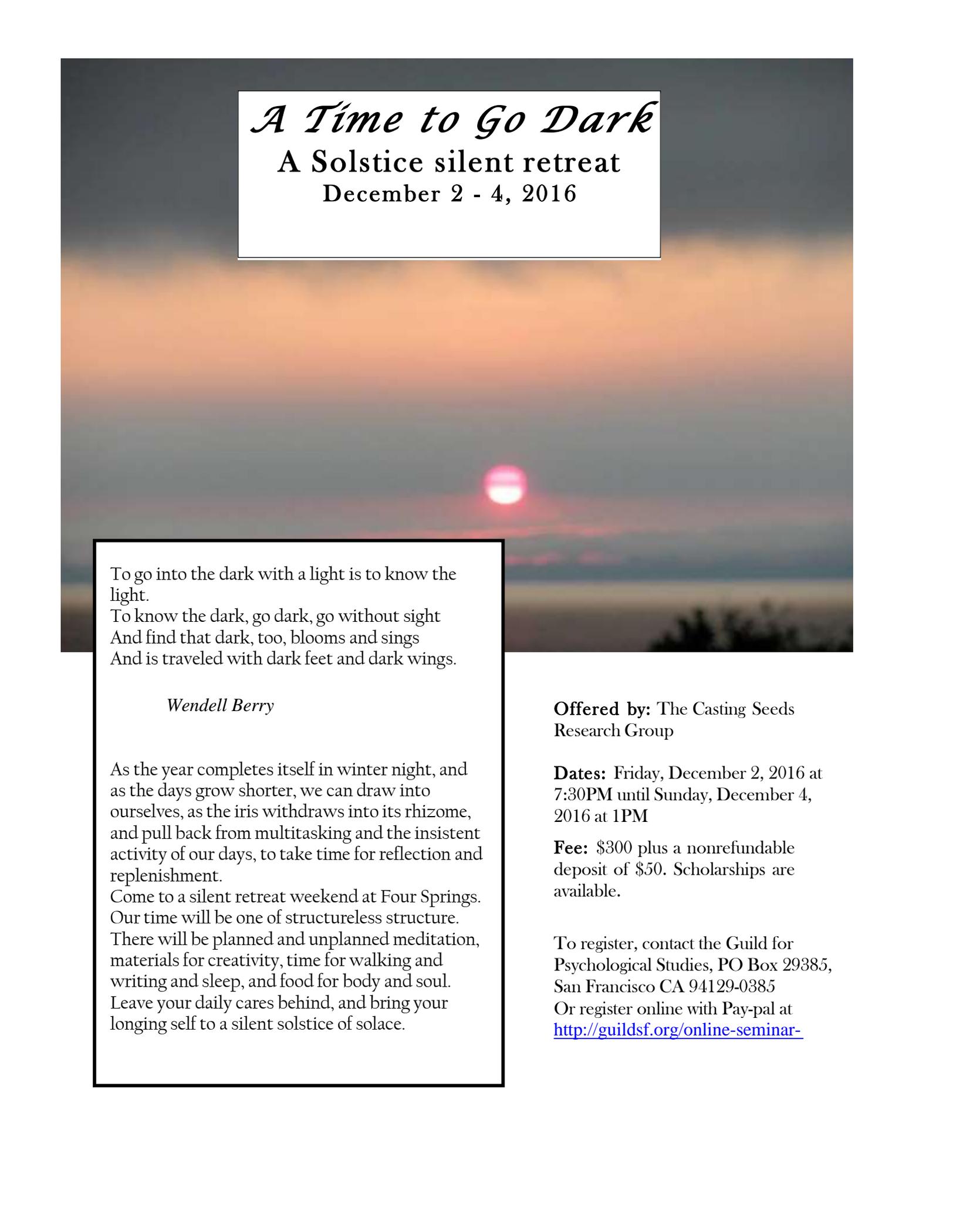
\$1,100 + \$50.00 registration if application is received before February 27, 2017

\$1,200 + \$50.00 registration if application is received after February 26, 2017

For more information about the seminar please contact
Patricia Stenger at pstenger@comcast.net or 707-537-1511

For information about scholarships, please contact
Manuel Costa at mjmmc46987@aol.com or 408-266-2084

Register at <http://guildsf.org/online-seminar-registration/>



A Time to Go Dark

A Solstice silent retreat

December 2 - 4, 2016

To go into the dark with a light is to know the light.

To know the dark, go dark, go without sight
And find that dark, too, blooms and sings
And is traveled with dark feet and dark wings.

Wendell Berry

As the year completes itself in winter night, and as the days grow shorter, we can draw into ourselves, as the iris withdraws into its rhizome, and pull back from multitasking and the insistent activity of our days, to take time for reflection and replenishment.

Come to a silent retreat weekend at Four Springs. Our time will be one of structureless structure.

There will be planned and unplanned meditation, materials for creativity, time for walking and writing and sleep, and food for body and soul.

Leave your daily cares behind, and bring your longing self to a silent solstice of solace.

Offered by: The Casting Seeds Research Group

Dates: Friday, December 2, 2016 at 7:30PM until Sunday, December 4, 2016 at 1PM

Fee: \$300 plus a nonrefundable deposit of \$50. Scholarships are available.

To register, contact the Guild for Psychological Studies, PO Box 29385, San Francisco CA 94129-0385

Or register online with Pay-pal at <http://guildsf.org/online-seminar->

Stay Connected

Bob Ridder, Administrative Coordinator, is available for all inquiries by phone at (415) 561-2385, or by email at office@guildsf.org.

Send your email address to office@guildsf.org so that we can keep you connected and up-to-date on Guild events. Also be sure that we have your current mailing address so that we are able to send you this yearly edition of the newsletter. Please keep us updated with your address changes.

Mailing Address

Guild for Psychological Studies
P.O. Box 29385
San Francisco, CA 94129-0385

Guild Website

Visit www.guildsf.org for information about seminars and events, and to register for seminars. The website also has general information about the Guild, past issues of the Threshing Floor, relevant news, and links to resources. If you would like to post information of interest to the Guild community, please email harryhenderson51@gmail.com, our web administrator.

Guild Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/guildsf>, launched in January! If you haven't yet, please "friend" and "like" us!

Newsletter

To receive 12 issues of *The Threshing Floor* a year, please contact the Guild office. There is no charge for an e-mail subscription. For a print subscription, please send a check for \$25 to the Guild office.

Items for inclusion in the Threshing Floor should be mailed to the Guild Office, Attn. Threshing Floor Editor, or emailed to office@guildsf.org. The deadline for each issue is the 20th of the month. Items received after that date will be published the following month.

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Volunteers

There are several people who fill necessary volunteer roles in the Guild. If you would like to be a Guild volunteer, please contact the Guild office at office@guildsf.org and let us know particular volunteer roles that appeal to you. Currently volunteers are members of the editorial staff for the Threshing Floor; members of the Board of Directors; serve as continuing education coordinator; train to serve as seminar coordinator, committee person or cook; provide transportation to/from seminars for attendees; help to catalog or research Guild archive materials; write reviews for Guild books and other publications; etc.

Friends and Members

Friends of the Guild are donors and others interested in receiving Guild information who are not Voting Members. Voting membership requires active participation in some form of leadership or committee role, or other volunteer effort, and the payment of annual dues. Voting members may receive a print subscription to the Threshing Floor upon request.

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