



# The Threshing Floor

November 2017

Newsletter of the Guild for Psychological Studies

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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.

## Humility and seminars

By Janet Boeth Jones

It was at my first Guild seminar in 1985, at age 50, that I began to learn about humility: that it was less about being a doormat and more about honesty and courage. Less “do it well or not at all” and more “if it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing badly.”

A trusted friend, John Gallagher, whom I’d met when he was interim priest at St Luke’s Church, SF, invited me to join him and his wife, Nan, at a winter weekend on Nikos Katsanzakis. “Oh,” I thought. “Zorba the Greek! Fun!” Well, it was *Saviors of God* - not fun. I’d been alerted that on Friday evening a quotation would be posted on the kitchen door to think about and then bring my reflections to the first meeting. I took one look at the words, “God is in every idea, smash the idea and set God free,” and panicked. I retreated to my cabin and sat in the dark. “Whatever am I going to say about that?” I was afraid of sounding stupid – afraid that they’d say to John, “Whatever possessed you to bring her?”

I’d also been assured that I did not have to say anything, I could just listen. In the circle in the living room by the fireplace that night, I did stay silent. But one of the leaders, Jean Gansa, kept saying, “Let’s hear from the quiet ones,” and I began to fear that no one would be able to leave until I said something. I don’t remember what I ventured.

We were asked, that first evening, to use line and color to express our image of God. I think I put down some chaotic colors with no discernible pattern or image. When we returned to the circle, we were invited to place our artwork in front of our

chairs and speak about it if we wished. Almost everyone had drawn what I later learned was a mandala – a circular pattern of wholeness with lines radiating from the middle. I thought, “Good grief, I didn’t need to worry about personal expression, all I had to do was draw wheels and spokes.”

Saturday morning began with music around the olive tree on the large patio. We were urged to move to the music, letting our bodies express our feelings, to find our own space and forget about the others. I wanted to flee, but I remembered that I used to feel graceful when I played tennis and so moved through tennis swings in slow motion – forehand, backhand, serve, volley – and that helped. Later, I became braver and actually enjoyed dancing, although in a hidden corner or with my eyes half closed.

After breakfast, in the seminar room, we all sat in a large circle; a leader read passages and asked us questions. I was in perpetual angst. When we reached a phrase, “My entire soul is a cry,” we were invited (ordered, really) to walk slowly outside in a line and find a spot to sit down and listen for the cry. As I walked in single file, I felt silly, until I mentally clothed us all in monks’ robes, complete with hoods. I found a spot behind a stone shed and sat and listened, feeling clueless. Then I heard “Meow” and Pluto, Four Springs’ black cat, strolled

up, climbed into my lap and purred. That was a cry I could understand. I would have remained there until lunch had not John come, saying they were waiting for me. I didn't know that all meetings were a command performance unless we were ill. No empty chairs allowed.

Saturday afternoon gave us free time to rest, read in the library, journal, use the materials in the art room, sit in the meditation room, or walk in the woods. In silence. I tried the art room, then read and rested.

Saturday night was a festive, though structured, dinner, with small glasses of wine. I had been introduced to the value of symbols, exploring the meaning of traditional ones and, where they had lost their value for me, seeking new ones. Symbols and synchronicity, where outer connected with inner. When we'd first arrived, we had picked up napkin rings from a basket – a ritual introduced by Nan Gallagher. Each ring had a symbol painted on it; a list on the wall explained what they were, so that we might reflect on why that one had chosen us. I don't recall which chose me that night, although after that, on first nights, I went immediately to the basket to see what awaited me.

At Saturday dinner (we all signed up to help set up and clean up meals, which kept the cost low), single words from quotations were placed under each of our plates and others put in a basket for us to take one, unseen. At some point, we were asked to stand and speak about what these words might mean for us. Fortunately, I didn't know this until after I'd been able to enjoy my dinner. At that time, I couldn't hear what anyone else had to say until I said mine and could relax. I don't remember the words that night, but, again, I later came to look forward to them, too. They were like psychic prompts, stirring the mind into unexpected reflections.

Sunday morning was a silent breakfast, which I loved – sitting at a wooden table with hot coffee, eggs, and toast, looking out into oak trees, mist, and the rising sun. Then, while taking a last sip of coffee, a loud crash nearly caused me to splash my neighbor. It was the opening chords of a requiem. So much for my morning reverie. I sat for a moment, while the music reverberated in the sound box of the wooden room, and then I crept quietly out the back door. Walking halfway up the hillside,

where the decibel level was better for me, I stood looking, smelling, and listening. I heard another meow and there was Pluto trotting up the path, tail in the air, heading my way. I hunkered down and he jumped into my lap and purred. That cat had an uncanny ability to know when someone needed his company. He never appeared again on my future walks up the hillside.

The final seminar, after lunch and after we'd stripped our beds and cleaned our rooms and common areas, was a time to bring whatever we wished for show-and-tell. In my room, I gathered up my art and journaling bits and at the last minute went back for a sketchy piece that, at first, had looked too unfinished to show. But that was the one I chose to speak about. It was appropriate that it was unfinished, because it was of a flute player learning to play his own tune. A simple story for me to tell.

To my surprise, once home and faced with a catalog of future seminars, I found myself applying for more. At first I chose work-weekends, where subject matter and structure were lighter, and we spent time donating our energy to maintaining the beauty and safety of the place (I remember raking a lot of leaves).

Each time I sat in a seminar room, I'd think, "Why am I doing this to myself?" Yet, afterwards, I'd sign up for another. I'd never before been asked what I thought or felt about something; I'd only been taught and expected to remember, with appropriate footnotes, or just to believe without questioning. I was surprised to find I was acquiring some of my own answers and, with them, new questions.

And I was learning humility. Beyond admitting what I did not know or deferring to others – I was familiar with that - also speaking and moving and painting and writing, without apology. I was learning to acknowledge possible strengths as well as weakness, learning to play my own tune.

"In an encounter with divine reality, I do not hear a voice but acquire a voice, and the voice I acquire is my own." James Carse, *The Silence of God*.



*All manner of thing shall be well  
 When the tongues of flames are in-folded  
 Into the crowned knot of fire  
 And the fire and the rose are one.*  
 -- T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding"

**Santa Rosa Fires**

*By LynneAnne Forest*

When the fire came, I could not have been living in a better place. I live at Brookdale Chanate, a senior residence in Santa Rosa. From the first smell of smoke early Monday morning until we returned home ten days later, Brookdale handled all the details of our evacuation.

When the 70-plus miles per hour winds began, followed by increasing smoke, employees banged on our doors and told us to get down to our library immediately. We huddled together and watched the fire on the large television screen. We were fed a hot breakfast, the buses came and we boarded amidst an eerie, red glow and black smoke so thick that it was difficult to breathe. With a stop at Brookdale Vallejo to assess where we would go next, half of us were bussed to Brookdale, San Pablo and half of us went to Brookdale, Danville.

I was very disoriented when we were told to leave our apartments immediately. I thought to leave an open bag of dry cat food on the floor food for Tobias and grabbed my bright orange emergency backpack (totally useless as I wouldn't need packets of water or food or a Mylar blanket to keep me warm!) except that I had had the foresight. when I prepared for earthquakes a few years ago, I put in medications to last a few days.

I forgot my walker, cane or walking poles as I left. I had looked at my cell phone by the phone but thought fuzzily that I would never be able to keep it charged. I looked at the heavy large printed library book I had been reading and for a moment thought of taking that! I left my address book, my iPad and worried while there that I couldn't contact family and friends. I couldn't remember phone numbers or email addresses.

Because of forgetting my walker, etc. and because I'd felt my balance was better, I walked with no support during these past two and continue to do so. A miracle - she walks!!

*Love is born in fire; it's planted like a seed.  
 Love can not give you everything,  
 But it gives you what you need.*  
 - Kate Wolf, her song, "Give Yourself to Love"

Danville Brookdale employees, volunteers and residents opened their hearts and welcomed us warmly. We were given air mattresses, bedding, towels, a room we shared with one of our fellow evacuees, delicious food, entertainment, and use of their phones when we wanted to call our families or friends. Our staff purchased sweaters, underwear, toothbrushes, combs, etc, etc, for each of us.

During the time, although we did not have to worry about much it was traumatic. Our anxieties and sense of displacement erupted in a variety of ways. I unexpectedly burst into tears, especially when I was thanking people who were being so kind and supportive. One of the things that helped me was to write in makeshift journals. After ten days I'm back home, deeply grateful and exhausted.

**November Birthdays**

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

## OTHER UPDATES ABOUT THE FIRES

**Friends House, Santa Rosa:** Rosemary Hayes and Clare Morris were evacuated for 11 days to another retirement community, The Meadows, with little time to take anything other than what they could grab in a few minutes. Rosemary said they were well cared for at The Meadows, but of course happy to be home.

**Angela Center, Santa Rosa:** This was not spared and is "closed for the foreseeable future," according to its website..

**From Four Springs (Facebook), Oct 16 , 11:38 AM:** "To all of our friends who are concerned about Four Springs and the forest fires nearby, we are cautiously optimistic that Four Springs will continue to be safe. Our main concern has been the eastern end of the Tubbs fire coming over Mt. St. Helena for the past several days. It appears firefighters have been able to contain this fire near the Lake County line, about 5 miles south of Four Springs. Winds are light in Middletown so far today so we are very hopeful. Thank you to all for your continued prayers, well wishes and positive intentions for Four Springs. **12:16 PM Update:** The Lake County Sheriff's Office has just cancelled the evacuation advisory notice for the Middletown area! (Hooray!!)"

**From The Bishop's Ranch, Oct 11:** "So far, the Ranch [where we go for "Nourishing the Soul"] has been safe and out of the way of the fires. However, many of the Ranch staff, family and neighbors have been evacuated and in some cases have lost homes. Some staff families and neighbors are temporarily sheltering at the Ranch."



### **Our Lady Mother of God By Maureen Hartmann**

**Mary struggling to birth Jesus bringing  
peace on Earth  
through blood and water  
pouring from our Holy Spirit  
What a baptism.**

**Evolution into Sister Lucia,  
oldest of three children  
who saw Mary in vision,  
Sister, envisioning 1917  
red-sky prophesying  
Russian cold war  
aiding our conflicted people.**



*Sweet Darkness*  
A silent solstice retreat  
Four Springs, Middletown CA  
December 1 - 3, 2017

When your eyes are tired  
the world is tired also.  
When your vision has gone  
no part of the world can find you.  
Time to go into the dark  
where the night has eyes  
to recognize its own.

~David Whyte

**Offered by:** The Casting Seeds  
Research Group

**Dates:** Friday, December 1, 2017 at  
7:30PM until Sunday, December 3, 2017  
at 1PM

**Fee:** \$350 plus a nonrefundable deposit  
of \$50. Scholarships are available.

**Location:** Four Springs, Middletown CA

To register, contact the Guild for  
Psychological Studies, PO Box 29385,  
San Francisco CA 94129-0385  
Or register online with PayPal at  
[http://guildsf.org/online-seminar-  
registration/](http://guildsf.org/online-seminar-registration/)

The sun, through its growing absence, announces the darkening of winter. Is your vision of the world tired and bleak? Is vision gone? Time to go into the confines of aloneness, and recognize what is too small for you, and seek what brings you alive.

During this solstice seminar, we will immerse ourselves in "sweet darkness," awaiting what looks back at us. What attitudes no longer fit, are in fact already outgrown? Is there a hidden vitality in the sweet darkness, ready to come home?

We will approach this darkness with seminar dialogue, art, music, movement, journaling and silence.



**SAVE THE DATE! JULY 7 – 15, 2018**  
**2018 GUILD FOR TRANSFORMATIONAL STUDIES SUMMER SEMINAR:**  
**ANXIETY AND JOY**  
Roslyn Retreat Center  
Richmond, Virginia

Every two years, Hal Childs (PhD, MDiv, MFT) and Patricia Stenger (MFT) from the Guild for Psychological Studies in California, guide a 9-day retreat through St. Mark's Church on Capitol Hill. Between July 7 and July 15, the seminar for 2018 will explore **Anxiety and Joy**. These seminars are spiritual in nature rather than religious, honoring all who want to grow in their truth.

Anxiety steals the breath -- it disorients us in the middle of the night or overwhelms us in the middle of normal daily activities. We may feel powerless in its presence or embarrassed that the experience of anxiety compels us toward unwanted behaviors. How are we to face anxiety and its manifestations? What is anxiety and what does it have to tell us about itself?

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 the new being. What orientation of heart and mind might be needed to explore the creativity that is within anxiety? What might be the relationship between the disturbing symptoms we experience and 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. Participation in any of these activities is voluntary. There will be ample free time to explore, hike, and gather with other participants.

All applicants new to Guild seminars are asked to accompany their application with a letter stating why they wish to attend and any pertinent information about prior study and experience around spiritual issues. No prior experience is needed to attend. You are asked only to bring yourself to a circle of seekers to come to a fuller expression of your own truth.

For a registration form and additional information, please contact Susan Thompson at [susanlynnthompson@gmail.com](mailto:susanlynnthompson@gmail.com). **We will accept 18 participants to keep the circle small and early registration ensures you have a spot.** Partial scholarships are available. Please indicate your interest in a scholarship to both Betty Foster ([bettywesfoster@earthlink.net](mailto:bettywesfoster@earthlink.net)) and Susan Thompson ([susanlynnthompson@gmail.com](mailto:susanlynnthompson@gmail.com)).

## Stay Connected

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

Send your email address to [office@guildsf.org](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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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Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter (by contributors other than staff and directors) are the writers' and not necessarily an official position of the Guild.

## Publishing House sales – books and CDs

Order publications on the Guild website, or contact Carina Ravely at [guildpublishing@yahoo.com](mailto:guildpublishing@yahoo.com).

## Donations

Many thanks to our donors! Your financial support in any amount helps the Guild with seminars and other events, with the training of leaders, with outreach, and with other new and ongoing efforts. Because the Guild is a registered nonprofit organization, with 501(c)(3) status, your contribution may be tax deductible. Donations should be directed to the Guild office address, or you may donate online using the PayPal link you'll find by selecting the Make a Donation link on the main page of our website.

## 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](mailto: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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