

Seeds of Celebration Via Creativa 2022 Crossing the Threshold

The term *Threshold* comes of Old German roots and is described by Webster's as:

“a stone or heavy timber placed at a doorway to contain the wheat winnowed from chaff in the production of grain.”

Such technology is necessary to sustain the heart of a marriage, the health of a community, the profit of the miller. The produce of the baker.

Such an implement is necessary to prevent the grain, the product of much blood, sweat, and tears, from blowing away to nothing.

Such is the work of creation that we must first create a vessel to contain our work before we can enjoy it: The writer must have pen and paper, the musician must have breath and an instrument to channel it through, the sperm must have an egg to burrow into, the lotus must have its mud. So it is with the ship of fools we call Jubilee! As we sail this blue planet into uncharted waters we must have creative technologies, some old, some new, to sustain us.

As we cross this Threshold bringing a harvest of unrefined gifts of Spirit to the table we do so with a certain fear and trembling.

We are reminded of Kate McKinnon's brilliant SNL character *Dr. Weknowdis*:

“When will the pandemic end?” “We don't know this.”

When will the original sin of slavery transcend to the equality promised in our nation's founding? We don't know this.

When will we see the planet turning a corner towards a sustainable climate for our children?

We don't know this.

How will Jubilee! heal from the division of our troubled transition? We don't know this...yet.

But we bring our winter wheat, our pen and paper, our flute and bated breathe, our sense of what in this world God has left to our care.

We Cross the Threshold not knowing yet what the harvest will bring. Knowing only that we are called to hearth, called to share, called to offer what we can of our piece of the mystery, called to sustain the call of creation ringing out through the universe in each and all of us.

O'Yeah!

VIA CREATIVA: CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

January 9th 2022 - Rejection

Have you not read this Scripture: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes’.”

— Mark 12:10-11

"The winds that sometimes take something we love, are the same that bring us something we learn to love. Therefore we should not cry about something that was taken from us, but, yes, love what we have been given. Because what is really ours is never gone forever."

— Bob Marley

One of the more unfortunate elements of being human along with nose hair and cellulite is *wanting*. Wanting things to turn out the way we wish them to be. Wanting things to be different than they are. These desires exist on a spectrum from the prosaic to the sublime: Wanting a

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cheeseburger, when you know rice & beans would serve the planet, your pocketbook, and the big 'ol booty in which it rides better.

Wanting the job that you see at the junction between the worlds' deep hunger and your deep gladness.

Or that sweet young thang that makes your heart sing.

Or children.

Or a transcendental experience of the Divine in the cave of a long gone saint.

Wanting is a natural state for most. Even the most ascended.

Recently, I decided that I wished to make a change in my career, wanted to do something a bit more elevated than frying bar snacks for tourists into the wee hours of a Saturday night.

I applied for a position with an organization I admired, went through the interview process, fell in love with the location, the people I would be working with and the mission in which I may play some small part. I received an offer from the Operational Director that more than met my material needs which I enthusiastically accepted the same day.

YAY!

And then. . . I got a call from the Executive Director, informing me, sheepishly, that they had offered the same position to an internal candidate who accepted.

A case of the one hand not knowing what the other was doing.

BUMMER.

So naturally, I got a big ol' spoon of peanut butter (serving size- arbitrary), my weighted blanket, and put on *the Wailers* as I looked over my note to the universe that manifested this opportunity.

I realized that what I was asking for, what I thought was a perfectly answered prayer in the form of a job offer, I could achieve with some tweaks to my current part-time job.

And I could, God willing, deepen my work for this community we call Jubilee!

And so, that rejection is the reason you are reading these words now.

Go figure.

VIA CREATIVA: CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

January 16th 2022 - Repairing the World - MLK Sunday

Jesus put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was asleep, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and slipped away. When the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did the weeds come from?' 'An enemy did this,' he replied.

So the servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'

'No,' he said, 'if you pull the weeds now, you might uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat into my barn.' "

— *Matthew 13:24-30*

"If you see what needs to be repaired, and how to repair it, then you have found a piece of the world that God has left you for you to complete. But if you only see what is wrong and ugly, then it is you yourself that you must first repair."

— *Menachem Mendel Schneerson*

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"Everybody can be great...because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love."

— Martin Luther King Jr.

"No matter what our particular job, especially in our world today, we all are called to be tikkun olam, repairers of creation. Thank you for whatever you do, wherever you are, to bring joy and life and hope and faith and pardon and love to your neighbor and to yourself."

— Fred Rogers

Jim Carrey's latest project is the sublimely good show on Showtime called *Kidding* in which he plays a children show host on the verge of midlife crisis/mental breakdown {through}.

In an effort to sustain ratings, and content PBS will approve, his father/executive producer hires a team of writers one of whom is a Jewish rabbi ("I'm a man of God, . . . but funny.") The whole show is worth a subscription , at least during the 30 day trial, but I submit that Season 1, episode 6, should be included in the Jubilee! canon

(Surely after 30 years we should have a canon, albeit a weird one).

In this episode, Rabbi Epstein describes the creation of the world using the example of a Black & White cookie (" . . .that my girlfriend made. They are good. . . but not great.")

God created light yes, good yes, but S/He also created evil, so that the good can be made perfect. Can be seen clearly.

For without evil what would be the point of goodness?

Without disease how would we ever arrive at *Gray's Anatomy*?

Without the divine right of kings how could we ever arrive at democracy?

No Mud. No Lotus.

One of our mantras as we sail the good ship Jubilee! is: "keep the main thing, the main thing!"

What is the main thing?

Hell if I know, but you do. At least for you.

Dr. King did,

Rev. Rogers did.

Rabbi Yeshua, who it must be supposed knew a thing or two about good and evil, sure does.

Another of our mantras:

"Your joy resides where your deep gladness and the world's great hunger meet."

Where might that be for *you*?

I think I'll go bake some cookies.

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January 23rd 2022 - Rest As Sacred Act

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the lake. Such large crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat in it, while all the people stood on the shore. Then he told them many things in parables, saying: "A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But

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when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown. Whoever has ears, let them hear.”

— Matthew 13:1-9

Amanda Jane was having one of those no good, terrible, horrible days described in the bedtime story she read Guinevere the night before:

Her husband took the last drop of Maxwell, she was running late to get the girls to school, drop off the black & white cookies at the church bake sale that the dogs somehow got into as she was kvetching at John for taking the last of the coffee and *not taking* out the trash while he rushed off to yet another appointment with his mom at the neurologist, and the Millers called wanting to move up the closing on the house across town.

In the midst of all this, one of her sponsees called on the verge of a relapse, if not already several cups in. Such was her state of mind at the corner of Patton and Vine as Amanda Jane wistfully spied the long line at the Starbucks drive-thru out of one eye while applying mascara to the other. “Call me Ismael,” she sighed.

“Who’s Ismael, Mommy?” Guinevere asked from the backseat, black & white cookie crumbs dripping all over the place.

“Ismael was a guy who bit off more than he could chew, Boo. Much more than he could chew.” So may it be with you.

Often the knowing-doing gap lies with what we are capable of doing, what we feel we can and should be doing, and what we as one person, or in this case, one typically busy mom, are able to reasonably accomplish on a Tuesday morning. It’s enough to lead to run-on sentences.

John Cage, a master of musical rests, titled his autobiographical collage, *How to Improve the World? (You’ll Only Make Matters Worse)*. On these days when the dark seems poised to overcome the light. When just getting, bleary-eyed, out of bed is a challenge of *Moby Dick* proportions it is helpful to remember that rest is a sacred act.

Rest and space.

Notice that Jesus got on a boat away from the madding crowd, before he addressed them.

Notice that the Creator of the universe takes Saturdays off.

Notice that wild geese flying south take turns in the pole position.

And for those other times when there seems to be no rest for the righteously wicked?

There’s always Starbucks.

VIA CREATIVA: CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

January 30th 2022 - Simplicity - Imbolc Sunday

“I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.”

— Matthew 11:25

“The Way is ever without action, yet nothing is left undone. If princes and kings can abide by this, all things will form themselves. If they form themselves and desires arise, I subdue them

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with nameless simplicity. Nameless simplicity will indeed free them from desires. Without desire there is stillness, and the world settles by itself.”

— *Tao Te Ching, Chapter 37*

“Living simply makes loving simple.”

— *bell hooks*

Midwinter has arrived. This is peak time for peeping our surroundings at the most skeletal. Nothing should be growing wildly. Outwardly, anyway. Reduced to the most simple, everything is as it is. Or is it? What meets the eye is not what trundles away out of sight, one of the wondrous lessons learnt as ragamuffins in early years of science class. The tree isn't dead, not even sleeping- it's very much alive through the bleak midwinter. Nor is the soil, harder underfoot in these cold months. It, too, is alive with millions of critters per square foot. This is when less is more, biologically speaking. Very few creatures showboat in these coldest months and days. No time for that, not a good use of resources. The slow trickles of milk, sap, and other lifebloods are enough, not that they would be noticed. Yet, this is the time that it can be felt, sensed. Imperceptibly as the days have lengthened, the skeletal Earth has shifted once again toward greening. Without the audacity of spring but with the same biological imperative. We've only had a few hundred years of science classes and a few thousand years of gods. The Earth has had several billion to continue this dance without having to explain it to anyone. Welcome back to another chance to see for yourself. Midwinter has arrived indeed.

VIA CREATIVA: CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

February 6th 2022 - Profession, Vocation, Avocation

“For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.’ But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten

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talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away.”

— Matthew 25:14-30

“Someone I loved once gave me a box full of darkness. It took me years to understand that this too, was a gift.”

— Mary Oliver

In college, I had a professor who, somewhat off the cuff, explained to us the difference between profession, vocation, and avocation.

Profession is what you are trained and paid to do. In this case, teach the NC Standard Course of Study (as those poor souls that have served as a public school teacher can tell you this is the bible).

Vocation is what you, specially, are called to do. As you teach you may also inspire and educate. It took me a long while to understand the difference between teaching and educating - comfort or protect your students.

Avocation is what you are called away to your higher calling and passion.

I don't remember much about my college lectures. It was AppState. There may have been some herbal induced mental fog but for whatever reason that explanation delivered at the tail end of a summer working session stuck with me. Perhaps because it was becoming clear, even at that early stage, that teaching wasn't what I wanted my profession to be and I nursed the disquieting thought, "I've made a horrible mistake."

"What do you want to be when you grow up?" as the joke goes, is a question adults ask children because we are looking for ideas.

We all have talents.

Kabbalah tradition describes the big bang as a grand dispersal of God's infinite talent through everything in the universe. And it is still ongoing. The universe continues to expand at a rate 73.3 km/ps, if anything astronomers believe that rate is accelerating!

It may take us awhile, perhaps all our life to unpack and learn how to use these talents.

I, for one, hope never to grow up.

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February 13th 2022 - Authenticity

“At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.”

— Matthew 11:25

“No matter how dark the night, the hand always knows the way to the mouth.”

— Idoma Proverb, African Traditional Religions

“You own everything that happened to you. Tell your stories. If people wanted you to write warmly about them, they should've behaved better.”

— Anne Lamott

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Did you ever tell the lie about homework? If so, that's between you and you. But if you ever pulled off even one of those, every little twist or iteration of it required a bit more energy to keep up. The dog not only ate it, but then spit it up, buried it, in the neighbor's yard, the mean neighbor, you tried to climb the fence but dislocated your shoulder... who did you tell about the mean neighbor? The bus driver or the assistant principal?

Transparency takes no energy, but it reveals everything. Opacity takes energy. Both can have their places in keeping we as little critters safe, but the further out we get, the sketchier inauthenticity becomes. We've accepted as a matter of norms inauthentic politicians. Okay? When some other glowing personality is revealed- BOMBSHELL! The normalization of inauthenticity, "deep fakes" and deception says a little something about our social appetites... Up until now.

One of the stories associated with St. Valentine, accurate or not, was that he kept letters in his little cabin brimming with compliments of the townsfolk. When he passed, they were shocked at the surprise, at the kindness of his truth. It's certain those took much less energy - if any at all - for Val to write. At least the dog didn't make off with those.

VIA CREATIVA: CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

February 20th 2022 - New Vision

"Your eye is the lamp of your body; when your eye is sound, your whole body is full of light; but when it is not sound, your body is full of darkness. Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness. If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light."

— Matthew 6:27-31

"The holy Preceptor by the Word lighted a lamp; Thereby was shattered darkness of the temple of the self, and the unique chamber of jewels thrown open. Wonderstruck were we in extreme on beholding it- Its greatness beyond expression."

— Adi Granth (Sikhism)

"When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less and less important whether I am afraid."

— Audre Lorde

"You do not have to see to see," the Shaman told his student. The student thought for a moment on this latest parable, and dismissed it outright, given his latest task. Blindfolded, the student was to walk on a thin plank between two boulders across a roaring river. This instruction was little more than a platitude when a simple misstep could send him helplessly downstream. As her feet tenderly began to put weight on the board, the old man coughed, distractingly. "This is not what I signed up for", she thought to herself, one foot fully on, the next slowly, gingerly, finding that next step.

"You see with your soul, your eyes follow," he gruffly mumbled, two steps ahead. Her heart was beginning to race. Her full weight was on the board. The wind, carrying the spray of the river, teased her. The heart was the drum to give her a tempo. If she ever doubted what a straight line was, it was now. Then again, he once told her that doubt was a cousin to curiosity and for this

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exercise (on which her life may depend) she could choose to be curious instead of doubtful. She stopped for a minute to breathe. What best served her?

“Are you waiting for the other side to come to you?” he shouted. She knew exactly what he meant. He wants her to make it, of course, and this was a clue. Everything begins inside, after all, and the only way there is to be curious about all of the ways the other side comes to her. She saw her way through.

“Of course,” she replied as she walked with ease. “Doesn’t it always?”

VIA CREATIVA: CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

February 27th 2022 - Ash Wednesday

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet!

Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins.

Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness,

and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God.

“Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”

Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers.

Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist.

Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high.

Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself?

Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?

Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

— Isaiah 58:1-12 (excerpt)

“The rugged old Norsemen spoke of death as Heimgang-“home-going.” So the snow-flowers go home when they melt and flow to the sea, and the rock-ferns, after unrolling their fronds to the light and beautifying the rocks, roll them up close again in the autumn and blend with the soil. Myriads of rejoicing living creatures, daily, hourly, perhaps every moment sink into death’s arms, dust to dust, spirit to spirit-waited on, watched over, noticed only by their Maker, each arriving at its own Heaven-dealt destiny. All the merry dwellers of the trees and streams, and the myriad swarms of the air, called into life by the sunbeam of a summer morning, go home through death, wings folded perhaps in the last red rays of sunset of the day they were first tried. Trees towering in the sky, braving storms of centuries, flowers turning faces to the light for a single day or hour, having enjoyed their share of life’s feast-all alike pass on and away under the law of death and love. Yet all are our brothers and they enjoy life as we do, share Heaven’s blessings with us, die and are buried in hallowed ground, come with us out of eternity and return into eternity.”

— John Muir

The ashes we use at Jubilee have always been made from the sweetgrass and sage that are transformed in the burning bowl. That bowl holds so much ash. I don’t think it’s ever spilled. Knock wood. So much transformation - years’ worth. It is a little gritty, and the mixture takes time to grind into a finer paste in a mortar and pestle. The preparation for this moment is just as sacred as the moment of imparting the ashes, saying the words, holding that quiet space. When

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grinding those larger chunks into finer dust, I consider that time is doing the same. Reconsolidating I, You, We, into a vastly more mysterious substance with a yet to be discerned purpose, guided by unseen forces. The purpose is Holy. Not because of a spiritual connotation as a placeholder. It's Holy because it's so much larger than I, You, We and vastly exceeds the limits of our mortality. We're the placeholders, but the stuff that we are - not so much. Everything that we are is constantly being mixed back in and Ash Wednesday is a moment of reconciliation with that mixing. It can be, at least. It begins with a simple ritual. What doesn't?

VIA CREATIVA: CROSSING THE THRESHOLD ***March 6th 2022 - When is enough, enough?***

Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet?
— Ezekiel 34:18

*Because these wings are no longer wings to fly
But merely vans to beat the air
The air which is now thoroughly small and dry
Smaller and dryer than the will
Teach us to care and not to care
Teach us to sit still.*
— T.S. Elliot

It is not in the best interests of late stage capitalism to allow our minds, our appetites, our fingers to rest.

To feel sated in any way.

At a press conference recently, Reed Hastings, the CEO of Netflix remarked that his main source of competition was not other streaming services, or other entertainment outlets, but ***sleep***.

Folks actually turning off the tube and entertaining their own dreamscape.

Every year there is a new phone, a new software platform and an endless array of programming options that is verging on the oxymoronic.

(I am pretty sure this is not what a 'real housewife' does, y'all).

As the pandemic began to unfold the most robust economy in the history of the world shut down and required taxpayers to shell out the largest government spending bill in our nation's history to prevent an economic apocalypse.

The Greek word apocalypse literally translates as "a lifting of the veil."

During the process of threshing wheat from grain there is a point, usually in the late afternoon, when there is so much wheat, grain and chaff flying around that it is impossible to continue. The only sensible thing to do is to take a break, have some wine and maybe a lie-down and let things settle.

Many modern day mystics advise a digital fast day. A day off from phones, email, and the rest. A day in nature or with family and friends. A day to peek behind the veil and see things as they truly are.

If you get bored may I suggest you do as my housewife mama did and make sourdough.

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March 13th 2022 -

“About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning. Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem. Peter and his companions were very sleepy, but when they became fully awake, they saw his glory and the two men standing with him. As the men were leaving Jesus, Peter said to him, “Master, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” (He did not know what he was saying.) While he was speaking, a cloud appeared and covered them, and they were afraid as they entered the cloud. A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.”
— Matthew 6:27-31

“In every crowd are certain persons who seem just like the rest, yet they bear amazing messages.”
— Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

“Every minister worthy of the name has to walk the line between prophetic vision and spiritual sustenance, between telling people the comforting things they want to hear and challenging them with the difficult things they need to hear.”
— Timothy Tyson

The ancient middle east was not likely a hotbed of psychiatry. I don't think there were many who were in the business of offering qualified diagnoses, but afflictions there were aplenty. Where there are afflictions, there are prophets. With a PH. The profits with an F are a side effect. To be a good prophet, your prophecies must have a good turnaround time. I'd venture that you measure prophet productivity in months or less. Years or more could be erased by your typical war, famine, flood and afflictions that you can't heal. Keep it short and sweet. And up that sleeve, keep a good trick or two, a cure here or there. A good prophet can pivot and adapt to changing business climates, say an invading army, plague of locusts which they didn't see coming, or an ornery miracle they can't quite perform.

The prophetic vision is a whole different can of locusts. It's not seeing into the future. It's seeing with the future and for our people, not ourselves. And it's what we most need, methinks, to cool the talking heads and the ice caps. The times call for something other than summits and pledges to far off years. They call for transformative acts which encompass more than just reactions to the immediate needs of the moment, but rather responses to what's coming. What if we took what we knew from the sages from ages of old and the leaders of the sciences of the present and envisioned a prophetic mystical calling? Well, it's kinda been done. Creation Spirituality is that evolving work in progress and Jubilee has for three decades been at the heart of growing it. Prophet, much? Wink.

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