

Bread of Life Bread Basket

Summer/Fall 2005

Waking Up to Your Sacred Story

by Sandra Lommasson

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Our New Website is Up!

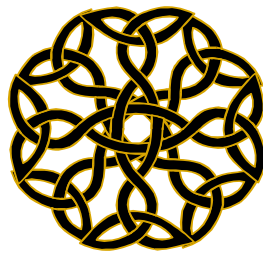
We're excited! Our long-awaited Bread of Life website is up and running and we want you come and visit at <http://breadoflife.org>

- See what's happening at our Davis site as well as at the Spirit in The Arts Center (SAC) in North Sacramento.
- Check out recent coverage about Bread of Life in magazines as well as on Chicago NPR.
- Take a look at the art of Whiteshoes. His connection at SAC helped him move from homelessness into a studio apartment for the first time in 10 years. SAC friends were present for a house-blessing and housewarming.
- See who's available for spiritual direction or to come and work with your organization.
- Read articles about spirituality... and more!

We're excited by our mission and hope you'll see something that sparks your interest... something that moves you to come by and to pass on the good news.

Like every human being, you have a 'sacred story' which weaves through the details of your everyday life. You may not be aware of it, but it's there. It's not about looking holy or being perfect. It's about the myriad ways Love touches you even when you're blind to it. The threads of God in everyday story may appear as a moment of connection to what really matters; a sense of meaning and purpose; a glimmer of hope that keeps you moving through a dark time; or the experience of being gloriously alive. Perhaps it appears as a longing for something more or in a disturbing question that keeps knocking on the door of your awareness asking for admittance. Everyone has a sacred story. Do you know yours?

Every human being has a sacred story. The challenge is waking up to it and beginning to make life-enhancing choices as a result. **Holy listening – also called spiritual direction or companionship – is the art of helping people discover and live from their sacred story as an individual, community, or organization.** Waking up to the Spirit's presence, activity and invitation is as basic to full human life as bread.



Actually, it's more than basic, it's essential. A remarkable Irish Catholic sister traversing the final stages of her journey from this life to the next recently came to what the Celts call 'the thin place.' It's the place where the membrane between the physical and spiritual worlds is so porous that everything non-essential falls away. As her body diminishes, she finds herself so defenseless against the pure love of God that she radiates peace and joy.

From this thin place Sr. Kathleen Dunne, R.S.M., a friend and spiritual director who was part of our Bread of Life team for forming directors, has a message of urgent clarity for directors everywhere. "Tell them," she repeated several times, "that spiritual direction is the place of hope for the world. It's the place where we are simply met by the Love that changes everything." She went on, "Opening to that Love is not easy – I've yearned for it and fought it my whole life. Spiritual direction provides a meeting place where we are opened to that Love so that the real story of what God is doing in our world shines out."

The **real** story of what God is doing in our world and in each of our lives is a story of powerful good news. Yet, accessing that sacred story and beginning to live from it requires focus and attention. We fear what we most desire. That's why spiritual direction is core to the Bread of Life mission of "**clearing a way for people to intentionally engage the Mystery we call God.**" It is offered at both the Davis and Spirit in the Arts (SAC) sites and comes in several forms. Inside are descriptions of what the practice is and isn't, how it affects personal and organizational life, and how to get started. Take a look and notice whether there's a tug in this direction for you. It could be one of those God-threads weaving another piece of your sacred story. And then give us a call.

The Art of Spiritual Direction

What is Spiritual Direction?

Everyone has a sacred story. Spiritual direction invites you to a closer relationship with God and helps you notice yours. God is already present in your life in love. A director helps you notice and respond to that presence in prayer, at work, at home, and at play.

You might come to spiritual direction for a variety of reasons, including to:

- Identify and trust your own experiences of God.
- Discern and make difficult choices.
- Look for God in struggles, losses or disappointments.
- Find encouragement, affirmation, and challenge.



Spiritual Direction is not:

- Pastoral counseling
- Counseling/Therapy
- Advice giving

How much does it cost?

Spiritual direction is offered on a sliding scale of \$20-\$80 per session, depending on a person's financial situation. No one will be turned away for an inability to pay.

What Do We Do?

We listen and create a supportive environment where you can look honestly at your relationship with God. We ask thoughtful questions that invite new ways of seeing. We tend what emerges in ways that are respectful, encouraging, and loving. We keep what you share in confidence. We do not preach, convert or judge. At Spirit in the Arts Center we actively encourage the integration of art in the spiritual direction process.



Who are our spiritual directors?

Women and men who have completed their formation in recognized programs based on the recommended components of Spiritual Directors International. Directors continue to enhance their knowledge and skills by engaging in ongoing education and supervision. They also meet regularly with their own spiritual director.



More About Spiritual Direction & Our Bread of Life Directors

We have 10 directors, lay and ordained, from a variety of traditions. Visit our website at www.breadoflife.org to learn more. On the 'What We Do' menu click on 'Spiritual Direction.' You'll find:

- A recent interview on Chicago public radio with Sandra Lommasson about spiritual direction.
- Descriptions of all our directors
- A link to the Spiritual Directors International website.

A Formation Program for Directors

Bread of Life offers a 3-year program in the Art of Spiritual Direction. The current class of 24 comes from across northern California and has nearly completed their second year. Information about the internship is available on our website at www.breadoflife.org.

Spiritual Direction: Portraits of the Process

Invitation to 'the More'



Spiritual direction is, for me, an experience of the trinity... Present in the room are more than two entities. It is the invitation to 'the more' that allows the directee to dig deeply. As directee, I can wax eloquently, sit stupefied, mumble meanderingly. Meaning unfolds, is digested, sometimes inculcated, unavoidable. And it teaches me, more clearly than any other interaction, to have compassion for myself and for others as I experience the compassion of 'the trinity.'

Lucy Day, directee

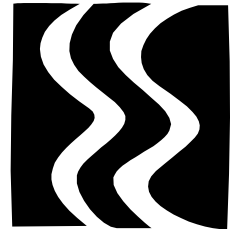
From Burning Questions ... to a Burning Heart

Early in my spiritual direction journey I sought answers to burning questions. I wanted my director to provide those answers for me. She refused, even though she could have very easily given me the "answers." She kept questioning me, encouraging me to probe deeper, and to trust my own instincts and intuition by inviting me to be aware of where God was calling me. Where was my heart burning? This was truly a turning point for me to learn to listen more deeply to the holy and to trust. Seeking spiritual direction and continuing with it over the past 12 years has enriched my life by deepening my relationship with God, self and others.

Rena Grant, BOL spiritual director and directee

Bread Crumbs Dropped Along the Path ...

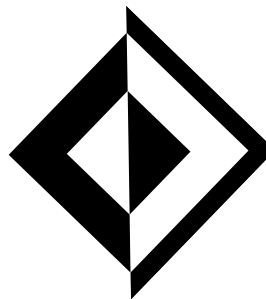
I am most grateful to my spiritual director for helping me become conscious of Spirit's tug in my life long before I knew it as such. Because I rejected the God of my childhood, I identified myself as an agnostic (and sometimes an atheist) for many years. Spirit's tug came first through a psychological mode that encouraged simple being in the present. It was all I could take in at the time. Years later when the tug became more insistent, I began direction. My director encouraged me to take a backward look at my life to see if I could discern the Spirit's movement. Many key points along my journey emerged. They appeared like bread crumbs dropped on my path. Each was just the right size. After I swallowed and digested one I could move on to the next. I saw clearly that those bread crumbs were Spirit's tug toward a deeper relationship with myself and Itself.



Barbara Alexander, BOL spiritual director and directee

Touched with Gentle Fire

Something blessed and incomprehensible happens when I walk into that room, lost in a dark wood. My tenuous and evanescent faith; the blotchy shadow cast over my landscape by the Self; my persistent, human failure to live with reverence and compassion: all these, mysteriously, are touched with gentle fire. It is not that I cease to suffer, to doubt, to fail; it is, rather, that I feel these things happening in the presence of the spirit inhabiting that sacred clearing. "Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there am I," said Christ. For that hour, in that space, my deepest being knows this to be true. There Faith can be, even in the absence of Belief; there confusion can be a valid form of prayer; there, in the compassion of the Spirit, I remember once again that I know how to celebrate.



Chris Motley, directee - 3 -

The Gift of Tears

As I sat there sharing a deeply painful story of my past, I realized I had been keeping my eyes downcast. There were aspects of this story I had never shared before, and I was flooded with feelings of embarrassment and discomfort. Then I looked up. In the eyes of my director, I saw tears. Somehow this validated me and my feelings around this experience so completely. In those tears, I saw compassion, love and caring. In those tears was an invitation to continue sharing and releasing the pain. In those tears, I saw the face of God.

Kathy Miranda,
BOL spiritual director and directee

More Portraits of Spiritual Direction

Witness to Love

It was an unusually intense period of my life from the summer of 2002 through November of 2003. It was a time of God moving profoundly; of family; of emptying of self; of sacrificial love; of great loss; of healing; and of reconciliation. It was a time that I went to see my spiritual director with great appreciation and gratitude for her very presence.

In July of 2002 my husband's 37 year old daughter Sophie was brutally murdered by her husband. She left 5 children, four of whom were teenagers, and a 7 year old. It was the most painful funeral I have ever attended. I loved her very much.

That December my 82 year old mother's health was failing in Massachusetts. I went back east in January of 2003, packed up her house and brought her back to a lovely 2 bedroom apartment only 5 minutes from my home in Sacramento. I felt blessed with an understanding husband and time open to give her the considerable care she needed.

The following June we returned to Los Angeles for the court sentencing of Sophie's husband. It was the time for surviving family of the victim to confront the man who had taken her so abruptly and brutally from our lives. While we were there, 2 of her children asked to come and live with us. The oldest also had a 3 year old son, my husband's great grandson. We opened hearts and home, bringing them to live with us that summer.

In November of 2003 my mom passed away suddenly from congestive heart failure and we had her funeral the day after Thanksgiving. I thank God for the year I had with my mom. It gave me great peace to be able to care for this woman who had given so much as a single parent.

My spiritual director was an important witness to this incredible year through her loving and consistent presence. She stood with me and witnessed how God uniquely and personally heals and transforms us as we are "Christ to one another." She provided a safe and loving place where I could share this sacred story as it unfolded. It was vital to have this companion who listened deeply, who encouraged me, and who confirmed the decisions I made in prayerful discernment.

It was life-giving to have this woman share the journey as she witnessed the miracles, the grief, and the healing that took place within this family. To have her watch with me in wonder and amazement at how much I am and we are God's Beloved in whatever comes has been a true gift.

Barbara Rodriguez, SAC spiritual director and directee

A Beautiful Gift



One of the most beautiful gifts I have ever received came on my 50th Birthday when I met a spiritual director for the first time. That relationship changed my life forever! I think of my journey with Christ as "a great adventure," filled with unknown happenings, risk-filled times, and great delights. And, it's imperative to have a spiritual friend along the way. Time each month with my director helps me live more intentionally into this great unknown and yet God-known journey. It's too scary to go it alone. I need someone to help me discern where and why I am going on this life-changing faith walk. I need a spiritual companion to help me integrate my spiritual practices with my 24/7 life. I don't want answers. I want someone who lives their own spiritual journey and helps me, through prayerful discernment and loving presence, more fully engage my soul with God.

Ron Lagerstrom, BOL spiritual director and directee

What do you want me to do for you?

I knew I wouldn't be employed once my project finished. While praying for clarity as to what came next, I sensed I was to divest myself of everything and wait. I gave up my apartment to live as a vagabond among family and friends.

Six months later I took a position requiring that I relocate again to Africa. As part of my preparation I went on an 8-day silent directed retreat. It changed my life.

On the first day my director recalled the story of Jesus asking the beggar, "What do you want me to do for you?" As I reflected on how I might answer that question of Jesus myself, I saw that God's call is congruent with my own deepest longing, not separate from it. Rather than going back to Africa, I gave up my international career as a result of what emerged for me in direction during the retreat.

Jane Swan, SAC spiritual director and directee

Spirit in the Arts Center

Come and See...

Our **Spirit in the Arts Center** is located in the upstairs rooms of the North Sacramento United Methodist Church, **650 El Camino Avenue, in Sacramento**. With open studio spaces and small rooms for spiritual direction, this special place is available to all who want to explore new facets of themselves, others, and their spiritual resources through creative expression and conversation.



Our emphasis on Spirit is broad and inclusive. While the founders come from Christian traditions, all are welcome here. The only expressions not invited are those that harm or diminish: A core value is treating one another as people of sacred worth and value while celebrating diversity.

Creative expressions found here include visual arts, cooking, gardening, storytelling, writing, drama, music and more. Everyone – from the most tentative first-time explorer to the accomplished artist – is encouraged to participate. Art materials are available at no charge to those who cannot afford to buy them.

An Evening of Sacred Story

September 27, 2005, 6:30-8:30

with David Elliot

Editor-in-Chief of *The Way of St. Francis*
Spirit in the Arts Center

Sacred story is a way to enrich and affirm the life of the soul. The spiritual resources of the imagination are called out through story as a spiritual ally for growth.

David is dedicated to helping others experience the symbols, illustrations, and transformational energies of sacred story. The evening is meant to be an introductory exploration with an invitation to explore ongoing workshops on this theme.

The sliding scale fee of \$15-\$40 is purposely set below market rate to encourage as many people as possible to come and explore. We encourage those who can afford more to pay more.

Community Portraits in North Sacramento

In partnership with the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission's Neighborhood Arts Programs we are offering a full year of **art workshops for adults** on the theme of **Community Portraits**. Workshops will take place in three semesters on **Wednesday evenings from 6-9 PM** at the **Spirit in the Arts Center**. Each series ends with a public art show and reception at a Second Saturday event. **No previous art experience is necessary**. This is a gentle, encouraging, supportive environment in which to play with the themes of portraits

Semester 1: Personal Portraits.

August 31, 2005 through the Second Saturday celebration on Saturday, November 12, 2005. Participants will learn and use a variety of two and three dimensional art techniques to create self-portraits. Emphasis will be on personal self expression and growth.

Semester 2 : Family Portraits.

January 4, 2006 through the Second Saturday celebration on Saturday March 18, 2006. Participants will create found object sculptures depicting their personal families. Emphasis will be on appreciation of inter-family dynamics and recognition of the wide variety of families in the community. The semester will culminate in a family night where participants bring their families into the art center to paint ceramic tile family portraits. The tiles will be placed in an outdoor, public wall mural.

Semester 3: Community Portraits.

April 5, 2006 through the Second Saturday celebration on Saturday, June 24, 2006. As a group the participants will design and paint a public mural celebrating the diversity of North Sacramento. Emphasis will be on learning about and appreciating the ways community is experienced.

The SMAC grant pays for one-half of the artist's fees and supplies which enables us to offer the workshops **without charge**. However we seek free-will donations to help offset the other half of the costs to the Center.

Registration preference will be given to residents of North Sacramento and class size is limited to 20 so advance registration is encouraged. Stop by the Spirit in the Arts Center or call 916-648-1803 to register.

Path of Contemplative Dialogue

Spiritual Direction and the Corporate Spirit



Spiritual direction is not just for individuals. God is also present in organizations and structures inviting our partnership in mission for the good of the world. A staff team, for example, might sit with a director to sift out and focus their response to what God is inviting in their church. The question here is how to access and tend the Spirit's movements together in a structure where many currents flow and vie for attention. Contemplative Dialogue is a primary tool for this corporate listening for Spirit. **A new training for facilitators in partnership with the Centre for Contemplative dialogue begins soon. Call for more information.**

*Bob Justman reflects below on how his work with the **Path of Contemplative Dialogue (PCD)** has affected KVIE, the 'corporate body' where he works. For more information about PCD, see the calendar insert for a description of our August seminar or log onto our website under "News and Events." Bob's full piece is posted on our website at www.breadoflife.org along with the open source manual which has descriptions of the tools Bob references. Go to 'What We Do' and click on 'Contemplative Dialogue.'*

Tending the Spirit at KVIE from Middle Management by Bob Justman

I came with no expectations to the seminar on the Path of Contemplative Dialogue (PCD) except to learn whatever I could and then implement it at work. It turned out to be a truly amazing experience. We sat in a group of 43 people, listening and talking, spending 3 days in dialogue on every topic under the sun. In the end we created relationships that last until today, and it was there I learned about the importance of community. (Although it took time and prayer for me, a person convinced that I could make it on my own, to internalize it).

One of my contributions was a question about HOW to take whatever I learned back to my company and implement it from a position in middle management. Little did I know how that question would drive me and where that drive would take (and still takes) me! I took some of the tools of PCD, such as the Ladder of Inference, back to my staff immediately and quickly earned a reputation as a man with a mission - introducing PCD to KVIE Channel 6. Still tools are just the beginning. I had yet to bring the feeling of creative community that I'd discovered in the workshop to the staff. Then a colleague joined me for a second seminar and a month later she and I facilitated our first KVIE dialogue. It really worked!

We set to work designing an ongoing program, which was quite successful for nearly a year. People gradually stopped coming, but things were happening - the environment at KVIE was changing for the better. We continue to use PCD in intra and inter-departmental meetings following the dialogue process: one at a time, no comments about another's beliefs, any topic can be addressed, and say things in a way that doesn't make others get defensive. Looking back the progress we have made at KVIE is nothing short of miraculous. A past employee was volunteering and visited me yesterday. She said that the environment feels different, that people seem happier. What a testimony!

How to make a difference from middle management? Find a friend and keep plugging. Never give up the faith. Always be open to concerns to see if you can help. Be cheerful - be a friend - hold a door open - pick up something dropped. You never know what act of kindness will turn a person's day around. Once a person starts smiling, that person is more likely to listen and give another a break. Be what you want to see around you - why should anyone treat you well if you treat them poorly? And be patient.

The Path of Contemplative Dialogue has changed (and continues to change) my life. Stay tuned!

The Community Page

Invitation to Explore Intentional Community



Twenty-two members from Catholic and Protestant denominations have been meeting the first Saturday of the month since September 2002. As an ecumenical community related to and participant in the living Body of Christ, we encourage members of our community to participate in a local congregation or parish. We anticipate that those who are drawn to intentional Christian community desire a depth of change in heart and life to emerge from taking the Gospel seriously and are ready to engage forms of loving mutual accountability.

We open to new explorers every fall, inviting them to participate with us for several months to discern mutual fit and call to this form of community. Ongoing members also evaluate continuing fit and call during the fall period. The commitment to active participation for the year begins each January. Interested in finding out more? Take a look at www.breadoflife.org under "Who We Are" or call 530-753-1577 to be put on the community information list.



The Ecumenical Community of Living Bread focuses on living the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our personal and corporate lives for the purpose of bearing the life that emerges into the world.



Newsletter Preparation Thanks

We would like to express special thanks to those of you who have volunteered your time recently to help prepare Bread of Life bulk mailings—a somewhat formidable and time consuming task for which we are very grateful!

*Cameron Gibbs, Tamara Thompson, Audrey Lippman,
Diana Kado, and Tania Love*



A Hello and Some Goodbyes

We've said goodbye this spring to several Bread of Life staffers: Brett Kersten, Kathleen Bowers, Barbara Anderson and Joe Yun. Please join us with thanksgiving for gifts shared and blessings for the path ahead.

Please join us too in welcoming Rochelle Petty who recently relocated from Florida with husband Rob and who commutes to us from Galt each day. Rochelle now serves as our Office Manager and is the new 'voice on the phone' you'll encounter when calling Bread of Life.

With Gratitude and Invitation

In Loving Memory...

Robert (Bob) Ball

A wonderful way to honor the life and spirit of one who has made an enduring contribution to your life is with a gift to Bread of Life. We have had two such legacy gifts recently. One was an anonymous gift in the amount of \$5000 to our scholarship fund honoring the spirit of a woman who preferred in life to engage her work behind the scenes. Another wonderful gift comes from Alice Parente, a long-time participant in Bread of Life, in memory of her late father, Robert Ball. Alice writes:

My father was a kind, selfless man who devoted his life to his profession as a Workers' Compensation Appeals Judge, to his family, and to his church, First Presbyterian of Santa Rosa. Honesty and fair treatment of others were two of his highest ideals. Through his strong, confident demeanor and practices, he was a living fulfillment of James 3:13: *Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom.*

Bread of Life is dedicated to helping people engage in basic spiritual practices - such as prayer - that allow each person to meet God in respectful, encouraging, challenging, *and* fully loving ways. Such connections with God were the essence of my father's life and something he desired for all those he knew. For this reason, I have chosen to donate a portion of his estate toward fulfilling the mission of Bread of Life.

Alice Parente

You Make a Difference...

"I have tuition and airfare covered," he recently wrote about our upcoming Contemplative Dialogue seminar. **"If you know of any possible sources for scholarship help with the room and board portion, please let me know."** A seasoned pastor recently retired from the church, his life and focus in ministry are changing. He sees "tending the Spirit in an organization" as something vital he could offer to the world. We agree, and invite you to partner with him and others like him in making such possibilities real.

Fees for service cover only 46% of our support. Right now, requests for assistance with spiritual direction and events have exceeded our Scholarship Fund by nearly \$5,000.00.

Bread of Life has always offered **scholarship assistance** and **sliding scales** to assure that no one is denied access to services. Because **fees for service cover only about 46% of our support**, the bulk of this mission depends on your generous partnership in the form of pledges and donations. **Right now, requests for assistance with spiritual direction and events have exceeded our Scholarship Fund by nearly \$5000!** We urgently need your generous assistance in replenishing the fund so that we can continue to keep the doors open to folks like our pastor-friend.

Won't you join us? You can use the form on page 12 or visit our new website at **www.breadoflife.org** to set up a regular on-line contribution.

Bread Basket is a periodic publication of Bread of Life. The mission of Bread of Life is to clear a way for people to intentionally engage the Mystery we call God. The focus of this publication is the authentic spiritual journey with and toward the Mystery we call God. This publication welcomes variety in experience and expression. Bread of Life depends on the support of individual donations in order to provide services, and offer events. All donors receive each issue of this publication by mail as soon as it becomes available. Please see page 12 for donation form.



Davis Community Church

Bread of Life

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Bread of Life Center / Spirit in the Arts

Bread of Life

Yes, I would like to support the work of *Bread of Life* with:

A gift of \$25 \$50 \$100 \$500 \$1000 Other \$ _____

Please designate to:

The Scholarship Fund Use where needed Spirit in the Arts

Other: _____

An annual pledge of \$ _____, which I would make monthly quarterly annually in installments of \$ _____.

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Please make my donation in memory of _____ /in honor of _____

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Thank you for your tax-deductible gift!

