



The Anchorage:
A Contemplative Community for All
Come away...

DEPTH SOUNDINGS

Encouragement, Inspiration and News from The Anchorage

February 2024

“Always, We Begin Again” St. Benedict

“The Gift of the Red Bird”

By Angie Gage

Sitting quietly on my back deck, I felt the sting of loneliness and a cloud of discouragement hovering over me. The excitement of the recent move had worn off, and now the reality of all the changes in my life was beginning to sink in. I was seven hours from my support system, overwhelmed with my husband's travel schedule and struggling with feelings of isolation. Desperate, I prayed and asked God to send me a tangible sign of his nearness.

Right after I whispered the prayer, I heard a distinct but unfamiliar click-like chirp directly above me. Directing my attention to the sound, I spotted a beautifully vibrant red bird staring at me on a nearby branch. Immediately, I knew God heard my prayer, and the Spirit sent this delightful cardinal as a visible sign of his abiding presence and deep care for me. The red bird stayed glued to the branch singing his birdsong for at least two minutes with his eyes fixed on me. Mesmerized by the goodness of God, I looked toward heaven and whispered a prayer of thankfulness.

God has reminded me of his nearness for twenty-two years by sending beautiful red birds during times of uncertainty, fear, and doubt. Over the years, this grace has strengthened my faith and deepened my friendship and intimacy with Jesus. I know there is nothing especially holy about a red bird. Still, its presence has served as a reminder to reorient my thoughts away from whatever circumstances are right in front of me and put my eyes and heart on the power, beauty, and wonder of the Living God.

Our Heavenly Father delights in giving his children good gifts. He reminds us of his presence and cares for us in many ways, whether through a timely word from a friend, a promise in scripture, or a little red bird that shows up at just the right time.

*(Thanks to Angie for this devotional, and for her leadership of The Anchorage Board. She enjoys offering spiritual direction, facilitating small listening groups, teaching Bible studies, hiking, walking her dog, and forming new friendships. Angie is married to Rob, and they have four children and one daughter-in-law! Her greatest joy and passion is bringing the hope and encouragement of Christ to others. Angie is pursuing a Master of Divinity degree at Asbury Hills Theological Seminary, as part of her response to God's call to chaplaincy. **Please note** that Angie is leading our April Desert Day!)*



*anchor
deep*

“The Word ‘Purpose’”

By Catherine Powell

This year, I’m caught by the word purpose.” It’s actually been a couple of years now that the word has helped make sense of a lot of pain. I’m grateful to my friends who live with significant pain and have learned to look for joy, often in hindsight, in the situation. Also, I’m grateful for my directees (folks come to me for spiritual direction) who are willing to share the hard stuff and then bless me by seeing God in it! Amazing! God can bring purpose out of pain; I’ve seen it again and again. Our part is to be open to it, to see it with new eyes, and to trust!

(Cont.’d on page 3)

“A Fresh Perspective”

By Carrie Crumbliss

The beginning of a new year can be a joyful and exciting challenge to some or a dread and unwelcome change for others. Some look forward with expectancy at what the year will bring while others breathe a sigh of uncertainty and/or fear as they greet the unknown. As 2023 closes and 2024 begins, how has it been for you? If you sat down and described the tones of your thoughts, ideas, reflections, hopes, dreams and goals for 2024, what might you write? Excitement? Anticipation? Anxiety? Relief? Regret? Sorrow? Hopeful?

Theologian Dallas Willard said, “The first and most basic thing we can do and must do is to keep God before our minds.”

I’d like to suggest and encourage us to consider that one of the key contributors that impacts the tone and mindset of our day is our thoughts, perspectives, and narratives. We have the broad capacity to choose what we ponder, allow in, listen to and believe. Let’s challenge one another to do our part and prepare to believe and incorporate Philippians 4:8 - “Whatever things are true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, think about such things”. That doesn’t mean that hard and disappointing times won’t come, but we will be better able to handle such things from a place of fullness rather than a place of lack. As a contemplative prayer ministry for all, The Anchorage seeks to provide ways to “come away” to hear from God during quiet times of reflection and contemplation of His truths and perspectives. God’s word, the Bible, has much to say about this. Romans 12:2 - “Do not conform to the pattern of this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing, and perfect will”; Psalm 143:8 - “Let the morning bring me word of Your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in You. Show me the way I should go, for to You I entrust my life.” Rom. 8:6B - “the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.” Don’t we all want more peace and wholeness?

When we meditate on and invite God’s word to be in the position of importance, priority and authority, it will impact, change, heal and replace those familiar, yet untrue and doubtful, thoughts and perspectives we’ve allowed to define the narratives of our lives. We begin to experience freedom from negative mindsets and can move forward with hopeful anticipation for what God has planned for us. Let’s encourage one another to seek God’s truth about our lives, to realign and reorient our minds and hearts to what His truth proclaims over us and help us to begin to gain a fresh perspective, God’s perspective, of what He wants to accomplish in and through us in 2024.

*(Thanks to Carrie for this article, for her friendship and for her service as Chair Elect on our Board, (Servant Leaders). She enjoys discovering how to personally and corporately grow closer to God through prayer, Bible and inspirational reading. Some of her favorite ways to spend time: with her husband Tim and daughter Samantha as they travel to new places together, meeting and hearing peoples’ stories from all walks of life, writing, being outdoors and playing with beloved dog Gibbs. Her greatest passion in life is helping people discover their purpose and place in God’s larger rescue story of hope. **Please note** that Carrie is leading our June Desert Day!)*

“From a place of fullness rather than a place of lack.”



The Anchorage

Vision

A contemplative community to encourage all people everywhere to live in a mutual love relationship with God.

Mission

The Anchorage provides a setting in which women and men may come away to be with God, as revealed in Jesus the Christ; and to come to love more deeply, through contemplative retreats and spiritual direction, this God who loves us beyond measure.

Metaphor

A safe harbor in which to anchor deep in still waters as a respite from the wind and waves; where pilgrims may enjoy prayerful grace, honor the rhythm of Sabbath and open more fully to the mystery of God’s love.

Core Focus

Encouraging a love relationship with our Triune God, especially in contemplative community.

Staff

*Catherine Powell,
Founding Servant Leader*

Servant Leaders

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Carrie Crumbliss
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“Journey with the Magi”

By Jill Minasi

I had the privilege of being invited to partake in a journey during the December Desert Day led by Susan Rice. It was a cold, misty morning and Susan invited each of us to meet in the nativity, to become a character in that holy story and spend time in wonder. The group was quiet as we contemplated which character to choose from her beautiful nativity set. An angel, the sheep, Mary, or maybe Joseph? I selected, or rather I think, one of the wisemen selected me. I took my wiseman and ventured outside into the dreary day.

As I walked, I thought about how it would have been like traveling, following the star. Many indicate that the wisemen didn't visit Jesus until he was approximately 2 years old. In my story, I chose to be on my way to visit him at his birth. Being Episcopalian, we love celebrating the twelve days of Christmas (December 25 - January 5) with an Epiphany celebration on January 6, signifying the visit from the Magi bearing gold, frankincense, and myrrh. In my house, the wisemen are often in another room, away from the nativity inching closer each day until Epiphany. As I walked, I became excited thinking about the visit and feeling special that I was chosen. I had images in my head of what the manger would look like. Would it be like the one created in my mind during my childhood? As I rounded the corner of the street and started up the hill, my feet became cold, and I wondered why I had come outside. Were the wisemen annoyed with the weather? Did their shoes keep them warm and dry? What did they eat? Did they constantly ask each other, how much longer? I started down a rabbit hole thinking of how long and hard the journey could have been and wondered if I would have complained or if my joy in seeing the baby Jesus would have carried me through. Am I really the one you want to visit and present gifts to the baby Jesus? The joy I had starting out turned into worry and doubt, flooding my mind like it often does in my life daily. I often abandon my plan due to fear, exhaustion or time.

However, I am never amazed at how the Holy Spirit works anymore. My mind was suddenly filled with the verse from Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” and the verse from Matthew 19:26, “With God all things are possible”. Later, I asked myself what is my impossible? Being honest, I think my impossible deals with the question, do I completely trust God? I say I do, I believe I do... but if I do, why all the anxiety, worry and doubt? If I really trusted God, wouldn't these feelings disappear? Many in the group admitted they often grapple with the same question. If life was always a bowl of cherries, would we continue to seek God? I certainly hope so, but I doubt life will ever be without conflict and human worry.

The difference is that because we are so loved, we have the opportunity to flip our anxiety into strength, to recite scripture that grounds us, to call on the Lord in both the good and bad times. The Christmas Eve message at my church confirmed that regardless of what is going on in the world or even in my own home, there is one thing that never fails. Jesus always shows up. Because of His love, we have the opportunity, always, to begin again. *(Thanks to Jill for this article, for her friendship and for being a servant leader (Board member) for The Anchorage. She aspires to live a more contemplative life every day. She is a Guardian ad Litem, with a counseling background. She is from VA, is married to John and is the mother of 2 semi-grown children.)*

(cont'd from page 2)

It is not intuitive, at all, to welcome trials and troubles when they come, as James tells us right out of the gate in his letter. My response has truly been, “yeah, right!” But I'm a slow learner, and I'm learning that God cares more about us becoming all we can be, and less about making our life easy. He never said it would be easy, just said we wouldn't go alone! So “Look up child!” to quote a favorite song.

“I say I do, I believe I do, but if I do, then why all the anxiety...”



Upcoming Events

Desert Days: First Fridays in even months, 9:30-2:30 “Always, we begin again.”

Content, Reflection on the theme, with God/community.

Leaders:

Feb. 2 – Robert Miles

Apr. 5 - Angie Gage

June 7 - Carrie Crumbliss

Fee: \$42 (\$30 if BYO lunch)

Location: Gower Estates,

Greenville, SC

5-week Lenten Book Study,

Living in God: Contemplative Prayer and Contemplative Action by Nicholas Amato.

Feb. 20-Mar. 19, Tuesdays,

10 -12. Will include some contemplative practices.

Fee: \$75 (does not include \$14 book, you may find it for less?)

Location: Gower Estates,

Greenville, SC

“Ignatian Retreats” on

Zoom. 3, 5 or 7-days, to fit your time frame.

You would need quiet space for this daily: 45 min. for Spiritual Direction on Zoom, and 1 hour for prayer with 3 different scriptures. .

Fee: 3-day (4 sessions), \$150,

5-day (6 sessions), \$200,

7-day (8 sessions), \$250.

Led by: Catherine

Ongoing Spiritual Direction Monthly – with Catherine

A time set apart to ponder your relationship with our triune God, with someone who listens with you for God. There is more information on our website:

www.theanchorage.org. There is a sliding fee, based on what is doable.

(If \$10 is all you can pay, then that's all you pay!)

We always appreciate your prayer for our events that they would be just what God wants!



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Community for All

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*"At that same hour, Jesus rejoiced
in the Holy Spirit and said, 'I thank
you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth,
because you have hidden these things
from the wise and intelligent and have
revealed them to infants; yes, Father,
for such was your gracious will.'"
Luke 10:21*



During one of our hours of reflection at our December Desert Day, Nicole Cobb was sitting on the "welcome" bench at the beginning of our front walk. As she looked at this flower she sensed God saying to her "I am in the details." It was just what she needed to hear.

Financial Status (as of January 15, 2024) (Our Fiscal Year is July 1 – June 30)

Total FY gifts budgeted	\$ 26,000
Total received	<u>\$ 13,700</u>
Amount needed	\$12,300

Total FY income budgeted	\$ 38,000
Total received	<u>\$ 18,580</u>
Amount needed	\$19,420

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR
ENCOURAGING GENEROSITY!!**

Our 2024 Friend Raiser will be in April with worship and dinner for our donors and participants - to say THANK YOU to our GOD and to our community – YOU!!!

BIG gratitude for **Christina Auch!** The website was hers for the last few years. And to **Susan Rice** who is covering it now.

THANK YOU!