



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

# DEPTH SOUNDINGS

Encouragement, Inspiration and News from The Anchorage

February 2023

## Celebrating 25 years of Learning to Dance: God Leads, We Follow

### “Christmastide”

By Tom Johnson

Christmastide in the northern half of our beautiful planet-home  
Increasing darkness and, if you seek it, silence  
Which reveals something of the spaciousness in which all of life resides...  
in all of it  
Living fully is saying Yes to it all  
Being willing to sit with the pain and suffering until it reveals its lessons,  
and then letting it go  
Embracing the joy and beauty just long enough to savor it fully and  
then letting it go too  
Being attentive then, as in Rumi's guest house, welcoming whatever comes next...  
welcome, welcome!  
The increasing awareness of that spaciousness, that ground of all being, reveals  
something of its character: mysterious, divine. It is love!! Can you feel it coursing  
through your very being?

*(Thanks to Tom Johnson for this poem and for helping to lead our centering prayer group at Christ Church, Episcopal in Greenville, SC. He is a retired engineer living in Greenville, SC with his wife of 47 years, Anne. He engages in his contemplation/silence practice in part to guide his doing: building diverse community by engaging with compassion while seeking justice; spending time in the natural world; and riding his bike seeking adventure with his co-travelers.)*

*(The picture behind the poem is of the view out our front door a year ago!)*



*anchor  
deep*

## “Learning to Dance”

By Catherine Powell

What do you recall about your first years of learning to dance? A bit awkward perhaps? While we don't pretend to have mastered the steps, we know the One we follow is worthy of our trust.

As Mary says in her delightful article, we don't always follow well, but our hope is that as we continue to take time, to make time, to listen, to be present to this One who knows us and loves us, we can say 'yes' to this invitation to dance.

The heartfelt article by Jo Ann highlights our 25<sup>th</sup> annual January beach retreat, such an important part of our history. I took a January beach retreat in 1998, to listen for God's leading, that resulting in the birthing of The Anchorage. We have gone every year since. 2021 was on Zoom, which lacked a lot! Specifically the smell of the ocean.

Tom's poem on the cover, speaks so powerfully of the reason we exist – to encourage solitude and silence with God. Thanks to all!

## “Dancing with My Father”

By Mary Pollini

My father was known as *The Rumba King*. Back in the '40's, he won a rumba contest, and that title followed him throughout his life. Whenever we were at parties that offered dance music requiring a partner, there would be a constant flow of women who would come up and ask him to dance. As he got older, he told me it was becoming harder to keep up with all of those dance requests!

When I was a toddler, I'd sit on one of my father's feet and wrap my arms around his leg as he walked around the room. When I was able to stand, my father would hold my hands, put my feet on top of his, and dance to the music. I was just going along for the ride!

As I got older, we graduated to “real” dancing. The first time we danced, he held my right hand with his left and placed his other hand on my back. As we began to move, I unexpectedly felt the hand resting on my back exerting slight pressure, tilting left and then right. I asked him what he was doing, and he said he was giving me “signals” so I would know which way we would be moving. He was literally leading and directing me - letting me know what we would do next! I tried my best, but didn't do a good job of following!

It took several dances with my father for me to get used to his method of leading, along with the fine nuances of his touch. Although I never really mastered it, it was certainly better than getting dragged through a dance or holding on to him for dear life! But I understood why my father always had a full “dance card” - his partners were being led by an expert who knew what he was doing!

Like my father's style of ballroom dancing, I have come to realize that an intimate relationship with God is about *communication and awareness - leading and following*. God is constantly communicating with us, but we need to be aware of God's voice and God's touch. God leads, and our response is to follow God's prompts. Being still - being quiet - helps! That's what is needed in order to be God's dance partner ... so that we can *move together as one*.

In the beginning of my relationship with God, I was carried. I would sit or stand on God's feet without knowing where God was taking me, or that it was even God's feet that I was on. When I was an adult and became more aware of God in my life, I let God pull me closer as we “danced.” I stood on my own feet as God took me in God's arms. With time, I could feel God's gentle hand on me but didn't pay much attention to God's “signals,” nor did I understand what they meant. I did, however, become more comfortable with the intimacy of God's embrace.

(Cont'd on page 4)



## 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

*(Board of Directors)  
Eric Barnhart  
Madeline Blackwell  
Carrie Crumbliss  
Angie Gage  
Susan Rice  
Matt Rollins, Chair*

### The Anchorage

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# “Sacred Water”

By Jo Ann Steger Hoffman



## Upcoming Events

**Desert Days: First Fridays in even months, (usually\*)**

**Theme is “Learning to Dance: God Leads, We Follow” 9:30 – 2:30**

Content and Reflection time in quiet with God and community.

**Leaders:**

**Feb. 3 Robert Miles**

**\*Apr. 14 Angie Gage**

**June 2 Carrie Crumbliss**

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

Location: Gower Estates, Greenville, SC

**Tues., Feb. 28, 6:30 – 8:30 Annual Friend Raiser**

Live Stream link can be found on our website by February 21

**[www.theanchorage.org](http://www.theanchorage.org)**

**Tues., Mar. 7 – 28, Lenten Book Study, 10:30**

– 12. *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers* by Dane Ortlund. The book is based on Mt. 11:28 revealing the heart of Christ.

**Led by: Catherine**

Location: Gower Estates

Fee: \$60 does not include book

**Tuesday, May 2, 6:30 – 8:30**

**The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Anchorage!**

Time to share stories, eat birthday cake, pray and enjoy some quiet with each other. All are welcome. Be in touch for details, using the website – and enjoy it while you’re there.

**“Ignatian Retreats” on Zoom. 3, 5 or 7-days, to fit your time frame.**

You would need to have relatively quiet space for this daily: 45 min. for Spiritual Direction either in person or on Zoom, about 1 hour for solitude prayer, 3 different times.

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

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

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

**Led by: Catherine**

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

## Silence. Surf. Spirit. Sisterhood. Solitude.

These are the recurring images that came to mind when Catherine asked how God had been revealed to me in 15+ years of attending The Anchorage Annual Beach Retreat. Nor are those the only ways the beach retreats brought my God to me. Add reflection, introspection, inspiration, intellectual challenge and – of course! – a feather! Over all of these experiences, spread the warm blanket of a welcoming, accepting community of like-minded retreatants. And there you have the essence of why people like me return and return, as if drawn by the tide, to The Anchorage Annual Beach Retreat.

Most of the “winter water women,” as we called ourselves in the beginning, understand the significance of the feather as the inspiration for the founding of The Anchorage. For Catherine Powell, a single white feather, received on a beach walk, held within it an experience of Spirit that led to 25 years of providing a venue, direction and support for dozens and dozens of fellow pilgrims to encounter God.

*Total disclosure: We did welcome men after a time! (God opens to all who knock!)*

True, the beach retreat provides dedicated time to be open to God-experience, and I’m sure all attendees could enumerate significant moments of awareness that occurred on these special week-ends. But perhaps the greater question is: How did the God-moments of the beach retreats revisit you in your daily life or continue to live within you? Let me give you one seemingly tiny example from my own experience – my first retreat, in fact –that *still* nourishes!

I am one of 20 or so women in a large semi-circle facing the ocean in the beautiful dining room of the Litchfield Inn. We are talking about the language of the Creed. Someone says: *When I come to the part about the Holy Spirit, “who spoke through the prophets,” I always say “who speaks through the prophets. Everything else about the Holy Spirit is in the present tense, and I believe we have many prophets speaking to us today!*

This prayerful, attentive woman’s very logical expression of belief has led me to ever after listen for the voices of the prophets of our day. And I find many! So, not a tiny encounter with God at all, but a momentous one, from one of our own water women! I never saw her again and no longer recall her name, only a memory of a small, articulate woman with very short, dark, curly hair. Someday I will ask you, Catherine, as I’m sure you will know!

Possibly the biggest take-away I can share from my years of The Anchorage beach retreats is that two days of solitude and silence paired with a loving theology (thanks to the incomparable Caroline Smith, SSMN) and discussion in the company of inspiring retreatants of all de-nominations and backgrounds has provided me with foundational wisdom for continuing insights into who I am before God. That said, none of this would be quite the same without the abiding presence of the ocean, the sacred water that holds us in her embrace for two days, under the spell of her tides, the unceasing murmur of her voice reminding us of the absolute constancy of our God.

*(Thanks to Jo Ann Hoffman for this article and for her friendship and support of The Anchorage for many years! Her publications include a children’s book, short fiction, and numerous poems in literary journals, including The Merton Quarterly, Snapdragon, Pinesong, Persimmon Tree, New Verse News, Kakalak, Red Clay Review, Broad River Review and Flying South, among others. Recognition from Palm Beach Poetry Festival contests and a Pushcart nomination are among her awards. Her narrative non-fiction book, Angels Wear Black, recounts a technology executive kidnapping in California’s Silicon Valley. A native of Toledo, Ohio, Jo Ann and her husband now live in Cary and Beaufort, NC)*

**“How did the God moments continue to live within you?”**



# The Anchorage

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Community for All

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*“For thus says the Lord God, the  
Holy One of Israel:  
In returning and rest you shall be saved;  
in quietness and in trust shall be  
your strength.” (Isaiah 30:15)*



*Susan Leaphart with her Service Award,  
with our gratitude for serving on our  
board for another 3 years.”*

### **(cont'd from page 3)**

As I matured spiritually, I developed a better sense of discernment. I was able to recognize whether or not God wanted me to go in a certain direction ... or slow down ... or speed up ... or prepare to be “dipped!” I allowed God to lead ... and I allowed myself to follow. I am far from an expert, but I have been getting the hang of it! I am also sure that God wants to hold me closer and teach me new dance steps! Isn't that God's desire for each one of us in the Dance of Life?

As I have reflected on the image of dancing with God, I was reminded of the 1975 song by the group Orleans called *Dance with Me*. Let the beginning lyrics below be God's words and desire for you. (You can find it on YouTube if you want to listen to it. Let God sing it to you!): May you accept God's invitation: *Dance with me!*  
*Dance with me, I want to be your partner. Can't you see?*

*The music is just starting.  
Night is calling, and I am falling. Dance with me....*

PS.: I googled my father's dancing technique as I was writing this reflection and found two articles: *The Art of Leading - And Following* by Frank Hamilton and *Lead and Follow* in Wikipedia. Look them up if you're interested!

**“God wants to  
hold me closer  
and teach me new  
dance steps!”**

*(Thanks to Mary Pollini for this article and for her friendship and support of The Anchorage for many years. She lives in Whitestone, NY and has known Catherine Powell since 2000 when they met on retreat at the Jesuit Center in Wernersville, PA. Mary taught math for 42 years, and has been happily retired since 2017! She received her certification as a spiritual director in 2012 after completing a two-year program at The Upper Room Spiritual Center in Neptune, NJ. In 2018, she participated in a summer internship at The Jesuit Center to direct retreats. Mary offers individual spiritual direction to people who have a desire to deepen their relationship with God. She also serves as a guest director, accompanying people making directed retreats, and facilitates a variety of programs in her home parish of St. Luke's.)*

### **Financial Status**

(as of January 15, 2023)  
(Our Fiscal Year is July 1 – June30)

Total FY gifts budgeted	\$ 26,600
Total received	\$ 12,700
<b>Amount needed</b>	<b>\$13,900</b>
Total FY income budgeted	\$ 41,320
Total received	\$ 17,400
<b>Amount needed*</b>	<b>\$23,920</b>

*We moved our Fall Book Study to Advent (home repairs) and some new folks joined us. God is good!*

*Our December Desert Day was plagued with illness so our leader, Matt Rollins, created reflections and sent them to us! All gift!*

**Our Friend Raiser will be live-streamed AND in person, Tues., February 28<sup>th</sup>!** Thanks for listening for God's leading about how much to pledge! It will be just the right amount! So grateful!

**All gifts are fully tax-deductible as The Anchorage is a 501c3 non-profit ministry.** (Use our convenient online PayPal donation/registration.)