



Longing for the Light

During the Advent season, like many churches, we light a candle each week to represent some aspect of Jesus. We light candles for Hope, for Peace, for Joy, and for Love, and as we draw closer to Christmas the Light continues to grow within the sanctuary and hopefully in our hearts.

Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world" (*John 8:12*), and He also says, "You (we) are the Light of the world" (*Matthew 5:14*). His words are comforting and empowering; yet sometimes the Light seems elusive, especially if we are walking on a "bridge over troubled waters".

As I write this, I cry out the words of Francis of Assisi, "Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace." I feel more despair than hope, more division than peace, more sadness than joy, and more hate than love in our world. Where is the Light we long for that shines in the darkness?

Richard Rohr says, "Spirituality is all about seeing with new eyes." I, maybe you, walk so quickly through the day that I often fail to see what is above me, below me, beside me, and within me. The feathered robin in the apple tree, the slant of light through the red stained glass, and the golden leaf drifting to the ground all escape my gaze. Do I miss glimpses of divine beauty? Heavenly light?

I am thankful for places like Peacewhisper that support a divine space for slowing down and reminding us that God's light and presence are always with us. Emmanuel!

May we slow down, look twice, and receive God's healing light this Advent Season.

~ *Craig Paschal*
Board Member

Pastor of United Methodist Church, Mancos, CO



Advent Longing

"Immense and magnetic as our universe is,
ancient as are its beginnings,
complex as are its immeasurable parts,
yet our hearts' longings are still more immense,
magnetized toward the mystery that is [God]."

William Cleary, We Side with the Morning

I think the two greatest gifts God has given us are the very gift of God's own self ~ God's longing for us, and a gift planted in the deepest recesses of our hearts ~ our longing for God. It is these deep longings that fuel our search for deeper knowing, intimate relationship, and visceral connection with God.

Imagine Mary's longing while carrying Jesus. Imagine Mary's profound experience of deeper knowing, intimate relationship, and visceral connection with God. We all long for this.

May Advent, a spiritual preparation for the coming of Jesus at Christmas, also be a time of reflection on our heart-felt longings, and if and how they are leading us closer to God.

~ *Barb Kollenkark*

Gratitude

We sincerely thank all of you who have visited us these last seventeen years. You have blessed us and Peacewhisper in your own unique way. We are grateful for these many blessings and for all those who have contributed time, energy, love, prayers, and donations. We could not have done it without you, and we extend our deepest gratitude and prayers.

We wish you all a peaceful Advent and a Christmas filled with joy, light, and love.

Mission Statement

The mission of Peacewhisper is to enhance spiritual growth and inner peace in an environment of simplicity and unique natural beauty through contemplative prayer and practice.

Longing of the Heart

God has a dream for us that echoes in our hearts as our deepest desire. If we take a little time in silence, placing ourselves in a posture of open receptivity and longing, we can feel it burning, experience its warmth and life, and even its rootedness in God.

And, Old Woman Tree ~
still, but still having something to say.
“Brother Wind! Settle down.
All whipped up, racing to where?
Settle awhile, enjoy what’s around us.
So vast, huh? Soak it in.
Join the desert pace.”

~ Sharyn Butler, Durango, CO



Holy Longing Retreat

I so loved praising the crescent
moon and the rising sun from the
top deck. And the solo time sitting
on the cliff edge or by the dusty
trail, composing silly ditty haikus.
As a dear, departed Episcopal priest
and friend used to say, “It warmed
the fleshy tables of my heart.”

Crescent moon open heart
Rejoice true soul God’s perfect light
Hung in night’s clear sky

~ John Kessell, Durango, CO

Peacewhisper Experience

From the moment I had my first conversation with Barb and Rick, saw the mountains and canyon behind me, and heard the silence between our words, I knew I had made the right choice to spend the week at Peacewhisper. Here was a world of silence and beauty that would offer me a chance to see some of the many faces of God. I sensed a kind of humility and simplicity in Barb and Rick, that I thought, had to be the result of their years of building, working, guiding others, praying, and cooking, all in this sacred place. I could see that they know it’s a world that is WAY bigger than anyone of us could hold! In the end, I guess it’s a matter of letting it hold us.

During my days here, I often thought of what Thomas Merton called a “hidden wholeness.” I walked the trails and prayed at each “special place,” for the people and places in our fractured world where sadness and brokenness obscure the beauty of “wholeness.”

In conversation with Barb, she helped me realize that my astonishment with the utter silence of Peacewhisper, was waking me up to my deepest longing for the Holy One who first longs for us. Each day the “wholeness” that Merton wrote about was revealing itself to me.

Several years ago, I first experienced this “hidden wholeness” in the world of the sea. I had an occasion to scuba dive off the coral reefs of the Bahamas. There I learned of the interconnectedness of every life form: thousands of species of fish, corals, and plants. Each one is affected by or dependent in some way or another. The silence was like a womb holding a life too profound for words.

Peacewhisper drew me into another ecosystem, another “womb,” filled with the life of the high desert earth, junipers, rock, cryptogamic soil, and “critters” of all sizes and kinds. Even the presence of the Native Puebloan peoples of past centuries remains in the signs they left behind. Like the world of the ocean, Peacewhisper held the same two lessons for me: the interdependence of every living thing and a profound silence. The psalmist says it best, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims God’s handiwork . . . not a speech, nor a voice, not a word is heard; yet their words go out through all the earth” (Ps 19:3).

As Advent approaches, I realize my time at Peacewhisper makes me all the keener to not just look, but to see; not just hear, but to listen. God’s Advent whisper announces the coming of Love, the gift of “hidden wholeness.” I for one, really don’t want to miss it!

~ Christian Morris, OSB, St. Joseph, MN



A Journey of Longing

When I decided to step away from work this year and begin this time by embarking on a road trip around the western US, I knew I was longing for something . . . a sense of freedom, less stress, reconnection with family and old friends, an adventure. I was feeling a bit confused about my path, and after the past few years of adjusting to a huge loss, a move, changes in my career, and becoming a solo empty nester, I was also longing for a deeper understanding of where I belong and how to proceed with a future so very different than I once imagined.

Two weeks of my road trip were spent at Peacewhisper, exploring familiar trails and views, savoring the most beautiful sunsets on earth, enjoying the love and support of family, and being part of retreat preparations for upcoming guests. During that time of planning, we spent hours discussing the “Holy Longing.” Time was spent in deep conversation, in prayer, in the creation of ideas and crafts. As I engaged in these small tasks, I began to feel something growing deep within me. It was a different longing, a very holy longing to feel closer to God, to understand what I might now believe, to experiencing a sense of trust again, that maybe despite feeling I am alone most of the time, that I truly am not alone. At the end of my two-week stay, my heart felt a deep sense of love and healing.

I moved south after Peacewhisper on to New Mexico and many weeks of other beautiful adventures, but the seed of holy longing was planted. Settling back at home now, I feel such gratitude for a time of rest, reflection, and re-energizing from what I experienced at Peacewhisper.

I continue to feel the seed taking hold and beginning to grow. My path is still not clear, but I will continue to nurture this holy longing and tend to its desire for greater trust, hope, and understanding as I move forward into the unknown.

Advent Poem

Tis the season of hope and promise
Tis the season of good will,
Tis the season of joy and sharing
Tis the season when time stood still.

Do you wait for the one who is promised
With anticipation hardly contained?
For new life is stirring within us
The Christ child already proclaimed.

Christ comes in the inner soul's darkness
To radiate light from within.
Do you feel his love and compassion
Do you give yourself to him?

Will you radiate Christ's light this season
To a world in plenty of need?
Will you greet the lonely stranger
Those who hunger will you feed?

For the Christ child lives within us now
Birthed year after year.
May this be the season you share that light
With all those far and near.

~ Barb Kollenkark



~ Our daughter, Jen Song
Minneapolis, MN

Peacewhisper News



As I settle in to begin this article, I am reminded that our season is nearly over. I look out the window and after three days of rain clouds that dropped almost 2 inches on us, the sky has cleared to a view of the first snow on the Abajo Mountains to our west.

It seems that only a short time ago I was enjoying the early spring wildflowers, but this summer seemed shorter for several reasons. The first of which is we were gone for big chunks of it. We graduated two of our granddaughters from college, each on a different coast and attended the wedding of a niece. Each one, whether we flew or drove, took a week or so. Then there is the issue of repairs. After 17 years of use, things just wear out or break. Being the maintenance man, I spent a fair amount of time repairing or replacing.

There are a few new projects that were completed though. The plywood box built in 2007 to hold all the solar equipment and the batteries has been replaced with a slump block structure to match the rest of Peacewhisper. Also, the stainless steel stations, which were badly faded, have been replaced with rusty iron ones to match the other signage we have. This is the fourth set we have had and I'm sure they will be the last. You can see pictures of all 14 stations on the website.

I wrote an article some time ago about the trials of replacing the dome bay window which had succumbed to the sun. The dome manufacturer had troubles and the current window is their 5th attempt. Unfortunately, that one has shrunk to the point where it came detached from the dome fabric. Replacement number 6 is in the works at the dome factory, and I have put a 'band aid' on for the winter, but with the weather changing, I will wait until spring to put number 6 in place.

Most of the other repairs involved plumbing (my least favorite) or equipment (which there is a lot of). The bottom line is that all the repairs, the water hauling, and all day grocery runs take a lot of time, time that I still enjoy.

~ Rick Kollenkark



*Wait quietly in My Presence while My thoughts
form silently in the depth of your being. I choose
to make My humble home in your heart. It is
there where you know Me most intimately, it is
where I speak to you in holy whispers.*

~ Sarah Young. *Jesus Calling*

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P.O. Box 595 Dove Creek, CO 81324

peacewhisper@gmail.com www.peacewhisper.org

Contacts: Barb and Rick Kollenkark 970-846-8466