Stone Circle News

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Abundance and the Vine

By Margie Gray

We are in a time of tremendous change in our world. There are many who feel a sense of scarcity in their lives. Certainly, someone who has lost their job may feel this intensely. There are many other losses that we may feel just as or even more intensely. In the US, it is easy to get caught up in the commercial attitude that we can and should have it all. We lose sight of the natural cycles of life that require times of pruning and purging in order for new, healthy growth to occur. I think of visiting vineyards in California and hearing how the vines are pruned back to the main stem so that the following year's harvest will be better than the last. The pruning puts all of the energy of growth back into the root and main stem making them stronger. They not only produce better tasting, more abundant grapes, but they are better able to withstand difficult environmental conditions.

This is important for me to remember right now. When I do, I have an opportunity to get rid of all of the superficial, extraneous "stuff" in my life and get back to basics. I ask myself questions like: What are the three most important things in my life? What are the three words that describe me when I am at my best? I am focused on keeping my answers simple, clear, and positive. Now I can focus on what is most important.

In answering my questions, I keep in mind that I am the root. My first focus is on keeping me healthy: mind, body and spirit. I know that keeping healthy can be simple when I make choices that get rid of the clutter of life. Simply feeding myself with healthy thoughts, nourishing foods and uplifting friends can make a world of difference.

Now I can do my own pruning. De-cluttering my head is something I can work on anytime, anywhere. Getting rid of negative thoughts about myself and people around me can open the space for a fresh perspective. Letting go of obsessing over unimportant details can give me wings. Even spending too much time on important decisions can drain my energy and add little value to my life. De-cluttering closets, drawers and shelves of belongings that no longer serve a purpose for me can open the space for recycling at its best. What is no longer part of my abundance can become abundance for someone else. Some pruning can be more difficult. Letting go of people or situations in my life that drain my energy is also a form of de-cluttering. It is not always possible to just hand over a particularly draining relative to Goodwill. However, I do still have control over how I relate to that person. Letting go of all of the energy that surrounds the relationship and focusing on the core of the relationship can make a huge difference.

This is a time of great opportunity for us. When we let go of everything except that which is in alignment with who we are, we prune back to the root and main stem. We become stronger, more fruitful and what we bring to the world is even sweeter.

Women have gathered in circles
since the dawn of history
for birthing,
to share story,
at cisterns for washing,
at fires for warmth,
at wells to draw water,
in embraces of profound joy,
in prayer,
in rings of sorrow and mourning.

With hands grasped, we gather our
collective wisdom,
energies and strengths
binding us and
guiding us into the future.
Each woman brings her gifts,
placing herself

Circles of Prayer

By Jean Gold

Sometimes the ebb and flow of life takes you into a situation where you need to pull up the memories of difficult times in your past to walk through them again. The moments, weeks and years revisited aren't as painful as they were when you lived with them day to day. When you were in the depths of despair, trying to find your way through these moments, God gave you words of comfort and hope through the books you read (especially the bible and other daily readings) and the spoken word. These words and thoughts helped you to center your thinking; giving you a small light to follow as you walked down a difficult path.

People came into your life who could hear your troubles and, by sharing with you the wisdom that they had gained during their spiritual journeys, they were able to help ease your concerns. The words of wisdom, sometimes difficult to hear or take to heart when they were offered, remained within to be revisited when they were later more fully comprehended.

In return for the guidance and wisdom that was given to you during those trying times, you then are sometimes called to help someone else in similar circumstances. In God's perfect timing, the wisdom and comfort that you were given is then passed on to another and you are allowed for a brief moment to witness one of God's planned "coincidences" and perhaps an answer to someone's prayer.

God has two dwellings; one in heaven, and the other in a meek and thankful heart.
- *Izaak Walton*

Love is much nicer to be in than an automobile accident, a tight girdle, a higher tax bracket, or a holding pattern over Philadelphia.
- *Judith Viorst*

Life is what we make it. Always has been, always will be.
- *Grandma Moses*

What can you do to promote world peace? Go home and love your family.
- *Mother Teresa*

AFFIRMATION CORNER

By Margie Gray

River of life…

I took a canoe trip with some friends. A couple of people showed up with modest backpacks that contained everything they needed for a day out on the water. Others spent a tremendous amount of time and energy loading up huge coolers and bags of food and "stuff." Against the advice of others in the group, one person decided to sit on top of a cooler in the canoe she shared. Floating down the river, that particular canoe had a lot of trouble. Whenever there were low hanging branches the two people paddling had to work hard to avoid the branches, moss and massive spider webs. (Anyone see where this is going yet?) Eventually, the top heavy canoe capsized dumping the two navigators, the "Queen of the Nile" (which is what she looked like to me) and the contents of the canoe into the river.

Take a look around you. How much stuff have you packed in your canoe to navigate the river of life? Are you sitting down comfortably in your canoe where you can keep your balance or are you sitting up high above the water, making the whole journey an uncomfortable exercise to avoid capsizing?

With the intention of getting back to basics, I would like to offer a few affirmations.

~ I have everything I need to thrive in this life, NOW.

~ I let go of anything that disrupts the flow of my life, NOW.

~ I am centered, grounded, and balanced in my life, NOW.

~ I nourish my mind, body and spirit, NOW.

Sometimes, on our journey, we collect "stuff" that can get hung up on rocks and branches along the way or interfere with our sense of balance. As we let go of unnecessary baggage, we clear the space to step into the river of life and truly go with the flow.

Please let us know the names of those you would like to have included in our prayer circle.

Calendar of Events

The women of Stone Circle meet for regularly scheduled and special events each month. Listed below are the events for the months ahead.

April 2010

9	Centering Prayer-Holy Cross	7:30 PM
	Newcomers Orientation	7:00 PM
17	Gathering of Women	
	Holy Cross Ministry Building	9:30 AM
24	**In the Company of Trees**	**10:00 AM**

May 2010

7	Centering Prayer-Holy Cross	7:30PM
	Newcomers Orientation	7:00PM
15	Gathering of Women	
	Holy Cross Ministry Building	9:30 AM
	Women as Nurturers	

June 2010

4	Centering Prayer-Holy Cross	7:30 PM
	Newcomers Orientation	7:00 PM
19	**Summer Solstice Sunrise Beach Celebration**	**5:00 AM**
19	Gathering of Women	
	Holy Cross Ministry Building	9:30 AM

July 2010

2	Centering Prayer-Holy Cross	7:30 PM
	Newcomers Orientation	7:00 PM
17	Gathering of Women	
	Holy Cross Ministry Building	9:30 AM
	Mary of Magdala	

Hard Times – Positive Changes

By Jan Herrick

Quite often a trauma or an unexpected challenge is the catalyst that forces us to reevaluate our lives and consciously initiate changes. Adversity can cause us to make decisions to do things in a different way. Sometimes these outside forces impact only one or a few individuals, but in the case of a natural disaster they can impact many people at the same time. Whether an illness, death, accident, hurricane, earthquake, or our current economic recession, meeting the challenges that these events place before us force us to respond. How we choose to react is up to us.

Hard economic times reach out to everyone across all boundaries. Some find their lives turned upside down, while others manage to profit from the situation, taking advantage of the hardships of others. When money is tight, most people are forced to tighten their belts, yet there are some who seem to live outside reality. For those who choose to seize the opportunity to confidently and positively reassess their life style and values, these moments of challenge can reveal a new sense of balance, and a new foundation for living life with simplicity and purpose.

We live in a country whose economy is based on buying and selling. We are the wealthiest county in the world, and we are used to being able to get the things we need when we need them. However, there is a difference between needing and wanting. When we lose track of this reality we can get in trouble. Putting things in balance by looking at our values, and what is really important to us, we might see the difference between what we really need… not just what we want. Tight money has caused some to chose to stay at home for dinner with the family, or watch a movie on TV, foregoing the cost of a theater ticket or a dinner out. Surprisingly we may be reconnecting with the value of time together as a family, as well as the fact that in helping each other we also help ourselves.

I like to think that as we each respond to our current economic times and respond to them in our own unique way that we are able to find a balance that will serve us best. May we each uncover our deepest values, beliefs and motivations; find our strength and courage, and empower our resolve and determination to bring about a renewal and a better future for ourselves, our families, our communities and our world.

The moment a woman comes home to herself, the moment she knows she has become a person of influence, an artist of her life, a sculptor of her universe, a person with rights and responsibilities who is respected and recognized, the resurrection of the world begins. ~ Sister Joan Chittister

Little Red Wagon

Pulling my three year old daughter, Star, in her little red wagon to pick up her brother Devin from school was a typical afternoon. We'd stop to pick a flower or chase a butterfly. Star loved to ride in that little red wagon and Devin delighted in pulling his sister around the back yard in that little red wagon. Star pulled her dog, Mila, in the little red wagon and many mud pies were made in that little red wagon.

Abandoned by my mom at five, I had no memories of sunny afternoons. My childhood was colored by bruises and black eyes. No lullabies to go to sleep by: only the sound of things flying and crashing. We were confined to an upstairs bedroom, our empty stomachs screaming almost as loudly as the yelling downstairs, all waiting for the safety of silence. I was imprisoned for nine years. No friends or school activities, just five moms and four dads confusing a little girl with a real dad saying "If you leave, don't ever come back."

At 14, I was called out of class to hear the words, "Your father has agreed to let you live with me." The stepmother had gotten what she wanted. We were not wanted though at the time I did not see what a gift our father had given us. All four of us teenagers then loaded up our belongings in our mom's station wagon and drove across the state line. No time for goodbyes. We simply disappeared, leaving behind my one friend without explanation.

We drove into an uncertain future, guided by a guilt ridden mom we had not seen in 9 years. The questions flooded my mind but were shielded by the defenses that I had learned. Trust no one, rely on self, distance self, let no one in, and stay detached. No one gets hurt, disappointed or abandoned again.

Slowly, the new start opened doors out of my prison of self reliance. I was the new kid without a history. I discovered I was good at sports and found myself the captain of the basketball team and the MVP for track. I felt the warmth of friendship erasing the coldness of my past. Opportunities and choices replaced a quest of pure survival. I could finally wear a real smile. With the help of my track coach, a track scholarship paved my way to a great college experience. I moved from N.C. to Florida for my first job as a wilderness counselor helping emotionally troubled teens. I met my future husband, converted to Catholicism, coached wheelchair sports, had two wonderful kids, and totally immersed myself in family.

Scars heal with time. Forgiveness heals memories. I see how God has been pulling me through, keeping me safe and protected as I have traversed narrow and steep cliffs nearly falling out of the wagon. His hands have hung onto me as my wagon has plunged perilously like a roller coaster. Even now, when I am being the best I know how to be, the road can sometimes get dark and lonely. Then I trust the invisible hand: the hand that created me uniquely and gave me no fear. God: my strength and my shadow; whispering to my heart. My wagon is constantly being filled with the things that I love making me savor the ride.

I smile at my little Star as she giggles on the path to her brother's school and dream of the day I can give my grandchildren a gift of a little red wagon.

Written by Linda Gayle Edited by Cindy Jank

Reconnecting with the Essence of Self … now, I have a title for what I have been conceiving and actively trying to succeed at. Not long ago, I was made very aware that I had disconnected from my Self by letting other people be my first priority, resulting in the reduction/loss of my personal Self care.

When Self is mentioned, most people jump to the connotation of "selfish"; as though that is a bad thing. I personally have decided it is okay to be selfishly concerned about my daily mental and physical well-being. I have also discovered it is a gift to be selfish about getting and keeping myself grounded with family and friends that share my same beliefs and values. It is the basic value of "treat others as you want to be treated."

Currently, the most important activity in my life is to redevelop my Self. It is my intention that my associations be peaceful and renewing, filling *up* my spirituality. I sleep better these days because I have finally slowly learned "*And the God of all grace…will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast"* **Peter 5:10** It is getting to be a pleasure to connect with people, places and things that bring me a sense of well-being. And to everything else, "wish you well – bid you farewell." Self is important. You can be a plus to the world if you are good to yourself. By Virginia Strait

Connecting the Dots

By Dorie Croissant

The concept of change has many faces. Faces that are both good and not so good. In the past I thought that abundance meant having a lot of material things, but as I grow older I must be gaining a bit of wisdom.

I believe now that abundance is instead about connecting the dots to what I do have in life. Connecting friendships with the faith of a bright new idea. Connecting faith with the spirituality of inner peace and soulful living.

Connecting life's events with new learning and incredible experiences. While some of us absolutely hate change by pulling and pushing, screaming and screeching, change does have the power to manifest itself in ways we can't even begin to grasp. Take for instance the concept to "spring forward" when it comes to losing that one hour to Day Light Savings Time. Ouch! I hate that weekend because that one hour seems so precious. Then I forget about that hour because the evenings appear longer. Connecting the dots once again.

The joy of watching the women of Stone Circle as they gather for monthly meetings, prayer circles, Decade Day celebrations and spring bonnet creations (as well as many other such celebrations), makes my heart sing with an abundance of what's real and significant. One of the most recent celebrations was Decade Day. This event is always celebrated on February 7th. And while this year it coincided with the New Orleans Saints winning the Super Bowl for the first time ever (same time/same night), we had a great turnout. Several of the women came for the very first time and I do believe they were all touched by the ritual richness of the evening. The women in the group spanned several decades—all to be celebrated and applauded. Talk about connecting the dots on this Decade Day—it was just plain awesome. I, for one, will be entering yet another decade of life this year and there were several women who are currently in this decade who were there to welcome me into what they call a great time in life. The Stone Circle readings for each decade focuses on different gifts. Ironically, the gifts of my new decade wish for me faith and wisdom, mingled with life experiences, mistakes and understanding. It can only get better. Therefore, let there be no lack of abundance in God's graces for the dots we connect and for the wisdom we gain because it IS all good.

From left to right: Sue, Jean, Jean, Dorie, Anne, Lucy, Lee and Jan.

Spring Fling in Clearwater

By Virginia Strait

Our "Spring Renewal" began at the church parking lot with perfect weather and everyone's synchronization for traveling in a timely manner. We divided into two vehicles to keep someone from being a hood ornament. I had the privilege of being a back seat driver, Jan had given me the written direction's to call out. We passed some known and new landmarks, details were shared amongst us as we knew them. I was amazed at how beautiful all the bodies of water were as we passed, a nice variation from the east coast.

Arriving at Salome's lovely home, we were greeted with a her quick smile and quite an array of munching delights. The festivities were soon focused with questions like "What represents Spring to you?"...I of course thought of the seasonal chocolate bunnies, which brings the proverbial question "Do you eat the ears or the tail first?". Personality traits are supposed to be revealed by your eating habits...I was amazed at the *variety* of spring signs and symbols each of the ladies had. Then, we all got very creative with the provided supplies to make our own "Easter Bonnets." We picked through, selected, traded, glued, and remodeled some great fashion statements. There are pictures to prove it.

I returned home with a pleasant refreshed feeling. I have reflected on many of the topics shared and realized, "It's a beautiful life if you want it that way." Thanks for reminding me ladies.

"The newsletter topic is ***"Reconnecting with the Essence of Self":*** *how do we re-connect with our self in this time of change and lack of abundance.*

Say what?" …and then I pondered. Upon further thought I realized I'd have a hard time "re-connecting" with *self* because even at my advanced age I feel as though I am still connecting with *self* in the first place.

I have not experienced as so many have, the loss of a job; or had to change my daily life in drastic ways; or suffered personally from a lack of abundance in these times. There have been other such times in my past when that has happened, but not in the recent years. When I think about re-connecting with the *essence* of self, I think, for me personally, it is all tied up in "peace-of-mind"…the bottom line is that with "peace-of-mind" comes the serenity, and acceptance that helps all re-connectivity fall into place. The way to that peace-of-mind for me is in coming to know and understand and accept myself and to learn to know, understand and accept all others in my life.

By Jody Donovan

The 2010 Stone Circle Cruise Retreat

This year we are planning another three day cruise/retreat on the Royal Caribbean *Monarch of the Seas* for the October 15-18 weekend. A variety of cabin categories are being offered in hope that the cruise will be affordable for everyone who wishes to come. The prices begin with an inside cabin—$269.34 per person and an ocean view—$291.34 per person. All rooms can accommodate 2,3 or 4 persons (if booking 3 or 4 persons per cabin the cost will be lower pre person).

Please call Allison at 407-855-4252 to reserve your space. A $100 deposit is due May 1 with final payment due on August 1. Anyone booking by May 1 will receive a $50 per cabin credit or a $25 per person credit.

The Stone Circle Group
will be 11 years old this June

Our first meeting was on the Summer Solstice In 1999

Stone Circle women would like to celebrate this birthday on the evening of

June 6

With a dinner gathering at a local restaurant yet to be determined

Please call Jan Herrick if you think that you would like to attend this birthday celebration.

In the Company of Trees
Saturday, April 24th
10:00 AM to Noon

"In the Company of Trees" has fast become a popular annual event. We gather in the shade of the magnificent 500 year old tree on the property of the Mennello Museum off Princeton in Orlando to celebrate Spring, Arbor Day, Earth Day, and all that trees symbolize or mean to us.

I have lived here in Orlando for over twenty years and I know that I have passed by this beautiful tree a hundred times totally oblivious to its existence, but once discovered, I never miss acknowledging its presence or telling everyone I know about her. I will refer to the tree as her, since "it" is so very impersonal, and she has, over the years, become a steadfast friend. I have sought her out in times of trouble or sorrow, and shed tears while sitting in her arms. I have laughed with her and played like a little girl in the shade of her immense canopy. She is many things to me, but her role as witness to the world and a keeper of wisdom are the ones that I treasure and admire most.

She has stood for 500 hundred years, witnessed the Civil War and watched as hundreds of Floridians went off to two world wars and countless other fights. She has seen Orlando develop from vast marshes and fields to a metropolis that is still in the process of growth. She has withstood hurricanes and other natural disasters, stood tall in sunshine and rain, and lost limbs in the process. She has stayed even as those who would see her removed have come and gone. Still she lives and gives us her example of courage. She embodies the phrase, "bloom where you are planted". She seems to say, "Make the most of what the world throws at you, and keep your head held high."

Treat yourself and join us on Saturday, April 24th and savor the company of trees and reconnect with the beauty and wisdom of Nature. Come prepared to play, contemplate nature, share stories or poems about trees we have loved, and bring along a chair or a matt and a brown bag lunch to eat in the shade of the 500 year old tree. Call Jan to sign up and get car pool information.

By Jan Herrick

Summer Solstice Celebration
Depart Orlando 5:00 AM
Sunrise on Cocoa Beach 6:20 AM
Breakfast Following

Make plans now to join us for the celebration of the Summer Solstice on Saturday, June 19th. This popular annual event has us getting up way before light and driving to Cocoa Beach to witness the Sunrise. Yes, it happens every day, and most of us never notice. We get up and go on with our day without ever focusing on the magnificent splendor and radiance of the Sun's rising above the horizon to give us blessed light and warmth for the day. This is precisely why we stop once a year at the time of the Summer Solstice to mark the occasion by our gathering at the beach to witness the event with joy and profound gratitude.

The Summer Solstice is a time of reawakening to the wonders of our world, to acknowledge the joys in our lives, and to stop, even for a moment, to experience the wonder of it all through childlike eyes… and give thanks. It is the longest day of the year and marks a shift in nature that affects our world in countless ways.

This year as in years past, this celebration coincides with our monthly Women's Gathering, where we will continue the celebration and discussion of the event. We will gather in the parking lot of Holy Cross Church in the darkness at 5:00 AM. Yes… I did say 5! After carpooling to the Beach for the Sunrise, we will have breakfast in a local restaurant and then drive back in time for the meeting. Hope you will consider joining us this year. It is well worth setting your alarm at 4 something AM!

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Stone Circle operates as a nonprofit entity whose presence seeks to enhance the feminine milieu for women of the 21st century. We truly rely on the generosity of friends and those who participate in programs.