



Stone Circle News

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Gratitude

By Gerri Helms, CSC

I am someone who looks at the positive things in my life more often than dwelling on the negative. I once heard that if my cup is always just half empty (or half full), get a smaller cup! With an attitude like this, my life is always overflowing with wonder.

Many recognize the last quarter of the year as a time to be grateful, and that suits me! For a long time, I've kept a gratitude list, recording at least five things each day for which I am grateful. Last year about this time, a friend of mine lost her husband. I called to extend my condolences and thought about how much I love my husband Dave, even though he can get on my nerves at times. Suddenly, his corny jokes were funny again, and I didn't mind picking up his dirty clothes. I guess that Wayne Dyer was on right point when he wrote, "*When we change the way we look at things, the things we look at change.*"

For many years, my parents, five siblings and their families converged on the home of my youngest sister in North Carolina to celebrate Thanksgiving. At last count, there were twenty-seven of us. Now there are many more, as our children raise families of their own.

Our Thanksgiving celebration always started with the entire brood attending Mass at Sandy's church. Later, the brothers became gourmet chefs for the day, and the meals were always sumptuous! The women, children and any non-cooking brothers raked leaves on their rather large country front lawn. What fun, making big piles of leaves, jumping into them and acting like children! We probably made a bigger mess than actually helping my brother-in-law!

One year, Sandy rented a big tent so we could all be together for the meal. Sandy's husband, Craig, asked that we all take a turn to say one thing for which we were grateful. Most of us shared how wonderful it was to have such a great, loving family. Yumi, their foreign exchange student from Japan attempted to speak but was so overcome with emotion that she just started crying and buried herself on Craig's chest.

Now our families have grown and we no longer make the pilgrimage to North Carolina.
(Cont. on page 3)

*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
as a stone in the unbroken circle.*

© Janet Herrick

Chronos & Kairos/Gratitude & Blessings

By Sherri Finnegan

I write lots of stories. As I write, I keep in mind two key factors – *Chronos* (Greek for “clock time”) and *Kairos* (Greek for “holy time”).

Chronos time is measurable, a constant. The school bell rang at 7 a.m. Another day of classes, the 45 minutes of each class ticked off by the large clock hung in each room. *Kairos* time is more about emotions, how we experience that time ticking off. The last class of the day. The hour hand has already reached the large 3 on the face of the clock. The minute hand is inching ever so slowly towards the upright position of the 12. The insistent click of the thin red second hand ticks off another moment until we hear that clanging bell of freedom.

Gratitude and Blessings are a lot like *Chronos* and *Kairos*. I feel grateful for many things and people each and every day, but they are in the moment. I try to recognize as many daily graces as I can, to keep my sanity. Too late for that, I suppose.

Blessings, on the other hand, are favorable thoughts bestowed on ourselves and others. These wishes are on-going, felt with our hearts, and received with smiles and feelings of appreciation and love – holy time. I truly enjoy putting “holy time” back into my everyday life. I say “thank you” and “bless you” interchangeably to people who are doing something nice for me. I always have my bottle of Holy Water that I sprinkle on my dogs, my kids, my newest grandbaby, my letters to friends and families, my airplane seat when I am flying. I may be sanity-challenged, but I am blessed! And, finally, with the last name of Finnegan, I have a complete collection of famous Irish blessings framed and hung in my home !

Best Wishes for the daily graces in your life,
and Many Blessings, *Sherri*

Thank you God for always giving me
more than I need!!

Submitted by Louise Ambrose

AFFIRMATION CORNER

By Margie Gray

I like to think of myself as a positive person. Lately, I have struggled to live that way of being. Last month, I started to think about possible themes for the newsletter, so that I could send a couple of ideas for discussion. “Are you running your life or is life running you?” was one I came up with, or maybe “Digging out of the pile of muck that was just dumped on you.” (You may have a sense of what I perceive is going on in my life right now.)

When I saw the theme of Gratitude, Blessings and Thankfulness it was like smelling salts bringing me out of a fog. The song, “You’ve Lost That Lovin’ Feeling” came to mind. So today, I’m speaking to anyone who is struggling to see the beauty of their lives right now. Those of you who are in a great place regardless of what life has served up, have a great day and just move on. We will be joining you in the sunshine again soon.

I know I have many blessings and many things to be thankful for. So why am I struggling to find the blessing in certain situations? And why do I see those things as “negative”? They are supporting my growth as a person. That’s a good thing, isn’t it? One thing I have remembered as a result of all that I’ve experienced lately is that, as much as I would like to, I will not always feel good, optimistic and happy about what’s going on in my life, (even if I know it is making me a better person). Sometimes I just have to relax and be with what is. Sometimes that means being with the sorrow, sadness or frustration. As I work toward recognizing *all* of the blessings in my life, I am learning to be patient with the process. It’s alright to wonder where the divine order is in *this* moment.

On the other hand, it is sometimes helpful to get a gentle reminder that a positive attitude can make a difference. As I remember, relax and reflect, I realize that I can make things even more difficult by focusing too much energy on the challenges and not enough on the triumphs. So I am taking a deep breath, affirming patience with myself and waiting for the blessings to be revealed.

With that in mind, I offer affirmations for those moments in which the blessings are not immediately evident.

- ~ **I am open to the blessings of this moment NOW.**
- ~ **I trust that the blessings of this moment will be revealed in their perfect time.**
- ~ **I breathe in peace and release (fear, sadness, frustration, pain) NOW.**
- ~ **I trust in the divine flow of life NOW.**
- ~ **All is in divine order.**

I do my best to remember to be gentle with myself in the moments that escape my understanding. In those moments I also trust that I will feel the warmth and comfort of optimism and gratitude shining in and through my life.

Prayer Circle

Christy
Kathy
Margaret
Cheryl
Evelyn
Mergie

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.

Oct 2011

- 15 For Women Only Gathering
Church Ministry Building 9:30 AM
- 21-24 **Annual Cruise/Retreat**

Nov 2011

- 13 **Labyrinth Walk** 2:00 PM
- 19 For Women Only Gathering
Church Ministry Building 9:30 AM

Dec 2011

- 17 For Women Only Gathering
Church Ministry Building 9:30 AM
- 18 **Winter Solstice Celebration** 7:00 PM
Offsite Location

Jan 2012

- 1 The Friday Series:
Meditation-Centering Prayer
At Jan Herrick's home 7:30 PM
- 14 For Women Only Gathering
Church Ministry Building 9:30 AM
(2nd Sat. this month only)

Centering Prayer that has been offered on the first Friday of each month is being replaced with The Friday Series: Meditations of Daily Living

"Feeling grateful or appreciative of someone or something in your life actually attracts more of the things that you appreciate and value into your life."

Christiane Northrup

Gratitude (cont. from page 1)

This year, we will prepare dinner for our son, Jason, as he returns home from southeast Asia. Perhaps our daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren from Alabama can join us too. Thanksgiving dinner with my brothers and sisters will always be a fond memory though, but I'm now creating new ones with my children-by-marriage.

I feel moved to call and thank people who have made an impact on my life. I will continue to make my daily gratitude list, each day finding five new things for which I am grateful. It seems like such gestures is when I really look at, and acknowledge the abundance in my life.

I'd like to challenge you for the rest of 2011, to find one thing a day that makes you happy. So, what are you grateful for? I bet you don't stop at one!

365 Days of Thanksgiving

By Dorie Croissant

One day at a time. Each day is a gift. Repeat.
One day at a time. Each day is a gift.

I am thankful for so many things. How could I not be!

Each day I make it a point to consciously send up a prayer of thanksgiving.

On a very good day, I get the opportunity to tell a friend thank you—in person.

On another very good day, I remember a good deed from the past and smile in gratitude.

Today I choose to be thankful for the friends & family who have supported my education efforts. The goal is near. The encouragement and guidance have been on-going and enlightening. Bless each of you for the talents you have shared - listening, proofing, tweaking, and quizzing. In gratitude, in thanksgiving, and in joy. I could not have gotten this far without you. The graduation goal is near.

365 days. Each day provides an opportunity for a nugget of thanks. Today is another one of those days.

Gratitude

By Janet Herrick

There was a time in my life when I looked back at incidents, situations and conflicts, mulled over them and thought of how things might have been different. I even spent time wishing that I could change what occurred. I reflected on individuals as well, considering them as obstacles because of the challenges they presented to me, or the discomfort and hurt they brought to me. I might have even wished to wipe it all out and start over, but I couldn't. Often the twists and turns of life didn't turn out the way I expected. John Lennon was right, life does happen while we make other plans. My regrets, anger, or hurt was the total opposite of gratitude. Not all friendships or relationships overflowed with blessings, sometimes they presented sadness and disappointment.

One day there was a shift in my understanding of this thing we call the journey of life. I realized that all the challenges, painful situations and even the hurtful people we meet along the way are part of making each one of us who we are today. Every day we open our eyes and meet the day there are things we can learn, amazing things to see and wonders to encounter. We only need to be open and aware of them. Just as we have grown in body from tiny babies to adults, we also grow in mind as well. We have the opportunity to gather tidbits of knowledge and insight along the way, which hopefully turn into an accumulation of wisdom and true maturity. This shift of insight made me realize that I had to be grateful for every part of my life, set the notion of regrets aside and embrace the challenges as enthusiastically as the joys.

Gratitude means embracing the present and letting go of the past, but remembering the lessons learned. Gratitude means being grateful for everyone who has been a teacher in the school of life, dropping the labels of good or bad. What we each do with our unique accumulated lessons manifests in our capacity for compassion and care for each other and our world. Wisdom is bestowed on those whose hearts have been broken open. Only then can true love break free.

Do not ask to have your life's load lightened,
but for courage to endure.
Do not ask for fulfillment in all your life,
but for patience to accept frustration.
Do not ask for perfection in all you do,
but for the wisdom not to repeat mistakes.
And finally, do not ask for more,
before saying "Thank you" for what you
have already received.

By Brenda Short



Poem Submitted by
Mary Reichert

It is with gratitude
that we thank God
for the blessings of
being born in America.

Gladys Kelly

Gratitude, Blessings and Thankfulness

By Virginia Strait

I am so thankful that I can now know my days are full of blessings. For a long time, I took many great events and happenings in my life for granted. Then there was a time of awakening...God got my attention and there was an adjustment. You really cannot appreciate what you have until you lose it. I am very lucky to be able to be here to agree.

Every day, I make great effort to recognize, and remind others, of the great ways that God guides and grants each of us favor... while I may not know how to solve each challenge that comes my way, I am blessed enough to know a God that can.

Our Hearts and Prayers Go Out to

Judy Galligan
Anne Wlosek

On the death of her mother, Pat
On the death of her Aunt

Summer 2011 Mini Retreat "Fearlessness: Reaching Beyond Fear to Courage"

On Saturday, July 30th, 18 women gathered at the Rosen Shingle Creek Hotel for Stone Circle's summer retreat. The day-long event was lead by Jan Herrick, with Mary Lospinoso assisting. Below are several comments that participants shared with Jan after the retreat.

~ "It was the best retreat/seminar that I've been to...most I've attended were too big (with the leader presenting the entire program)...you introduced topics...then open (the discussion) for all ...you open the door and give much food for people like me to think about..."

~ "I enjoyed the deeply interesting and life changing discussion on Saturday. Looking forward to getting together with the group again. Another affirmation I love is:
Fear knocked at the door. Faith answered and no one was there."

~ "Everyone was made comfortable with introductions...(it) produced a diverse group...once we examined different aspects, learned others experience's, we had better resources to deal with various levels of fear."



Labyrinth Walk

Once again we are offering the opportunity to participate in a meditative ritual walk of the thirteen circuit Chartre Labyrinth. The Labyrinth is an ancient tool to connect our outer and inner journey, to focus on the path allowing the distractions of daily life to be momentarily put aside in order to seek clarity, renewal and openness. Join us on Sunday, November 13, for this unique experience. We will stop to share a simple meal at a nearby restaurant on the way home. Call Dorie at 407-619-2909, for more information and to be part of the adventure.

2012 CALENDAR

January

- 6 (Friday) The Friday Series: Meditations of Daily Living
Meditation – Centering Prayer (Jan Herrick)
14 (Saturday) For Women Only Gathering (2nd Sat.)

February

- 3 (Friday) The Friday Series: Meditations of Daily Living
The Art of Baking (Dorie Croissant)
7 (Tuesday) Decade Day 7-9 PM (Jody Donovan's)
18 (Saturday) For Women Only Gathering

March

- 2 (Friday) The Friday Series: Meditations of Daily Living
Social Justice Issues: Soup/Bread Meal (Lucy Reda)
17 (Saturday) For Women Only Gathering

April

- 13 (Saturday) The Friday Series: Meditations of Daily Living
Helping the Homeless (Soup Kitchen) (Sub. to Change)
21 (Saturday) For Women Only Gathering
28 (Saturday) In the Company of Trees

May

- 4 (Friday) The Friday Series: Meditations of Daily Living
The Art of Water Colors (Jan Herrick)
19 (Saturday) For Women Only Gathering

June

- 1 (Friday) The Friday Series: Meditations of Daily Living
The Art of Writing/The Value of Journaling
(Jody Donovan/Salome Harasty)
16 (Saturday) For Women Only Gathering
23 (Saturday) Summer Sunrise Solstice

July

- 7 (Saturday) The Friday Series: Meditations of Daily Living
The Sacredness of Relaxation...“Spa Day”
21 (Saturday) For Women Only Gathering

August

- 3 (Friday) The Friday Series: Meditations of Daily Living
Getting and Staying Healthy (Jean Henry)
18 (Saturday) For Women Only Gathering

September

- 7 (Friday) The Friday Series: Meditations of Daily Living
“Sacredness in Everyday Life” - (Joyce Mansheim)
15 (Saturday) For Women Only Gathering
22 (Saturday) Annual Luncheon (WOW Award)

October

- 5 (Friday) The Friday Series: Meditations of Daily Living
Franciscan Spirituality (Roe Sullivan)
20 (Saturday) For Women Only Gathering
27 (Saturday) Annual Retreat – “Power of Silence” Location TBD

November

- 2 (Friday) The Friday Series: Meditations of Daily Living
‘Living Simply’ (Socks and Hats..Homeless)
17 (Saturday) For Women Only Gathering
18 (Sunday) Labyrinth Walk

December

- 7 (Friday) The Friday Series: Meditations of Daily Living
‘Light’ in Our Spiritual Lives (Jean Gold)
15 (Saturday) For Women Only Gathering
21 (Friday) Winter Solstice

Gratitude

By Laurie Croft

Every night before I go to sleep I go through a list in my mind of all the things I am grateful forthings that have already happened for me or that I'm looking to happen for me in the future.

I am so grateful for the people that step into my life! Often they arrive unexpectedly and at a perfect time. Most recently I was enjoying another beautiful day at the Hang Gliding school I manage, when I stepped two extraordinary women – Jan Herrick and Dorie Croissant.

You know how sometimes you just CLICK with someone? After many laughs and stories over the last few months of getting to know each other Jan and I began to form an idea about having a Women's Retreat centered around Balance. Wouldn't it be great if someone could just give you the tools you need to put Balance in your life? Easy steps to take? Between the two of us we have developed a retreat with these very tools. It's coming up in January (check your “in” box for more details down the road) and we promise it will be fun, informative and just what you need to start off 2012.

Thank you Jan and Dorie for bringing your adventurous, fun loving souls into my world. I'm truly grateful!

"Happiness will never be ours if we do not recognize to some degree that God's blessings were given us for the well-being of all."

Submitted by Salome Harasty



Stone Circle 12th Anniversary Luncheon



Seventeen ladies gathered at a luncheon on September 24, to celebrate Stone Circle's 12th birthday. Everyone enjoyed the gathering with lots of chatter and laughter.

This year, Stone Circle has designated two new **Women of Wisdom**. Virginia Strait and Jody Donovan were honored for their continuing dedication and spirited contributions to Stone Circle meetings and events.



Gratitude, Blessings, Thankfulness

By Jody Donovan

I am sometimes overwhelmed with gratitude when I realize the blessings in my lifetime for which I am eternally thankful to God and many others. How's that for a summation of the theme of this newsletter? As I go plodding through my years (at 73+ 'plodding' seems a good descriptive word), I am amazed at how blessed and lucky I have been...wonderful parents (the best of teachers), a steadfast husband (52+ yrs.), great kids (also good teachers), grandkids, great grandkids, and the best of friends that a person could hope for.

As in anyone's life I have had my times of sorrow and grief, sadness and fear, confusion and unhappiness...but through it all I seem to have come out on the other end OK....thanks to all of the aforementioned people and the grace of God.

Recently I was the recipient of one of the Annual WOW Awards for the women of the Stone Circle. Although the awarding of it was sneakily accomplished by un-named persons...I was grateful for their acknowledgement. My biggest problem with receiving it was that there are women on the Vision Committee (the planners of the SC) who are more deserving than I feel I was...but that did not stop me from giving my notable acceptance speech and then escaping the building clutching the award. Thank you. By the way...the Vision Committee includes: Jan Herrick (Co-Founder), Dorie Croissant, Jean Gold, Mary Lospinoso, Joyce Mansheim, Jean Henry, Jody Donovan, and Salome Harasty (Co-Founder Emeritus).

Winter Solstice

Seasons change even in Orlando, Florida. They may be more subtle, but we do have winter none-the-less, and although we don't have snow, it can get pretty nippy at times. Life, like the seasons, can hit us in similar ways. Sometimes changes are subtle and at other times they can hit us like a ton of bricks.

The Winter Solstice ritual, that has become a much loved and well attended Stone Circle event, is a time to acknowledge and mark the changes and losses in our lives, those bricks both large and small. Looking back over 2011, we can recognize the times that we have experienced changes in direction, losses, or hurt. Once acknowledged, we can choose to work on letting them go and commit them to the purifying Solstice Fire.

The Winter Solstice is a ritual about moving forward into the new light that becomes longer and brighter as the months pass in the new year. It is clearing our slates, taking what we have learned with new found courage and beginning again in 2012.

The Winter Solstice has been marked in every culture in all parts of the world since humans began to notice the sun moving through the sky dictating the seasons. It was chosen as the time to celebrate the Nativity because it symbolizes the promise of new life and new light in the world.

Please join us this year on Sunday, December 18, at 7:00 PM in Williamsburg for our Ritual Celebration of the Winter Solstice. Please call Jan to let her know that you will be participating and for directions to the location.



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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.