

# Stone Circle News

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## Describing Stone Circle

By Jody Donovan

It is not always easy to describe to someone what **Stone Circle** is all about. **Stone Circle** is a wonderful group of women who come together several times throughout the year for various reasons, assembling in various locations. It is not limited to age, religion, ethnic background, height or weight. There are no dues or mandatory charges (although donations are always welcome).

In this edition of the Newsletter some members of the Vision Committee and others are going to write about those different individual gatherings, describing what they are and what impact those times have had on them. These gatherings take many forms as you'll see by the comments they've made.

Simply put, we gather symbolically as 'stones' in an unbroken circle of strength and support...as women have done since the dawn of history. We chat and share, or sit quietly and listen. We laugh a lot, and cry sometimes. We learn and unknowingly teach. We meditate, pray, and ponder. And we always gain strength for ourselves from the renewed awareness of self and others, that these simple moments bring. The 'doors are always open' old friends and new...greeted with genuine welcoming care and concern.

As an overview, the annual calendar this year includes: "For Women Only Gathering" (monthly), a 'First Friday Series', 'Decade Day', the 'Tree Visit', Summer and Winter Solstice Celebrations, an Annual Retreat, a Labyrinth Walk, an Annual Luncheon and a fabulous Newsletter (4/yr).

These take place in different places, at different times with different topics of discussion...usually between 15-20 women are present...always casual and warmhearted...small donations are

welcome but not mandatory. We always hope for new women to join with us on this journey through life, encouraging '...everyone who comes, to bring another one..' so our numbers will increase.

Involvement with Stone Circle has brought me immeasurable treasure. I can say it has given me friendships beyond measure, a solace in my soul and a realization of the blessings in my life.

*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

## Stone Circle's Monthly Meeting

*By Jean Henry*

We, the women of Stone Circle, meet the third Saturday of each month from 9:30 to about 11:30 AM.

The purpose of Stone Circle is to gather our collective wisdom – all ages – all different backgrounds and perhaps at different crossroads of growth and stages in our lives. Each woman brings gifts from the wisdom she has gleaned over the years. We each choose a stone (or it chooses us!) from a basket and place it in a dish to form an unbroken circle. This group has “no strict rules.” I personally felt that I have had too many rules in my life. In Stone Circle we gather, learn and renew ourselves.

As we grow, at least for me, I've learned that religion is not synonymous with spirituality. Stone Circle meetings support all women in deepening their spiritual life whatever their faith tradition or stage they are in their life. Through the meetings and other events throughout the year we hope to honor and stretch ourselves, take risks, think outside the box and grow through these changes.

I am going into my third year as a member of Stone Circle. When I joined this lovely group – I was like a stone. Hardened almost to a “stone” due to being tossed about like stones in a creek or river. I had just retired from Sea World as a nurse. The nurse's cap came off. I felt that I had no new hat to wear. My girls were grown; grandbabies were growing “too fast.” I felt adrift in the river of life. When I met Jill in Publix, she invited me to come to a meeting and the wonderful women in Stone Circle welcomed me “Home.” My new hat says “Jean.” It is time now to learn what I am all about. Stone Circle members help me to be more still, think before I speak, be more contemplative but not ruminative (constantly mulling over things is what I did before Stone Circle). Even though things in my family may remain a bit cloudy at times, my vision is clear and I know my “own” truth for the first time in my 68 years.

I will be forever filled with gratitude for Stone Circle.

## Affirmation Corner

*No Destination*

By Margie Gray

I had a poster when I was in college that said, “God put me on this earth to accomplish a certain number of things. Right now I am so far behind that I will never die.” I still feel a connection with that quote. There are days when it feels like the longer I am on this journey, the farther I have to go.

On the other hand, I have found that in connecting with others...other women in particular... we reveal, mirror, and amplify the beauty that each of us brings to this life experience. In those moments, I no longer feel that I am closer or farther, doing better or worse, or ahead or behind. I cherish those times as the ones that open the space for me to be the full realization of my potential. I don't need to “get anywhere” other than where I AM. I don't feel the need to “be” anything other than my authentic self. It is a timeless place. It feels very non-linear in that those moments exist as a “complete” experience. I have a sense of “wholeness” when I am sharing with you.

In celebration of my connections with each of you and all of you I offer these affirmations....

- ~ I am committed to living a life of gratitude for the blessings of women in my life, NOW.
- ~ I am committed to revealing, mirroring and amplifying the beauty of others in my life, NOW.
- ~ I am committed to being the full realization of my potential moment to moment.

Whatever I bring to this world as a blessing, I honor each of you with that. I'm not focused on a destination, as I cherish your companionship on the journey. The blessing of your presence supports me in being present. Thank you for sharing your wisdom, your story, your love and your beauty.

# Prayer Circle

Shannon  
Bethany  
Christy  
Margaret  
Evelyn  
Margie

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.

### Jan 2012

- 1 The Friday Series:  
Meditation-Centering Prayer  
At Jan Herrick's home 7:30 PM
- 21 For Women Only Gathering  
Lake Ridge Village Clubhouse 9:30 AM

### Feb 2012

- 3 The Friday Series:  
Meditation-Centering Prayer  
Will be offered again—  
At Jan Herrick's home 7:30PM
- 7 **Decade Day (Night)**  
**Jody Donovan's home 7:00PM**
- 18 For Women Only Gathering  
Lake Ridge Village Clubhouse 9:30 AM

### March 2012

- 2 The Friday Series:  
Social Justice Issues: Soup/Bread Meal  
Lucy Reda's home 6:00PM
- 17 For Women Only Gathering  
Lake Ridge Village Clubhouse 9:30 AM

### April 2012

- 13 The Friday Series  
Helping the Homeless (Soup Kitchen)  
Date subject to change
- 21 For Women Only Gathering  
Lake Ridge Village Clubhouse 9:30 AM
- 28 **In the Company of Trees 10:00AM**

## First Friday Series: Meditations of Daily Living

By Janet Herrick

Starting the 6th of January... the previous experiences of Centering Prayer, which has been taking place on the First Friday of the month, expanded to both a new location and a new format. We will continue to explore various ways that our individual practice of Centering Prayer/Meditation moves beyond inner silence to everyday life, or in other words moving our practice off and beyond the cushion.

Friday, January 6, 2012, dealt with beginning the basic practice of Centering Prayer/Meditation. It dealt with all that one needs to know about what meditation is, and how to embark on beginning and fostering your own practice. We met at my home, and in addition to an orientation, and a 20 minute experience of Centering Prayer, we followed up with discussion and a question and answer period.

Future first Friday evenings will explore other ways that we can take meditation into daily life, and how we can be mindful of making every day and even simple acts sacred. Topics such as cooking, writing or journaling, and even being in nature will be explored in future months. These sessions will take place in various locations and will be facilitated by other capable women of Stone Circle.

However.... We are not dropping the notion or importance of personal meditation practice. The hope is that all our days are grounded by a commitment to this powerful form of prayer practice. I am always available to give individual introductory help for those who wish to incorporate centering prayer/meditation into their routine. Anyone interested please call 407-247-5391 if you wish to contact me and get started or restarted.

### The First Friday Series:

#### Meditations of Daily Living

**Feb. 3** There will be a second centering prayer offering at Jan Herrick's house due to unexpected company arriving at Dorie's home.

**March 2** Social Justice/A Soup & Bread meal will be held at Lucy Reda's home.

## Decade Day (Night)

By Jean Gold

Decade Day is a ritual celebration of all women's birthdays especially those who will be entering a new decade this year. The celebration is always held on February 7 (which is Jan's mother's birthday) in the evening. As part of the ritual we honor all women, past, present and to come. The ritual is a wonderful affirmation of our feminine gifts.

If you would like to join us this year at Jody Donovan's home on Tuesday, February 7 at 7 PM, please call Jan to let her know that you are coming and for directions to this event. When you come bring a candle and candle holder and a photo of yourself that is at least 20 years old. A \$10 donation is suggested to help us with expenses.

## Retreats

By Mary Lospinoso

"It's not the sun you're trying to find  
Something else is on your mind  
You need a little space and time to Break Away"  
Art Garfunkel

Retreats allow you to take a break away from the ordinary, connect with your inner-self, find God within, and just BE. Retreats let you reflect, ask questions, get insights, and become AWARE. Retreats link together the past, present, and future. Retreats give you permission to let go of little things, concentrate on what really matters, make better choices, and BREAK AWAY.

## In The Company of Trees

By Virginia Strait

In the Company of Trees brings together a fabulous circle of women. Everyone has a special story to relate of how a tree has affected their life. Some climbed and fell from trees. Others had trees that shaded their windows, shielding them. Some grew up with a tree and were very bonded with the foliage.

Jody has a 'tradition' book she reads about a boy and his tree. Others share poetry or passages about/of trees.

We always take time to enjoy our brown bag lunches and use the opportunity to walk about the beautiful setting and ponder various points of interest. I appreciate the wisdom shared.

The tree we choose to be with is at least 600 years old. We determined it has survived civil war action and too many hurricanes to name. And yet, she still shares the long branches that have gotten so heavy they touch the ground and start again. I believe I described it as "a forest of one." The branches are great for pictures.



## Our Hearts and Prayers Go Out To

Lena Moriarity

On the death of her husband Ken.



## Summer and Winter Solstice Celebrations

By Dorie Croissant

The Summer and Winter Solstice celebrations have been a ritual of our women's group for several years. The word solstice derives from the Latin words sol (sun) and sistere (to stand still). We literally "stand still" for a split second to pause and reflect on many things. These two solstice celebrations are opposite in nature. Let me give you a short list: June vs. December; summer vs. winter; longest day vs. shortest day; hot weather vs. cold; early morning vs. evening; water vs. fire.

The Summer Solstice takes place on the longest daylight day of the year when the sun is at its highest position in the sky. That official day in 2012 will be June 20th. We will send you an invite as to when we, as a women's group, will celebrate this day. The Winter Solstice takes place on the date that is the shortest daylight day - when the sun is at its lowest point in the sky. December 21, 2012 is the official Winter Solstice day this year. We will let you know our exact date and location closer to December.

These two rituals have become very meaningful for the women who participate each year. For some, it is their first visit to the beach at sunrise and for others who are more daring, it is a day to walk the beach and feel the stresses of life wash out to sea. Symbolically, last year, we tossed homemade, non-edible, biodegradable sand dollars into the sea. Virginia was kind enough to surprise us with these sand dollars that will surely become part of our Summer Solstice ritual. These sand dollars floated out with the waves carrying individual prayers of courage and willingness to change. Holding the rising sun in our hands as it lifts in the sky is an awesome and inspiring gift of beauty. The fire burning, in the fire pot and in our souls, catch our strength and solidarity at the Winter Solstice and gives us comfort and peace as we let go of past hurts and losses.

We hope you can join us in 2012, and in the years to come, when we next celebrate these Solstice events. Cultures all over the world mark the moment that the sun stands still. The women of Stone Circle are proud to bring this tradition to you. Let's celebrate together, because together we are strong with the promise of new life and new light in the world.

## Walking the Labyrinth

By Joyce Mansheim

Each year the women of Stone Circle gather to walk a Labyrinth at Woodlawn Memorial Park here in Orlando. At first glance, a Labyrinth may appear to be a maze, but unlike a maze there is only one 'circuitous' path to the center and out again. There are no decisions to be made on the journey, other than to decide to put one foot in front of the other and trust that we are exactly where we are supposed to be! Labyrinths have long been used as meditation and prayer tools. Our labyrinth walk as a prayer has 3 phases:

1. Releasing (Purgation): The path to the center allows us to shed or "let go" of whatever is weighing us down or limiting us.
2. Receiving (Illumination): The center is where we open ourselves to illumination, insight, clarity, and focus.
3. Integrating (Union): On the path out we are empowered and energized to take the insight from the center out to be manifested in our daily lives.



It is fulfilling for me to walk this journey with the women of Stone Circle, as I believe our Saturday meetings reflect this same format: release, receive, and go forth with a sense of renewal. I look forward to walking the path with you!

## Down Under Stone Circle Connection

By Mary Wales NSW Australia

Whilst being many miles away from Stone Circle, I feel a connectedness with it. Through the many quotations sent to me I have looked at them and adapted them to my self awareness and life. I hold the quotation in my heart and soul for many days and then the quotation leaves and I know that they have touched me and others. The enrichment I feel is overabundant. This has enabled me to be more connected with Stone Circle and the thoughts and prayers I feel, though never answered, and why should they be, because I don't expect them to be, must reach someone in need of this support.

When the newsletter is delivered to my inbox, I usually keep it for a special reflective time and think of the many people who have put their thoughts down in words to share. I then share it with the people I know who need a little bit of encouragement and prayer (and even those I may not be aware of). This, in a way, has raised my level of self-awareness in reaching out to others, a gift in itself that I am fully starting to appreciate, no questions, just that feeling of sharing.

I have shared the Stone Circle Prayer with many and it has touched their lives. In particular, I have a group of school friends from many years ago (most of us are reaching our 65th year this year). When we get together for our weekends away, for caring and sharing, we have a pottery dish with six friends on it holding hands in a circle. One of our six is no longer here but we say the prayer and light the candle in the middle and remember. We were fortunate to share this at her requiem with the stone circle dish on her coffin and the prayer read out loud. This so touched one of her nieces who now has her own Stone Circle with special friends far and wide and they pass the candle and a similar dish onto the next person for safe keeping until their next time together.

***In November 2011 I was fortunate enough to meet with Jean Gold whilst she was here in Australia on The Grand Tour, people used to go to Europe for this but I am very thankful that she and Bob decided to do theirs here.***

***Luckily our times coincided, I had been away so thought it may not eventuate but it did. We met one afternoon and had a wonderful time for me and I hope it was for Jean too. It was just as if we had known each other before (thanks Stone Circle). I believe we shared many things of interest, we had a common bond, particularly "Women and the Hierarchy of the Church," together with our connection with Salome Harasty. What a wonderful hour or so we spent at "Gloria Jeans" at Circular Quay, Sydney. I was able to point out to her where Salome and Jerry lived whilst they were in Sydney, yes, the building is still standing and will be for a long time.***

***Jean had her camera around her neck, we were so busy talking and sharing that she forgot to take a photo of the two of us - sigh! I have attached a more recent photo of myself taken a couple years ago in Kuala Lumpur visiting my eldest son,***

***From Mary Wales NSW Australia***

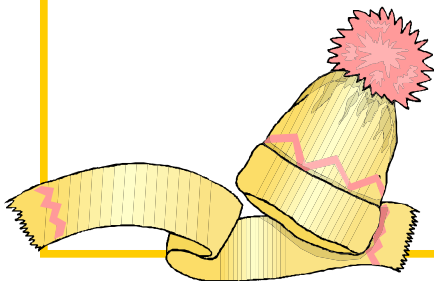




Our regular monthly meeting in December was filled with lots of hats and Christmas head bands lent to us by Virginia Strait (front row red head). She brought her Christmas head band collection to the meeting and there was just enough for all of the ladies that joined us that morning. Thank you, Virginia, we loved the fun that your head bands and hats added to our meeting.

### Helping the Homeless

We would like to collect hats and socks for the homeless at our January meeting and at Decade Day (Night). There is always a need for these items, especially socks. The items that we collect will be taken downtown to one of the shelters for distribution.



## Monthly For Women Only Gathering

### 2012 CHANGE OF MEETING LOCATION

Lake Ridge Village Clubhouse in Williamsburg  
10630 Larissa Street  
Orlando, FL 32821

Approximately 7 minutes from Holy Cross or 5 miles

#### Directions:

Take John Young Parkway from Holy Cross Church to Central Florida Pkwy.  
Turn left on Central Florida Pkwy.  
Turn right on Leewind Way  
Turn right onto Lazy Lake Drive  
Turn right onto Larissa Street, clubhouse is on your right.



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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 21<sup>st</sup> century. We truly rely on the generosity of friends and those who participate in programs.