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# *What Canst Thou Say?*

**Friends • Mystical Experience • Contemplative Practice**

*You will say, Christ saith this, and the apostles say this: but what canst thou say?  
Art thou a child of Light and hast thou walked in the Light, and what thou speakest,  
is it inwardly from God? —George Fox*

## *Being with the Dying (Supplement)*

### *Hope*

*Susan Greenler*

Each of us has to make our peace with life and death one day. Or not... The journey each of us takes in relationship to life/death and the time in between is uniquely ours and is personal. From my experience working with those who are facing end of life and are in hospice care, there are themes that arise.

**Hope.** A powerful word. Some believe that signing on with hospice is “giving up hope”. My vision is that our work in hospice is to enhance quality of life for as long as possible (and studies document that people with life threatening illnesses live longer in hospice care than without it).

So what about hope? What we hope for in life is constantly changing and evolving. When I was a child, I hoped my mother would get me a treat at the store or hoped I would be picked for a volleyball team. As I grew, my hopes grew too—hoping to get into college, get a job, meet someone I might want to spend my life with. Life is filled with endless hopes—some are dreams; all change. Hope itself is always evolving and changing.

By the time someone enters hospice, their field of hopes has narrowed. Now someone may hope to be pain free, to see a family member who lives far away again, or to make one last trip to the casino (yes this has happened more than once). As our bodies and health decline, we may at last hope for one final thing: to die peacefully, without pain and suffering, and without being unable to breathe. So, I return to how I view hope: as long as we are breathing, there is hope. What we hope for may change in life, but the essential quality of hope remains, undaunted by what we have experienced in life; undaunted by death. Hope is essential to the human spirit and as natural as breathing. Hope is a triumph of the human spirit, sometimes against all odds.

**Roots.** I believe we all put down roots in life, roots connected to place and to people. Part of the dying process is pulling up these roots. Letting go of all that has been

important to us—people, places, things. I have called this “going internal,” and have seen many patients take this step in their journey towards the end. I have come to believe that letting go of this life in some invisible way involves pulling up these roots from the earth and looking skyward to whatever is to come next. It is a natural process and for those of us still rooted here on earth, it is our role to hold the container for those who are dying to do the work they need to do.

**Dying.** I believe that the human spirit has some choice in when the moment of death occurs. I have had patients whose family tended to them round the clock, and the patient died in the 30 seconds they all left the room. There are patients who wait for loved ones to arrive from out of town, or to hear someone’s voice on the phone. One patient waited for her family to leave and died as I sat singing to her. This is one of the great mysteries in life. What does the human spirit wait for (if anything) before releasing into the great unknowing? Families ponder this. Patients ponder this. I had a patient once say to me “I told God I was ready to go, why the hell am I still here?” The alchemy is the dance between the person at end of life and spirit. When families ask me when their loved one will die, I have no concrete answer. The more we think we know, the less we sometimes do know. So, in this dance, I suggest that space—the space of spirit—be interjected into being with someone who is dying. Be with loved ones, and then leave the room for a bit. Give them the space and the choice to die with us there, or to be alone.

All the writings offered in these print and web versions address ways those of us currently residing here on earth have or are working to make sense of life, loss, grief and death. Each of us experiences this differently. In this journey are gimmers of hope, our roots, and the essential mystery of the dying process itself. Enjoy the journey.

Blessings, Susan Greenler, Guest Editor

# Alive in the Spirit

Sally Campbell

## **What Canst Thou Say? (WCTS)**

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## **Chorus:**

*Alive in the Spirit, at rest in the Spirit  
Afloat on a beautiful sea  
The Spirit surrounds us, the Spirit upholds us  
It's flowing through you and through me.*

*Before we are born we each live in a sea  
Inside our own mother's womb.  
There we are given whatever we need  
As we grow till we fill that small room.*

*On the day we are born, a door opens wide  
As we travel from dark into light.  
We take our first breath, and we give our first cry  
Filled with both freedom and fright.*

## **Chorus**

*All through our lives on this planet so green  
Made of fire, earth, water, and air,  
Wherever we go and whatever we do  
The Spirit will always be there.*

*And though we be lost in a dry, dusty land  
So far from the sea that sustains,  
Remember we live in an ocean of air  
And the sea is alive in our veins.*

## **Chorus**

*And when we pass through the doorway of death,  
As all who are living must do,  
Will we find that we stand, bathed in light on a strand  
Looking out on an ocean quite new?*

## **Chorus**

I wrote this song for my parents who were at the time in their 80's to explain to them what I understood about death and dying. Their home was on Leetes Island which is a point of land surrounded by the Long Island Sound, so the feeling of being safely held and sustained by the sea came into the song.

I thought my identifying the similarities between the beginning of life and its end was original, but I have seen this in many other people's writings. It does make a lot of sense.

This is the song that I have asked to be sung at my memorial service since it gives comfort in the face of death. Notice I end the song with a question not a statement. Having experienced both my parents' deaths since writing it, however, I now am quite sure there is something very different and very wonderful waiting for us to discover after we pass on.

**Sally Campbell ... (See May 2016 issue for a bio) If you have her CD "Gift Songs and Blessings" it is the seventh song.**

# Alive in the Spirit

Sally Campbell

Voice

A - live in the spir - it, at rest in the spir - it, A -

float on a beau - ti - ful sea. The spir - it sur-rounds us, the

spir - it up holds us. It's flow - ing through you and through me. Be-

fore we are born we each live in a sea in-side our own moth-er's womb.

There we are giv-en what - ev-er we need as we grow till we fill that small

room.

# *My Father's Renewal*

*M.M. Browne*

Finally, they got him off the respirator. My biochemistry-professor-brother had at last arrived from out-of-state and the doctors deferred to him as if he were their managing superior. It had been an agonizing wait. My father's hands had been tied to the sides of his bed to keep him from pulling the respirator tube out of his mouth and throat. He seemed to be in agony, not able to properly wake up, not able to speak.

I had done everything in my power to convince the hospital to take him off the machine, but my voice as a mere female grade-school teacher had little impact on the very male hospital establishment.

Still, I was not idle. I discovered the hospital social worker and learned from her that I needed to get signed release statements from all our family members exonerating the hospital of any culpability should my father die without the machine. With the releases, the hospital could consider our request and hopefully free him from the torture we saw him undergoing.

So I went into action and called the family members who were out of town and within a day or so we had all of their signed statements sent by fax to the hospital. My sister had come in from the west coast, so we signed our forms there in person. Everything was in place for the hospital to turn off the machine.

When my brother arrived, the doctors went over our father's chart with him, and the next thing I knew we were all standing around my father's bed as he lucidly looked around at us, propped by many pillows, the sun streaming in the windows lighting everything with a

spirit of welcomed relief. The irritating wheeze of the respirator was no more, and my father's familiar baritone voice was back, thanking us for coming, not unlike the way he would thank his audience for showing up at one of his gigs. He was the consummate band leader, even from his hospital bed, breathing tube in his nose, and intravenous feeding lines in his arms. Despite his ordeal, his mood was not disturbed, and we were all overjoyed to have this chance for conversation with him and entertained the thought that he might still be with us for a little while, at least.

But I knew that this possibility was not very realistic. We had heard from his friends that the priest had been by several times already to pray for him and administer last rites. My father was not the religious type as far as his general personality was concerned, but he went to mass every week no matter what town he was in, and he carried a small crucifix with him in a little box in his suitcase everywhere he traveled. Plus, he used to sing in the church choir. So, I knew that he had an inner appreciation of God, no matter how hip the guitarist he projected himself to be for the world around him. And I had this strong sense that he wasn't afraid of dying.

As for me, my rationale around death is very matter-of-fact, in a way. I see it as a transition we make from one world to another, but most people relate to death as an ending and a loss of the person who is "dying," as if they are disappearing forever. They relate to life and death like a song that just stops, never to be heard again. From my perspective, the process of dying is just that,

a process, one of continuation. There is no stopping. And as such, I want to facilitate that process for the person who is undergoing it to the best of my ability. For me, this means being with the person and keeping an eye on where he or she is going as they shift from this world to the next. This helps the person making the transition to focus on where they are going as well, rather than bogging down in the place they are moving away from.

In short, I take heaven seriously. It exists as an alternate dimension as it were, and we go there when we meditate and pray, and when we die. Consequently, we need to do things when people are dying that open this pathway to heaven, most importantly, speak about it and make it real and present with the person who is about to go there. (Respirators under these conditions do not facilitate this process.)

Somewhere along the line, it occurred to me that a good way to affirm the existence of heaven is to read passages from the Bible that are near and dear to the person making the transition. I choose passages that they heard as a child that they perhaps have not heard for a very long time, and that affirm the existence of angels and heaven.

The passage that came to mind for me to read to my father was the appearance of the heavenly host to the shepherds, announcing the birth of Jesus, usually read at Christmas. I had my Bible along with me, so I was ready to read to him. I am not sure how I introduced this idea to him. I think I just started reading.

Everyone was quiet and listened. I continued through the story, as my father looked into the distance, not focused on anyone exactly, but



listening closely to my words. When I stopped, he said, "That is absolutely beautiful." He had a tear in his eye. I asked him, "Dad, have you seen the angels?" He turned and looked at me with an unusually surprised expression on his face. "Why yes! They are all around! Have you seen them too?" "Yes, they are very real." We all fell silent then, but it wasn't a silent silence. It was very full and alive.

Just then the nurse came in and asked if Mr. Browne would like to taste a little soup. He hadn't had any real food to eat for a long time. Dad perked up right away at this suggestion. The nurse had a cup of beef broth. She carefully spooned it into his mouth. He savored it. "Tastes really good," he said as she gave him some more. He took it gladly. We were all encouraged by the prospect that he had a good appetite and wanted to eat. Our hopes were rising, but the sun was going down, it was getting dark. We all had a rather long way to drive. It was time to leave—we gathered our things and made ready to go. I can distinctly remember myself planning in my mind how I would see him again tomorrow, in the morning, and I would read to him again. We all waved good-bye for the evening. He had a big smile on his face and waved a big wave back at us. It wasn't just a little wave of his lower arm and hand. His whole arm made a perfect arc in the air, it almost seemed to float in its course of movement. Something about it felt very complete to me. I felt so relieved that his hands were untied, and he was not in pain and suffering anymore.

I had been asleep for a few hours when the phone rang. It was the hospital nurse. When she had ascertained that it was me on the phone, she said in a very emotionless tone, "Mr. Browne has expired." I responded, "Thank-you for letting me know." I called my sister and brother and told them that the hospital had telephoned, and that dad had passed. They were OK; so was I. We had had that last chance to speak with dad when he was truly with us, and so it was easier to let him go. I felt grateful for my understanding that God is near us all the time, and that we are a part of God and each other always. And I knew my dad was in fact, not "expired." Instead I knew that we had freed him into a life-affirming process of renewal, of continuation in the heart of God.

**M.M. Browne** has met spirituality from a poetic and mystical perspective since childhood. She has been a regular-attender of Quaker Meeting for many years, in Kalamazoo, Michigan; West Lafayette, Indiana; and Urbana, Illinois.

## *For Louise*

*Michael Resman*

*Of a sudden  
my earthly being  
betrayed me*

*Sprouting deadly disease*

*What am I to think*

*Am I to succumb*

*Or fight*

*Where is God I in this*

*Back I go  
seeking what I know*

*It is blessed to give  
But giving needs receiving*

*For long I gave  
And that was holy*

*Now I receive  
Which may be holier yet*

*I do not fear death  
A coming home to Wonderous Love*

*I'd just as soon  
dodge pain*

*But I can face it calmly  
pushing me  
into God's arms*

*Why me I won't know in this life  
Look forward to understanding it in the next*

*Mean time I will bask  
in the care and love that surrounds me*

## Living With Losses (Part II)

Mary Waddington

My husband Richard had been a lifelong teacher of metaphysics. He knew no strangers, held no resentments, was kind, generous, and inclusive. He saw and savored the goodness in others and was adept at separating life's wheat from its chaff. Because he was convinced of the soul's immortality, he had no fear of death; therein lay his easiness with aging. He told me often that when his time came he would die suddenly to avoid the expenses and burdens that I would otherwise incur during a lengthy illness. Furthermore, because he and God had a long-term and highly satisfactory working relationship, he claimed his pronouncement to me would be honored. My husband was known as a man of his word.

Richard died at nearly 80 of a massive heart attack while mowing the front lawn. The mower had abruptly stopped its noise when his hands left the safety bar. I ran out into the muggy silence of that summer day and knelt over him in time to hear his last breaths leave his body. I swooped up his head and cradled it in my lap. Our faces were very, very close and the smell of freshly clipped grass clung to us. I was rocking him. We began an exchange that was beyond words, that was tender, that was heart-piercing, full of familiar meanings and feelings. These precious moments of our togetherness swelled into a timeless love story.

A caring observer had called 911 without knowing of the advanced directive that requested no heroics. Without warning, sirens tore big holes in our sacred silence. Strange vehicles fell into the scene. Responders invaded our space and told me to move away. I watched huge shears slice an opening in the new L.L.Bean jacket next to and along the length of the zipper. The defibrillator had a voice. It instructed its operator when to fire another jolt and when to give an injection. This zapping happened over and over and over with no results.

Somehow one of the mower wheels had come to rest on top of Richard's left foot and remained there for a time unnoticed, no more and no less bizaare than any part of the 911 scenario. After his limbs were realigned, his body was placed on a gurney and shoved into an ambulance. Then the clog of vehicles drove away without leaving a vestige of comfort. I watched all this as an outlander, not quite sure where I was or what to do next. Everything had been trampled on.

I lingered on my half-mowed lawn knowing the costly intrusion had been unnecessary and discrepant. Where was the fullness of those moments in the grass before the sirens came? Why did I feel like collapsing? Just then, in the awful emptiness, came Richard's familiar timbre, soothing and restorative, vibrating throughout my being with the message, "I'm here."

**Mary Waddington** is a life-long member of Salem, New Jersey meeting. Mary is retired from her holistic health practice and can now devote ample time to her photography. Part I is in the print version of this February 2019 WCTS.

*What Canst Thou Say? 101 (2)*

## Grief

Grief is subversive, undermining the quiet agreement to behave and be in control of our emotions. It is an act of protest that declares our refusal to live numb and small. There is something feral about grief, something essentially outside the ordained and sanctioned behaviors of our culture. Because of that, grief is necessary to the vitality of the soul. Contrary to our fears, grief is suffused with life-force. It is riddled with energy, an acknowledgment of the erotic coupling with another soul, whether human, animal, plant or ecosystem. It is not a state of deadness or emotional flatness. Grief is alive, wild, untamed and cannot be domesticated. It resists the demands to remain passive and still. We move in jangled, unsettled and riotous ways when grief takes hold of us. It is truly an emotion that rises from soul.

—Francis Weller

*Entering the Healing Ground: Grief,  
Ritual and the Soul of the World*

## Home

Michael Resman

*don't weep for me  
I am bliss  
Forever  
Lost to your senses  
Still here in your soul  
Watching  
Praying for you  
Till you too return home  
And freed from physical blather  
We can  
in all innocence  
intertwine  
Loving boundlessly  
Endlessly  
For now  
reach inside  
And again  
Till you  
feel me  
Curling round your heart*

# Life Lessons from Dying

Rhonda Ashurst

**M**y first memory of being with the dying goes back to when I was six years old. My kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Chichester, was dying of cancer. Mother took me to her house every week. I would climb up into bed beside Mrs. Chichester and mom would pile my reading books around me. For the next two hours, I read, even when she was sleeping. When mom came to pick me up, Mrs. Chichester would smile up at me and say, "Thank you so much for coming to read to me." I could feel how much it meant to her. I realize now that I was probably the only one of her "kids" who came to see her during her last days.

Since then, I've been a part of the dying of many people and animals. It seems to be one of my callings in this life. I count them amongst my most important teachers. Here's some of what I've learned.

The first time I watched death, I was probably eight or nine years old. I raised sheep on our family farm. I had come home from school and was checking my flock. One lamb was down and struggling for breath. My parents were not home and I didn't know what to do. So, I sat down and held his head in my lap, watching him try to breathe. I prayed for him to live, but his breathing only became more labored. Then the moment came of his last gasp followed by peaceful silence. In that instant, I knew his Spirit had gone on, leaving his lifeless body in my lap. I knew he was really eternal Spirit; we are all eternal Spirit. Through my tears, I felt peace and all fear of death and dying left me and it has never come back.

When I was fourteen, the first boy to give me his high school ring

died suddenly of meningitis. We all reeled with the shock of it. I realized that Death can come for you at any time, better be ready.

In graduate school, I studied counseling and decided to do my internship with Hospice. The amazing inter-disciplinary team and my precious patients taught me about the dying process in all its aspects: physical, mental, emotional, social, spiritual. But, more than that, they taught me how to live a rich and wonderful life. I was in my twenties, trying to find my way. They were there to help me live as much as I was there to help them die.

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*I knew his Spirit had gone on, leaving his lifeless body in my lap. I knew he was really eternal Spirit; we are all eternal Spirit. Through my tears, I felt peace and all fear of death and dying left me and it has never come back.*

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"L" told me her life story, giving me an 80-page book and then filling in the details during our weekly sessions. I learned from her that the dying need to tell their story. She was a wild artist who once painted her husband's piano red while he was at work. She encouraged me to dare to be myself and honor my creativity.

Death had a special gift for "L" that I will always remember. She was adamant with me that, "I don't believe in any of that spiritual crap. When it's over it's over. So, don't talk to me about it." I honored her wish and wondered how her passing would be, given this belief. On the day she died, I went to see her. She was dying of lung cancer and struggling

for breath. She pulled me down close to her mouth and told me this story:

"I died before. I was crossing the train tracks in the rain with my kids in the car. There was a dip in the road and it was dark, so I couldn't see how deep it was. The car stalled right on the tracks and I could see the lights of the train coming. I tried to start the car and I couldn't and the train was almost there. Suddenly, I was in a tunnel and there were Beings there. I am here again in the tunnel now and they are here with me. Last time they told me to go back because I wasn't done with my life yet.

"I woke up in the car with my kids on the other side of the tracks. I still have no idea how I got there. Now I can see through to the other side of the tunnel and they tell me it is my time to come with them. Rhonda, I wish you could see these colors! I can't even describe them, and I'm an artist."

I asked her if she was ready to go and she nodded, smiling. She died that night.

"R" lived in her recliner in the living room. One day while I was visiting, I noticed her dry, cracked feet peeking out from under a blanket. I asked her if she would like some lotion on them. She grinned and handed me a bottle from her side table. I moved my chair down to her feet and massaged them with lotion while she talked.

From that day on, when I arrived, she would lift the blanket off her feet and hand me the bottle of lotion. From her I learned that the dying still want and need to be touched.

"R" also taught me about the futility of insisting that the dying give

up their bad habits. The nurses were concerned that she was smoking next to her oxygen tank. They tasked me with getting her to quit. (She was dying of lung disease caused by her 50+ years of smoking.) When I told her what the nurses wanted she said, "That's my last pleasure in this life. I'm not giving it up."

We started brainstorming about how to deal with the dilemma. It was "R" who came up with her own solution. "I think I can make it to the bathroom and smoke in my makeup chair if I wear the oxygen half way there." I suggested we try it and see if it worked. Sure enough, she could make it to the chair, smoke half of a cigarette and make it back to the cannula she had dropped on the floor in the other room. The nurses were not happy with our solution, but it worked for "R" and kept her safe.

There are more Hospice stories than I can tell here, but I want to share some of the wisdom I gleaned from the experience:

- I learned that it is very important for caregivers to take care of themselves, attend to their own grief and get help when needed.
- At a certain point in the dying process, it hurts to eat and drink, so honor their refusals. Ice chips and chapstick are better in the final stages.
- A dying person is losing everyone and everything, including themselves. It can be a scary, disorienting, painful process—be patient and compassionate.
- Dying is also beautiful, poignant, liberating, and natural, like birth in reverse.
- Don't forget to notice the collateral beauty (also a great movie starring Will Smith).

Everyone has their own unique death, just like they lived their own unique life. Be with what is happening in each moment with an open mind and kind heart and it will all be OK.

I also learned a lot about good living from the regrets of the dying. Here are some of the ones that have most influenced my life:

- They regret having spent too much time working for and acquiring stuff and not enough time living life and being with their loved ones.
- They regret not taking risks that would have made their lives happier and more fulfilling.
- They regret being so busy they missed all the beauty, wonder and love around them.
- They regret not forgiving, and sometimes could not let go of life until they had made peace with a loved one.

When I was nearly forty, my beloved Uncle Joachim from Germany died. He taught me the beauty of planning an intentional death complete with a big party! This is somewhat of a tradition in my German family, but it was the first time I attended.

He was turning eighty and invited everyone to come and celebrate with him, "because then I die." He explained that he was on over 20 medications which were keeping him alive and that he didn't feel good or enjoy life much anymore. He believed it was time to go on.

So, he had a big party in a fancy hotel in downtown Berlin complete with a 6-course meal that lasted well into the night. Over 100 people attended. I didn't tell him I was coming. I will always remember the look of surprised delight on his face when I arrived!

We honored him with songs, dances, speeches and skits until 2 a.m. He left an eight-page letter, rolled up and tied in a gold ribbon, on each of our plates. The letter spoke of his life, his loves, and the wisdom he wanted to pass on before he died. There were tears and laughter, hugs and kisses—a great outpouring of love and respect. I will never forget it.

The next day he stopped taking the medications. Lucky for me, he still felt well enough over the next few days, to tour me around Berlin and tell me about the family history. Before I left for home, he was bedridden. Within ten days my beloved and courageous Uncle was gone. What a way to go!

Not long after my Uncle passed, my soul-sister friend, Debs called me to come to the death bed of her mother, Lila. They had just come to visit me in Colorado four months before. Lila and I were hiking in the high country of Colorado. When she got home, she was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. I was stunned that it had gone so fast. Debs was devastated. She has cerebral palsy and her mother was her greatest champion and supporter. She was terrified of losing her.

The night I arrived, I went in to see Lila. She was emaciated, her face drawn with pain. I placed my hand on the side of her bed rail and said her name. She turned and looked me straight in the eye, placing her hand firmly on mine. She never said a word, but the message I received was, "Good, you're here. Help Debs get through this."

The next morning she died in my arms. From Lila I learned that the dying need to know their loved ones will be cared for after they go. They will often wait until they feel assured of this.



A few years later, my beloved father died of dementia after four years in a group home. During this time, he lost his mind, his ability to stand and walk, or do anything for himself. In the end, he could no longer speak. We were lucky he always recognized us with a smile.

He couldn't feed himself, but he liked to eat. So, we brought him his favorite foods and fed him. I recall being anxious, uncertain what to do, especially when he lost his speech. Normally, you could never get a word in edgewise with my dad in the room.

I was lost in his silence. Towards the end, I learned to simply sit with my father, give him Reiki, hold his hand, rub his shoulders. I realized that my father was at peace and my mother and I had come to peace with him.

It took four years of losing everything he was and surrendering to that process for us all to receive this final gift. He taught me the greatest lesson of all. The greatest liberation comes in losing all you thought you were and all you esteemed as important to find your true Self.

**Rhonda Ashurst** worked as a counselor for St. Mary's Hospice in 1995. She now lives a quiet, contemplative life with her partner. She attends the Reno (Nevada) Friends Meeting. She practices yoga, serves the cat, and writes a blog <[rhondaashurst.com](http://rhondaashurst.com)>.



## Before You Claim What You Have Come To See As Yours

Kat Griffith

*He spent his last years mainly on his sailboat, Shanti.  
Rocked by the soothing, silent swells of Long Island Sound,  
Ever traveling, always at home.  
Safe in the cocoon of a boat named Peace.  
Safe from the tug-of-war between his mother and his former wife  
and his children.  
Safe from the incessant demands of their neediness.  
Then came the cancer diagnosis—  
His whole body riddled with it.  
From diagnosis to death—just two weeks.  
His last hours a Gimme vigil.  
His last hours claimed by each of them -- Mine! Mine! NO, mine!  
As his mother, then his wife, then his children  
Filed in one by one, grasping their 15-minute allotments of his remaining breath.  
Each determined to have their fair share.  
My slot came—a visiting niece on hand for this final installment  
Of his life.  
His not-actually-his life.  
“Would you like my 15 minutes to yourself? Would you like to be alone?”  
A hoarse, “Yes.”  
I stood guard at the door, keeping them out for 15 minutes.  
Then the apportioning resumed for another hour or so  
Until he breathed his last.  
The nurse pulled the sheet over his head,  
And the fight over Mike became the fight over the remains of Mike.  
His mother, bereft at the loss of her only son,  
Demanded his ashes to sprinkle on Long Island Sound.  
His former wife, asserting her claim,  
Demanded his ashes to inter in the wall of a church he never attended.  
In the end, they divided the ashes in two.  
Half silently escaped into the waves of the Sound.  
Half were entombed in the permanent stone of Christ's Episcopal Church of  
Rye, New York,  
imprisoned by an insistent wife who could not let him go even in divorce, even  
in death.  
He died as he lived—  
Claimed and fought over.  
Yet in death,  
In leaving them all behind,  
His ending was finally only his.  
Before you claim what you have come to see as yours,  
Think.  
Shanti, Mike.*

**Kat Griffith** says she wrote this poem for a Renshi poetry group where each starts with the last line of the previous person's poem. She is a high school teacher in Ripon WI.

## Book Review:

### **Poems from the Myst**

Michael Resman, 2018, Zumbro River Press, Rochester, MN.

#### **Reviewed by Rhonda Ashurst.**

I have been a fan of Mike's poetry for some years now and was delighted to discover he had published a collection of his work. It is available from Amazon and is free to Kindle Unlimited subscribers. The electronic version is only \$.99 and I bought my print version for \$7.40.

The poems take us on a journey through Mike's life, from his days working with disabled children as an Occupational Therapist, to the epiphany experience that opened him directly to the Divine, to the ongoing walk of a mystic in this wondrous and terrible world. His poetry is filled with searing images both of beauty and of pain, of love and sorrow, longing for and union with God. His use of language and punctuation is simple and concise, making his poetry a pleasure to read.

Here are some of the stanzas that leapt out at me and struck a chord in my soul:

*A tiny container  
for glowing ember*

*A web of love connects the universe  
with The One and each of us*

*Lie on the universal web  
and seek healing.*

*He roared with laughter,  
tipped back his head –  
and I fell into  
the hole his face became.*

*Wallow in this world  
or die to self  
and dance on cloud tops.*

In the introduction, Mike takes us through a poem and describes his creative process. This helped me understand how his poetry is born of his life experience, filtered through the lens of his spirituality. I keep this book next to my meditation chair, along with my other favorites, to read each morning with my coffee. I always find something that speaks to me.

For a more comprehensive description of Mike's spiritual journey, I would also recommend *A Contemporary Mysticism* (available from Amazon and Barnes and Noble). This book is one of my regular companions on the spiritual/mystical path. It helps me better understand some of my own experiences and to know that I am not alone in this journey that often feels so out of step with the rest of the world.

## Star Dust

Michael Resman

*O death,  
you are an ugly sucker,  
but you hold no fear for me.*

*Arm in arm  
We waltzed round galaxies;  
my cheek pressed to rotted flesh,  
stench trailing.*

*My comfort convincing you  
I will come  
when called,  
and introduce others  
to you.*

*Till that happy day  
we together go.*

**Michael Resman** is one of the WCTS editors. He worships with Rochester MN Friends Monthly Meeting.

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## Please write for *What Canst Thou Say?*



May 2019

### Eldership

Guest Editor: **Alison Levie**

*And dear people of God, be tender over the least breathings of God's Spirit in one another and all wait to be clothed with a healing Spirit.*—William Dewsbury

What is your experience with spiritual eldership? Has someone acted as a “midwife to your soul”? Have you witnessed Friends speaking both kindly and clearly in response to Friends’ choices? Have you seen the skills needed for this important role nurtured? Does Spirit-led eldering deepen the faithful vitality of Friends’ meetings?

Deadline: February 15, 2019

August 2019

### Discernment

Guest Editor: **Marcia Nelson**

*Growth in the spiritual life comes precisely in faithful exercise of whatever capacity for discernment we are given. ... As far as we are able, we practice an ongoing intentional openness and prayerful attentiveness to intimations of divine presence and guidance, both inwardly and in outward life and relationships.* —Patricia Loring

How have you experienced discernment? What tests of discernment have you used? How have you distinguished discernment from ordinary thinking? In what way(s) has discernment made a difference for you?

Deadline: May 15, 2019

November 2019

### Young Adult Friends Spirituality

Guest Editor: **Greg Woods**

What role has your faith/spirituality played as you traverse young adulthood? What has most surprised you about your journey? What are you seeking in a spiritual community? What have been the challenges in your search? Have you found what you seek? What gifts do you bring to a spiritual community? Who or what has inspired you spiritually as a young adult? How has that inspiration affected your spiritual journey?

Deadline: August 15, 2019

## **What Canst Thou Say?**

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*Being with  
the Dying  
(Supplement)*