

Stone Circle

Volume 21, Issue 1

January 2021

Mailing Address: 2549 Clarinet Drive,
Orlando, FL 32837

Ms. Janet Herrick (407) 247-5391
Web Site: <http://www.stonecircleonline.org>

2021—Thoughts

By Jan Herrick

Several months ago, in October we normally would have published the Stone Circle schedule of events for 2021. Unfortunately, this last year has not been normal in any way. As I look back, there has been so much loss and isolation for all of us. We have been unable to meet in person and feel the physical support of one another. The only normalcy has been in maintaining our newsletter and reading the wonderful writings from so many of you. We thank you for your support and hope you continue participating by sending your articles and thoughts, because you are the heart of the Newsletter. Without you it would not exist.

I would also like to thank you for the positive responses I have received for my efforts with the Stone Circle Blog. Thank you also to Dorie for sending it out via email to all on the mailing list. You can always read the others (now over 60) by going to the website stonecircleonline.org. I have become very committed to writing the Blog each week, as it is my way of staying connected to you. As always...I need this connection as much as any of the women in Stone Circle.

Looking forward, until we deem it safe for us to meet in person, we will continue to stay connected through the Newsletter and the Blog. I hope that by the time we reach April we will be able to celebrate "In the Company of Trees" in the Menello Park, as we have for so many years outside in the open air. It is also my hope that in the meantime everyone stays safe and healthy. Keep in touch with each other if you can, keep positive, and plan to get the vaccine for the virus as soon as it is available to you.



My Retreat

By Joan Macias

My go-to retreat is my room.
I have a comfy chair
next to a table lamp.
Every morning I read scripture for
30 minutes.
This is the time that grounds
me for the day.
It is part of my morning routine.
Even when I am not home
my day starts with my ME time.

*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

Retreating

By Jean Gold

I can't think of a time when we are more in need of a spiritually-led group retreat. How refreshing to be together as a group, talk and share our thoughts, and take the time to be with one another. Our world right now doesn't allow us to be refreshed that way.

So, right now, I have to fall back on what I can, to take the time I need, to soothe my soul, , in part, states that to retreat is "the process of withdrawing especially from what is difficult." So withdrawing is my fallback even though the moments may be short and not as often as they could be – they are what I have.

When I withdraw, the small joys of some music and something to read are my favorite choices. A new book, read as quickly as I am able, is another wonderful withdrawal. I love to sit outside on my porch and in my glider. I particularly love when the weather is cool as it is right now.

During these times, withdrawing from hearing the news and even choosing a different radio station for more mellow music has helped. I recently started a 10 minute "The God Minute" podcast that I listen to the first thing each morning. It always starts with music followed by a little scripture, a small sharing, and a prayer. Not a whole lot of time before my walk but enough to set a peaceful beginning to my day.



Affirmation Corner

By Margie Gray

An Impromptu Retreat

Just before Christmas I felt a strong urge to indulge in some self-care. I ran a hot bath with scented bath salts, cued up some tranquil music, and proceeded to take a Mommy Time Out. As I relaxed in the warm water and soothing music, I allowed my thoughts to drift away from practical planning to encourage my mind to relax as well. I wandered to thoughts about what is important in my life right now. I reflected on a familiar Winter Solstice theme... letting go of the old, no longer useful aspects of my life to open the space for what is coming into my space. As I scrubbed away the grime of the day, I could envision letting go of thoughts that are not serving me. I could recognize the value of letting go of relationships that are holding me back from new opportunities. I focused on the ways that I could engage in cleansing and releasing in all areas of my life. Clothes, possessions, thoughts, relationships, how I spend my time, how I spend my money, fixed beliefs about my future...nothing was off limits.

I could feel the old and dead being washed away to reveal the fresh and vibrant. Not just physically, but mentally, emotionally, and spiritually as well.

- ♥ I gratefully acknowledge the gifts of the past and release that which no longer serves my higher good.
- ♥ I create space for that which renews, replenishes, and lifts me up now.
- ♥ I open the space for that which serves me now.
- ♥ I am committed to being who I was created to be so that I may serve others now.

Whether it is a relaxing bath, a comfy chair in a corner of my home, or a spot to sit out in nature, I realize it is important for me to identify the moments in which I can relax, replenish, and renew. A mini retreat can give me what I need to create the space to re-center. I choose a quote, a seasonal theme, or even a thought that has been nagging at me, and seize the opportunity to open the space for inspiration. Lighting a candle, playing relaxing music, pulling out a book of meditations or inspirational quotes, can support my shift to a spiritual space. Then any moment can be the right time for a planned or impromptu retreat.

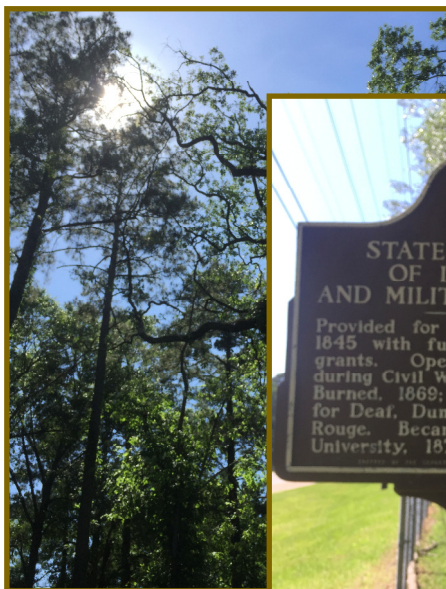
Prayer Circle

Betsy
Jody
Lucy
Julie
Linda

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

Calendar of Events

Upcoming events and gatherings have been suspended for the time being. We will keep you posted as to when we can meet again in person.



A Walking Path Retreat

By Dorie Croissant

There are two walking paths not too far from the house. I visited one of them late last August with my sister-in-law. It was a lovely get-out-of-the house afternoon where she knew we would not be in contact with many people during this pandemic time and we could walk at our own pace. It is on the site of the Louisiana State Seminary of Learning & Military Academy (circa 1860). There is a winding path through many tall trees and the remains of building foundations. It is a lovely place to meditate and walk or sit on one of the several benches that are provided. In contrast to this incredibly old historic site, there is a relatively new walking path on the grounds of a Baptist church close by. I have passed it a few times and keep telling myself that I am going to stop and walk. Both locations I think will be ideal for my idea of a personal retreat.

R ~ Relax & Refresh. Take this opportunity to focus on what I am trying to achieve.

E ~ Engage & Energize. Take this time to consider the meaning of each step, both literally and figuratively.

T ~ Thoughts & Trails. Take this time to explore internal reflections and other musings.

R ~ Reflections & Realizations. Take this time to acknowledge what comes to the surface.

E ~ Exhale & Explore. Take this time to pay attention to the feelings that surface and ponder accordingly.

A ~ Awareness & Acceptance. Take this time to be aware of my breathing and pace myself to align my breathing with my steps so I can be in sync as much as possible.

T ~ Trust & Treasure. Take this time to ponder the power of patient trust and treasure the peace that ultimately comes from that trust.

Since I have now detailed this short retreat agenda, I do plan to execute it soon. I hope you can find your own walking path, whether inside your home or close by, that will inspire and re-energize you. All the best!

Retreat is a state of mind.

By Dr. Betsy Williams

It is not a place, a schedule, circumstances, lovely scenery, candles, or flowers. Of course, all of that can help. But ultimately retreat is a state of mind. Retreat means "to separate the mind from ordinary affairs," "touching the heart mind." It usually involves a period of intensive meditation. Which may alternate with walking meditation, work periods, and time sitting in nature.

Once we are able to develop this state of mind, we can evoke it anywhere, any time. It helps, like periods of formal meditation, to practice retreat under more ideal circumstances, so as to be able to slip into this state of mind for periods of time under more adverse circumstances. Once cultivated, retreat can be evoked even under terrible circumstances. For example, Tibetan monks being tortured in Chinese prisons, Jarvis Masters on death row.

So how to cultivate retreat? With huge amounts of patience and practice over years. Here is where the more ideal circumstances can help. There are endless group retreats one can look into and simply follow their schedule and teachings. But due to work schedules, and living very remotely, I have had to look at personal retreats, which I suggest is what is necessary now during Covid.

Over the years, I have found time away from home in a simple place, such as a caravan park on the coast ideal. Choose a place that is not busy and has natural beauty. Look deeply at what my reasons are for retreat, what my needs may be. For me, it is nature, nature, nature. For everyone, it is recommended a break from television and IT devices. Turn the phone off. Have enough food and drink so you do not need to interrupt the retreat. Bring what is nourishing for you. Inspirational books (not too many), candles, and flowers can help here. Incense to mark meditation periods. I always include period of exercise, such as an early morning swim and a late afternoon quiet walk.

If you have not meditated regularly, then it is suggested to start with short periods of time for meditation, like 10 minutes. Follow your breath, return to the breath over and over again, or to whatever practice you are doing. Then mindfully, stand up, walk for 5-10 minutes, then sit again. I personally look at 40 minutes of sitting alternating with 20 minutes of walking, ideally outdoors if the weather permits.

Consider simple, nourishing foods that does not take long to prepare, but not too much, to avoid becoming sleepy during the meditation periods. This is not the time to try to lose weight or go on a caffeine fast. Stick to your normal habits. I find mid-afternoon is often a sleepy time for me and allow myself a good nap, I have usually accumulated a lot of tiredness from over-night shifts and call outs.

Be gentle with yourself. Know that right now, someone else is meditating. Feel your mind connect with others who may be struggling, sick, experiencing difficulties, fear. Remember you are never alone. If upsetting or frightening thoughts or emotions arise, remember they are only thoughts and emotions. Allow yourself to stand up, go for a walk and let the feelings pass through.

For me, now, retreat can happen during the hours sitting on a chemo chair, contemplating life, death, my own death. Life review and acceptance have become a major part of "retreat on the chemo chair" for me.

I'm sending my love and thanks for all of your support to all of you and only hope we can meet in person before I die.

Love, Betsy

Retreat At Home

By Virginia Strait

I have taken the "Covid please stay at home orders" as an opportunity to shrink my "to do" list. All the tasks I had put on hold for later are now my total focus. As I have worked my way through processes and techniques, I have a new appreciation for the skills I now possess. The *satisfaction* of completing projects has allowed me not to dread entering my garage for materials and supplies. Space has opened up as each item is marked ✓ Done on my Honey-Do list. I am pleased with the end results and sleep better knowing I have much less to plan on doing ... Thanks to the generosity of one fine lady, I now have an electric lounge chair that I use for peaceful reading frequently without guilt – because my "to do" list is virtually nonexistent. It is the little things that make life so enriching!

My Retreat

By Jan Herrick

The word retreat can conjure up so many thoughts. It might be the image of a long spa day at a rural lakeside country center. It could be an organized day of structured talks with a theme of self-help and better health, or it could be centered around spiritual development. There are so many choices and so many options.

In this uncommon time of staying home and social distancing, so many of these options are not within our reach. Our only option is to come up with a retreat of our own design, on our own terms specifically for us and our needs. I have already tried it, and it can be done, and done successfully with positive results.

My first day of retreat was many weeks ago. Paul and I decided to take a day away from all media focusing on ourselves and things that would feed our minds and hearts. We included time for meditation, reading, and being outside in nature. The result of the day was that we wanted more. We decided to make it a regular thing that we would pencil in every week. It is only one day out of seven that is devoted to renewing our spirits, recovering from the toxic effects of media, and strengthening our resolve to maintain balance in this crazy time. One day out of seven has made all the difference. It has even spilled over to the other six days. We find ourselves watching less television, reading more, walking outside longer, and coping better with the isolation that has challenged all of us for so many months.

There is no dictated formula for a retreat. This is the beauty of a self-directed, personally organized retreat. It does not have to be an entire day, but it can be if you choose. It can be a morning or just a few hours. The question to ask is "What do I need to renew my mind, body and spirit?", and just follow through. A small change like this can make a huge difference. It did for me and it can for you too! Try it!!!

Stone Circle Thank You

Thank you again for your continued support of Stone Circle. We greatly appreciate your generous donations which allow our website and newsletter to continue reaching you and so many others. The pandemic has not allowed us to keep to our normal schedule of events and gatherings, which would have maintained our coffers, thus the importance of your continued support. Once again, a huge thank you to those who have been so thoughtful and generous!

Labyrinth Walk on October 24 at Woodlawn Cemetery Labyrinth

We did have a Labyrinth walk in October. Just three of us showed up with masks. We walked in the open air and had a brief discussion before departing. This is something that can be done alone or with others in a safe way.

This can also be a different type of retreat. Since the Woodlawn Labyrinth is on cemetery grounds, it can also be walked as a testament to all of those who have died in Florida, across our country, and worldwide from the pandemic.



Stone Circle c/o Jan Herrick
2549 Clarinet Drive
Orlando, FL 32837

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.