

WHAT IS OURS TO DO?

In these challenging times of multiple raging pandemics, with viruses, fear, systemic racism and injustice everywhere, we ask ourselves: "What is mine to do? How do I respond to everything that is happening with integrity, and in accordance with my talents, abilities, and limitations?"

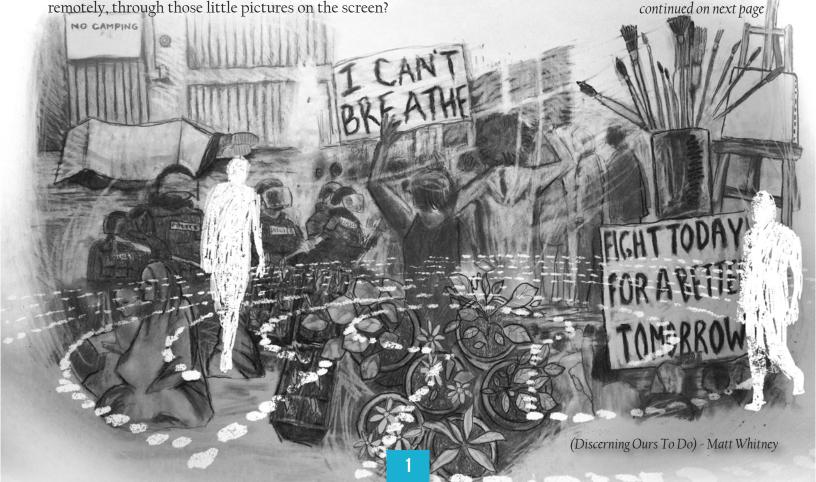
As we witness people demonstrating around the world, many of us spiritual companions wonder whether we are falling short. We might find ourselves unable to attend due to Covid-related health concerns, but also because of our varied temperaments, or physical disabilities, and other factors.

And the circumstances of our confinement also invite considerations around how to be the best spiritual companions we can. How do we best assist people remotely, through those little pictures on the screen?

How do we maintain intimacy, and safety? In short, how can we be most effective in this new world of ours?

It can feel a bit like being lost in a maze or labyrinth, struggling to find our way out and forward, mapping the best path.

And it reminds me of the allegory of the cave in Plato's Republic, where the prisoners' reality manifests as shadows cast on the wall they are forced to face, from a fire behind them. Without going too far into Plato's lessons from that tale (which go in a completely different direction), the analogy is suggestively apt to the plight of bringing ourselves into the light in these constrained circumstances, when our reality has increasingly become akin to shadows on a wall.



WHAT IS OURS TO DO? (CONTINUED)

With all that said, demonstrations aren't the only, nor necessarily the most effective, way to fight racism. And, similarly, in person meetings are not the only way to practice spiritual companionship, as we are discovering.

Most spiritual companions and directors endeavour to support the people who come to us as they wrestle very top, with both sets of eyes trained on the same view, what we each see would be quite different.

On a relative level, we are all unique, and experience the world, God and the Universe, distinctly. So our responses to the current situation, in all of its gravity and complexity, will likewise be multi-faceted. And if we really do believe that it's the road traveled

that matters, and not the destination, then a variety of responses are all "right," on some basic level. The most important thing is to act with integrity in purpose, and to be true to ourselves. What we have to offer, as long as it is well intentioned, sincere, and genuine, will illuminate the path of its own accord.



with the fundamental questions of our existence, such as "Who am I?", "Why am I here?", "How do I live a life of meaning?", and, most importantly in our field, "What is my relationship with the essence of everything?"

As we act as mirrors and supporters to those we companion, we attempt to cut to the heart of the matter. To the core.

In that light, "what is ours to do?" comes in many different guises. For instance, those of us by nature more introverted may sit in quiet contemplation with others as they discern on their own natures, and their own hearts. For the extroverts, it may indeed be taking to the streets, and being literally and figuratively demonstrative.

Both sets of responses are perfectly fine, and neither is necessarily better than the other. In fact, the range of responses enriches all of our perspectives, as we can all collectively "see" more clearly when we have multiple viewpoints on anything.

It is also true that no two people ever see in the same way, even when we are looking at the "same" thing. As an example, if we analogize spiritual growth as akin to climbing a mountain, with spiritual companions as our guides as we ascend, even at the

Of course, on an absolute level, we are all indeed one, tiny fragments of a larger organic whole. And that unified field, or water well, feeds and nurtures us all equally. We are in it always, beyond yesterday, today and tomorrow. Beyond myself, yourself, and ourselves. From that standpoint, what isn't ours to do? And what isn't already being done?

Ultimately, most of us operate on some kind of continuum, responding in varied ways to different circumstances. And we are certainly not uniform even within ourselves, and may have one type of response today, and a completely different one to the same trigger tomorrow. What wonderful complexity!

So what is ours to do? Every day and every moment bring the answers, both intended and unintended, seen and unseen. And like ripples on a pond, they spread and extend, eventually far beyond our own particular views, into the heart and essence of everything.



With love, Rev. Seifu



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We are an inclusive, global learning community that advocates for and celebrates the service of spiritual companionship, also known as spiritual direction, spiritual accompaniment, and spiritual guidance.

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SDI exists to support, educate and connect spiritual companions, spiritual directors, life coaches, chaplains, health care workers, and many other friends, providing a digital community where companions can find one another.

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All are welcome the way they are, carrying their own orientations and traditions (or none), where we all benefit from sharing our practices, beliefs and rituals. Here we share universal human values of love, compassion and respect.

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LABYRINTH WALK

The nun, who was no Ingrid Bergman, warned us before we left the convent: "Our labyrinth walk is not perfect. The gravel path has weeds and goose poop. But then, so does the journey of life."

She winked and waved us on.
And we followed, like lemmings into the cold November night, flashlights in hand, collars turned against the wind, socks double thickness.

As the full moon rose over Hampton Bay, we formed a circle and set our intentions as the nun instructed. We called upon the ancients who roamed the land (they were never more than a foot and a half away from us, she promised).

We walked deliberately in silence then, finally reaching the aluminum wash tub in the center, filled with a network of dried twigs.

The nun bent to light them. Flames catching slowly, then rising high, thin ribbons cutting the night.

Maria Mandarino is an acupuncturist, massage therapist, and spiritual director who lives in the northwest Phoenix Valley. She has been writing for over 30 years, has published a novel, and teaches classes in contemplative writing.





SDI WEBINAR

Spiritual Companionship and the Divine Erotic - Ethics and Sexuality 2-part Webinar Series | August 6 and 13, 2020







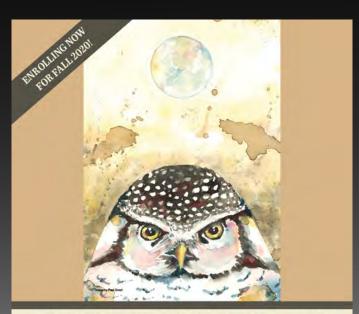
Presenter: Karen Erlichman, D.Min, LCSW Co-Presenters: Ravi Verma & Ashley Plotnick

Participate live or watch at your own convenience.

"...the circumstances of our confinement also invite considerations around how to be the best spiritual companions we can.

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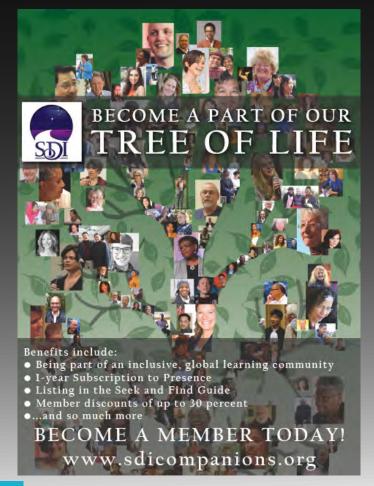


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HELPLESSLY HOPEFUL AT 90

The old lady poet
—never a poetess—
is dying,
wasting away before my eyes
and ears,
her voice stiffens
her chuckle flutters
her cheeks sag and pouch
her faith mellows.
She is dimming—
only a poem brightens her day,
engages her mind
delights her soul—

a poem or heaven the same to her.

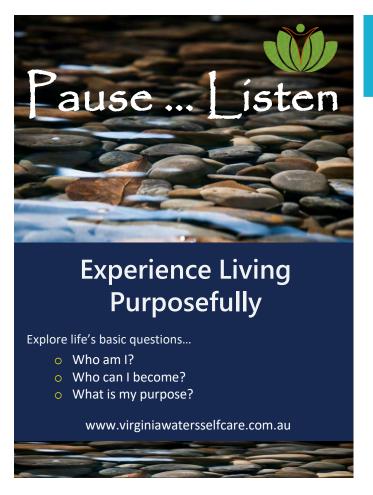
"I'm just moving on through it," she tells me.

No not yet, I think, and cry.

If I were God I'd say to her: Gloria, you are a poem Mine.

Rev'd Lyn G. Brakeman is an Episcopal priest and the author of two books and a 2016 memoir *God* Is *Not a Boy*'s *Name. Becoming Woman. Becoming Priest* published by Wipf and Stock/Cascade Books.





Listen

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MATSUO BASHO

The dragonfly can't quite land on that blade of grass.

Translated by Robert Hass





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