



Tree of Life Chasuble
Lumiere textile paint on satin, 2009
Molly Brown

the twig

ST. ANDREW'S JOURNAL OF THE ARTS

ADVENT 2009

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East Window, Great Hall at Green Lake
Designed by Nelda Danz & Built by Joe Hester

EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue of the Twig includes many pieces inspired by activities at St. Andrew's: a walk home after coffee hour and a cherished time in children's chapel became poetry; Wednesday night classes and the summer art studio incubated essays, paintings and amulets; and vestments for a new priest called up images of healing for our fragile earth. Other pieces distill experiences not so literally linked to church life, expressing love and loss, faith and discipline and the concentrated joy of creation. Each is a gift of the artist's time and insights, and each adds another shimmering thread to the warp and weft of our growing, vibrant community.

These poems, essays and images offer a quiet counterpoint to the frantic energy that overlays the season of Advent in our culture. They give us a glimpse of the light we welcome into our lives at this time each year and demonstrate the power of a gift of time and love which has been molded into tangible or audible beauty. The unseen energy generated by the spiritual, mental and physical work of creating art is rejuvenating and transformational. Our faith community at St. Andrew's and beyond is richer for the gifts on these pages.

I hope you enjoy this issue and share it with loved ones as you gather together in the next few weeks and in the coming year. May your Christmas and New Year be blessed with joy and peace.

Nelda Danz

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 Writing – 500 words or less, though longer works are negotiable.
 Visual Art – The Twig is published in full color online at

saintandrewsseattle.org. It is printed in black & white only. All images are included in both.
 Music & Video—Electronic file and written description.
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Remembrance for My Mother

Miriam Aileen Zimmer Van Osdel, February 9, 1921 – June 25, 2008

by Val Van Osdel

Having spent over thirty years in the Episcopal Church, I have come to deeply value the liturgy we have that celebrates the life of a loved one who has died. This liturgy has helped teach me about the need to share my loss and grief and to gather those around me whom I love and who love and support me. I am very appreciative of my family, my parish, and my friends who are here today. At the service my family had when we interred my mother's ashes with my father's, my brother Lew spoke movingly about our mother's life - her love, her talents, her strengths - and of the pain of our loss. He has done the same today, and I greatly value his gift to this service.

Having found strength in the Episcopal liturgy that acknowledges a death by celebrating the life, I knew I would have a memorial service for my mother, Aileen, but I hadn't thought about speaking at the service. It was one phrase my brother used in his talk at the cemetery which changed my mind. He spoke of remembering our mother as she was before these last two difficult years of her life, and while I knew and valued what he was saying, I also knew I needed to speak about the difficulty of those two years, and of the amazing reconciliation that took place.

When we are young the process of learning about ourselves and our place in the world is primarily external, and deals with secular terms of "success". As we grow older, we have more time to reflect on, and to discern our experiences. As we age, we have seen and experienced more, and our concerns tend to become more internal, and more spiritual. Norman Fischer, a Zen priest, in speaking of this process of maturing, notes that "we learn as much from being in the presence of others, as we do from our own insights and experiences. And through [this process] we come to some real accord with others".

Henri Nouwen describes this process of growing old as "[seeming] as though we are always passing from one phase to the next, gaining and losing someone, some place, something ... The losses remind you constantly, that all isn't perfect, and [that life] doesn't always happen for you, the way you expect ... Because of our strong cultural vision, it is a huge challenge to look at [the] vulnerability [of loss], not as a negative [experience], but as [a] positive [experience]".

The last two years of my mother's life were a difficult time for the entire family. My mother was a strong willed woman, (as am I), and it was very difficult for her to face her failing health and decreasing abilities. She had always been so capable and in control. She and I had had difficulties as I made choices which were not the ones she would have made. It was hard for her to have me disagree and move away in my own direction. And it was difficult for me to separate from her. It was very painful and in recent years our contact was limited. Though I continued to send holiday and birthday cards, a significant change in our relationship occurred when my mother reached out to me and I was able to respond.

Being disabled and not able to work, I had the time to make many trips to Portland to see my mother. I struggled to come to terms with my disabilities and am still working at it. During this

period, Mom fought very hard, struggling to maintain her mental and physical control, and above, all fighting to remain living in her own home. It was a time of great stress and difficulty for the entire family as we watched our mother decline. As I spent more and more time together with my mother during this period, it became apparent to me that she especially needed her only daughter to be with her and to support her. I would plan visits around taking her to the doctor or the dentist, visits she had been putting off for the past several years. At times when she was upset, I was often able to settle her down and just "be" with her. Sometimes we talked, other times I fixed her tea or a bite to eat. Often we were quiet, and simply held each other's hand. It was a time when each of us was able to let go of previous tensions and differences and truly appreciate our time together. It was a very bittersweet time.

Looking back after her death, I now see the past two years in a different light from the way in which I had been able to see it when I was in the midst of it. It reminds me in part of the time I spent doing hospital chaplaincy, and of the gift of intimacy which can often occur in times of illness, or in nearing death. The words of Norman Fischer are especially meaningful to me at this time. He talks of "true maturity [being] willing and able to show up for all life's meetings. This takes listening, but also responding - receiving something deeply, trusting life enough to allow [it] to change you, and then coming forward forthrightly, trusting yourself and your instincts. Maturity is knowing that the world is constantly creating you, moment by moment, but also, that you are creating the world as you come forward to meet it ... Connection to our own suffering, is connection to the fullness of life. It brings us to a profound compassion for ourselves and others. The journey to maturity is long, sensitive, and essentially spiritual. It involves responding truly and faithfully to conditions, owning our own experiences honestly ... and developing the strength, and stability to bear life's troubles, and the self-acceptance necessary to be able to truly love others. None of this is possible if we ignore or avoid our suffering".

The time I was able to spend with my mother the last two years of her life was an incredible gift of reconciliation. My physical disabilities and inability to work, and her physical and mental decline, gave each of us the opportunity to let go of past negative ways of relating, and to reconcile with each other, and to end our earthly life together with love, compassion, grace, and an overwhelming sense of having been deeply blessed. Henri Nouwen says it best: "Dying is our ultimate vulnerability. Instead of looking at the weakness of old age as simply the experience of loss, ... we can choose it as a passage ... where our hearts have room to be filled with the Spirit of Love, overflowing. It is ultimate weakness, but it is also potentially the greatest moment of our fruitfulness ... The seeds of death are at work in [each of] us, but love is stronger than death. Your death and mine is our final passage, our exodus to the full realization of our identity as God's beloved children, and full communion with the God of love".

It was with a sincere depth of being that I was able to say to my mother, "Mama, I love you deeply, I always have and I always will". Nothing can change that love.

Amen.

Walking Home

Ruth Oskolkoff

From church on Sunday after hearing how we are to be like Jesus and serve others and I stroll by maples and watch a seed spin down while I call my husband as I continue down the street to see about meeting for lunch while a perfect cloud peeks down from the sky and I remember David the scholar during coffee hour discussing faith within science and reasons for knowing then I look up at crows squawking in the crabapple trees that grow by the sidewalk and I think of the treats I just ate, champagne grapes, tarts and sandwiches while I cross the street and notice others on foot and biking who may also see the garden with red and yellow flowers splattered on lawns like abstract art and I walk under the freeway by cement columns and hear sounds of rushing cars like a huge river and turn into the diner owned by Andreas who smiles at me and I tell him my family will be along so I sit and listen to Greek music and my loved ones arrive and we eat and my five year old son enjoys his cheeseburger as if it was the most ordinary meal.

A Symbol of Hope

Isabel Gibson Penrose

Last April, my grandfather Churchill Jones Gibson Jr. passed away. My mom was presented with a gift certificate from her coworkers for Swanson's. Together we chose our tree, and planted a small Virginia dogwood (his hometown was Alexandria, VA) in our backyard. Right at the base of the tree we put a statue of a dragon.

My mom purchased the statue on impulse at a small stone shop while we were in Fremont soon after getting back from Virginia and the funeral. However, before we got the dogwood and set the dragon down to guard it the statue had no real meaning. Now every time I go around the back of my house to get in the car or sit in the hammock I see the tree, and right in front of it I see our sturdy little dragon. His expression is fierce, as if anyone tried to touch the tree he would burn them to a crisp (if he wasn't made of stone of course) or rip their head off.

It might seem strange that something so scary gives me hope, but when Grandpop was diagnosed with cancer all my family needed was something to breathe some fire back into us. We didn't get that chance for a long time, but we never gave up hoping. Finally we had to fly to Virginia for his funeral, and it seemed like my mom would never be the same. The statue and the tree represent more than just my grandpop to me. They give me hope that some day, my family will be strong and fiery just like the dragon.



Isabel enjoys frisbee, plays poker and hopes to be a counselor at Camp Huston next summer.



Fishing

by Mary Macmillan

*Watercolor on Paper, 2009
24 in x 18 in*

This painting was created during the Open Art Studio that Mary hosted at St. Andrews in the summer of 2009.



The Tree of Life Vestments

Art and Essay by Molly Brown

A golden Tree of Life adorns the set of priest's vestments I made this fall for Connie Carlson. The tree grows out of the intersection of two circles of double helix strands, emblematic of the DNA that forms all of life on Earth. Representatives of the animal kingdom perch in the branches of the tree along with flowers and fruits. The butterfly I painted there is meant to represent the Taylor Checkerspot butterfly of the south Puget Sound prairies. It is a species on the verge of extinction. Our grandchildren won't ever see them. May they rest in peace.

May the others rest in peace too, all those whose branches of the Tree of Life are breaking in this time of global change. Whether or not we humans are responsible for any or all of it, we are the ones—the only ones—who can do something about it. We can recycle, we can take shorter showers, use better light bulbs, plant green roofs, but none of that by itself is going to be enough. Without a unified shift in consciousness, a change of heart never before experienced on a global scale, we humans will find ourselves clinging helplessly to our own branch as it cracks and falls.

This change of heart, or shift of consciousness, is toward a spiritual awakening to a new set of values that everyone can buy into, regardless of religion, culture or ethnicity. The Tree of Life is a powerful symbol of the unity we need as we move into an uncertain future, but maybe not an entirely grim one. Daily scientific reports of melting ice, methane bubbling up from lake beds, tons of carbon dioxide burdening the air, children starving, species losing habitat, can bring on despair, a sense that "it's all going down". But possibilities are rising up where they never could have before; it is possible that we are moving toward a new way of being, maturing as a species, finding a new relationship with life.

The Tree of Life isn't about a new religion; it includes all religions as it does all species. It is an image of the mystery that lies at the heart of every religion and in the heart of each beloved being. It tells us life is sacred. Not just our own individual lives, or that of our tribe or community or nation, but all of life, all our brother and sister species and us. I even imagine that when life is discovered on another planet, it will be found to be built upon the very same spiraling DNA molecule that structures life on earth. The infinitely dividing roots and branches of the Tree of Life reflect the great mystery that binds all things, that sings in our blood and in the galaxies, that twists the DNA helix, that sparks between neurons, that is crucified in the tension between opposites, between life going onward and extinction, between despair and love of life.

This is what Michael Meade says about the Tree of Life in his book, *The World Behind the World: Living at the Ends of Time*:

The Tree of Life is the Paradise Tree and the Tree of Imagination; it is the Tree of Fertility and the family tree; the Tree of Ascent and Descent where the shamans seek the heights of spirit and the depths of soul; it's the Tree of Sacrifice, the Tree of Death; it's the 'hanging tree' and the Tree of Enlightenment. Call it the Tree of Life and Death, the Tree of the Sun Dance, the Shaman Tree and the Tree of the Cross on which Christ hangs. It's the Otherworld Tree, the Tree Behind the Tree; it is the Bodhi Tree of stillness where Buddha broke through the spell of the world and found enlightenment; it is the cosmic pillar that the shaman climbs in ecstatic trance.

Jesus was always telling us about the kingdom of heaven in terms of growing things, branching things. In the parable of the mustard seed he says, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what should I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in a garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches." (Luke 13:18-19) The kingdom of heaven is infinitely branching, encompassing everything from a tiny seed to the whole universe and it is home for all of us, here and now. The Tree of Life image reminds us of everything that is, everything we are, with the great mystery flowing everywhere through it.



Molly Brown is a long-time member of St. Andrew's. She works with glass painting, fabric art, writing and ritual art. You can see more of Molly's work at marigoldstudios.com

Stories of the Heart

Essay, Poem and Amulet by Donna Handly

Part I – What’s a third grader to do?

I was 8 years old when my family moved from the Pomona Valley to the San Bernardino Mountains in southern CA. Before the move I was a happy child, just finished second grade at our local elementary school where my great aunt was my teacher and my grandparents managed the cafeteria. I had just begun piano lessons. My first recital piece was called Apple Blossom Time and as the youngest student, I was proudly first on the program. Our rented house with its screened in porch and boysenberries out back, sat next to an orange grove and was within walking distance of my grandparents house. My grandfather was a bee keeper and my grandmother entertained us all with her piano playing. Cousins, aunts and uncles were all close by. I had a best friend named Cecelia.

Our new house in the mountains, for which my parents paid a dear \$9,000 dollars, sat at the top of a hill on half an acre of pine trees. Not many neighbors around. No family. I was the new kid in third grade among children who had known each other since they were born. On Halloween that first fall, my mother, my older sister and I made caramel popcorn balls and waited for the trick-or-treaters. No one came that year. But we got a dog, and I discovered that pine needles make great forts. The outsider at first, I remember thinking to myself,

“Give those kids some time, they’ll like me.”

Part II – Music school = independence

Puberty caused some disruption in my family, mainly in my relationship with my stern, Missouri-raised, fundamentalist dad. The more I budded and flowered, the sterner and more judgemental he became. Looking back, I can see the humor – or poignancy anyway – but at the time, I wanted out. College was never assumed or even encouraged, but I saw music school as my escape hatch. With the help and encouragement of my music teachers, I prepared auditions, completed applications and got myself to a school in Oregon – an airplane flight away but close enough for a small town kid not to lose ties entirely.

I grew up, practiced and studied...and practiced, and strengthened my sense independence. I was proud of my talent and felt like a big fish albeit in a pretty small pond. But my senior year was rough. The cultural upheavals of the late 60s caught up with me and awakened in me a feminist and social consciousness. Distracted and unsure, I failed my senior piano jury – without which I could not graduate. There weren’t any adults in my life at the time, as there had been in high school, to help steer me or act as sounding boards.

I eventually got myself together enough to pass the jury - then my father showed up for graduation. I was expected to return home with him and my mom. I had other plans. It caused a rift that took years to heal – and the incident left me feeling very much alone. I moved to the East Coast, first with a friend to Washington DC. Then I joined the VISTA Volunteer program and was sent to western Massachusetts. There I helped organize a women’s

health clinic where we happily caused something of a scandal by openly talking about birth control in this heavily Catholic, rural town.

I had applied to graduate school and was accepted at Boston University School of Music. But when the acceptance letter came, I couldn’t hear clearly, I couldn’t see clearly. I turned it down and moved to New York City. One path not taken...

Part III – The Calling Project

Calling project. Or story-telling project. Make up your mind. What story is calling?

Joe reads a line of poetry,
“When the heart is right, for and against are forgotten.”

Physics and biophysics, creating patterns
Piano? Playing? Playing piano?
Capital cee or small cee?
Public or private?
Do your memes let you have more than one at a time?
Garden dreams – what is it that’s pushing up?
Where’s the sense of drama?
Don’t forget humor.
Don’t forget....

I forget my sense of hope, my sound, I cry
But only for a moment
There are voices in my fingers.



Whole Heart with Fragments

Fused Glass, 2009

Donna Handly

Donna participated in the Calling Project at the Center at St. Andrew’s led by Joe Hester this fall. This piece was prepared for the public presentation at the end of the six week project.



Selah

by Camille Hayward

Selah – A Hebrew word of unknown meaning, often marking the end of a verse in the Psalms and thought to be a term indicating a pause or rest. ~ The American Heritage Dictionary

Let us count out the sestina, the sonata,
the sonnet—
the selah, the song, the singer
and the sung. Let us remember
the whirling wind that came up from
the little breeze that took its time.
Know that the ocean sometimes surges
high and when it does

it rocks our little boat about.
This one is laden low
with fish and fishing folk.
It can not help but turn and writhe
first back and forth,
then up and down—

the little boat that we are in.
We wave our ocean streamers
all about. We are pretending
that we are with Him
and with His frightened friends.
Now the storm is really rising.
Now the surge of water rushes.
Now the hold of fish and folk
is close to turning over, spilling out—

“Wake up, wake up!” we call to Him.
“Wake up! Do You not care that the storm
is taking us down? How can You sleep?”

In the circle of the little children’s
chapel we are careful
that our crepe paper waves
on tongue depressors
do not go too close
to the holy hold of candle flame.
We straddle the temporal and the transcendent
in this weekly space
where the mystical and the material
can be relied upon
for intersection. How most fortunate
are we that we can depend
on transformation,
if we but gather our selves
in. Can we believe that it is real?
Can such fragile waves
hold out all truth of fear and failing?
If the selah of His speaking

contains the pause
between the waters—the peace,
the sigh, the pax, and, now the sob
that collapses inward on its returning
breath—if that is so,
then may we find to our surprise
the boat afloat,
and we, yes, we,
still standing safe
on top of it.

*Camille lives on
Capitol Hill in a condo
with two cats, absent
her 19 year old daughter
who recently moved
into separate quarters.*



*She is in her 30th year
of teaching elementary
school and her 51st
year of loving books
and everything to do
with words.*

Winter Morning
Pencil on paper
2009

Molly Kercheval



*Molly attends Kellog Middle
School. She loves to draw and
play the trombone.*





Generation

*Sculpture by Calder Danz
Photography by Dawn Cleveland*

*Two views
Spalted maple, cedar and tempera paint (base),
blonde shellac, linseed oil
9 x 16 x 10 inches*

*Calder helps in the St. Andrew's vegetable garden.
You can see more of his work at calderdanz.com .*



New Year's Day

Michael Cooley

"I will change!"
we loudly say,
and on this day resolve
not to involve ourselves
with past or last year's follies.

But Time rules the foolish pace
of hasty men and with its pen
writes
SLOWLY
on the page.

Thus we must remain
like wine in oaken casks
which mask
the silent change
of age.



Michael Cooley is the Music Director at St. Andrew's. He is also a gifted composer. Several of his original choral works are regular offerings at services at St. Andrew's.

Practice Sessions

Poem and Photo by Dawn Corl

The notes are dropping off the staves, emptying the score,
falling over my hands: 40 – 88 – 126 – 152 beats a minute
for syncopated hours.

Many lie jumbled, scattered, unsorted on the rug:
Little piles of dirt and pine needles,
ooze together, sloppy mud.

I have wrong notes stuck under my fingernails.
Flagged 16th notes flutter and cloud the air;
Sting my eyes and dust the cracks and folds of my body.
Quarter notes aim their stems at my heart.
Bull's eye.

I have the stain of blue notes under my eyes.
The flats stick to the soles of my feet.
The sharps collect between my toes and stink.

I've got to wash these notes off.

I need some measures of rests.

Wake up.
Count.



Dawn plays with the duo Clave de Sol. Her harpsichord was built by Jerry Mixon. You can hear her play at clave-de-sol.com

The Alto Vista Chapel on the Northern Coast of Aruba

Text by Marianne Mersereau & Photography by Jean Kercheval

Rebuilt in 1952, it sits on the site of the island's first Catholic Church built in 1750 by a Spanish missionary. A series of crosses each containing a line from the Lord's Prayer are stationed along the winding road leading up to the elevated site. We get out of the car just as a group of bikini-clad college kids on Spring Break tear off in their jeep leaving a trail of dust behind. Now we have this sacred space that is typically a crowded tourist attraction all to ourselves. We take a different approach than the kids and wrap sarongs around our shorts before entering the chapel. The wind blowing up from the Caribbean and across the desert is as intense as the panoramic view.

We begin to understand what our hotel owner meant when he described the chapel setting to us while mapping it out: "I'm not a believer," he said, "but I can feel something in the wind up there." We are believers, and we feel it too. It feels like Pentecost even though we are in the middle of Lent. It is the sound of many rushing waters, the universal Aum. We kneel and meditate before the adorned altar with its calming blue backdrop.

Now, almost two years following our pilgrimage, we marvel at the freshness of our memory of being on that desert mountaintop caressed by God's breath from the sea.

Marianne Mersereau has been a part of the Saint Andrew's community for 14 years. She writes about her faith, art and travels in her blog at wildhoneyministries.com.

Jean Kercheval is a photographer with a special passion for portraiture. See more at kerchevalphotography.com.





**Journal Entries from
the Calling Project**

*Colored Pencil on Paper
2009*

Regan Wensnahan