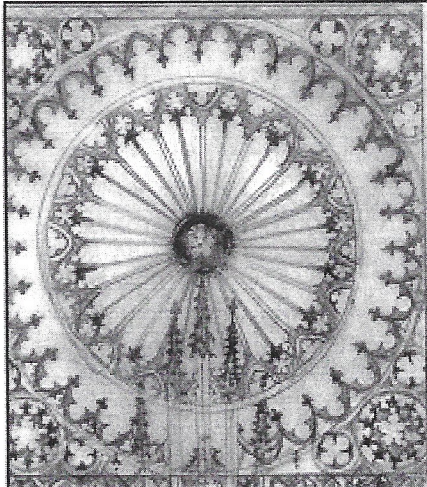




The Rose

inviting Wisdom into our lives & churches

Emmanuel Church ■ Athens, Georgia

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The Cliffs of Arbel

It amazes me that the Cliffs of Arbel are not mentioned, at least not by name, anywhere in the Scriptures. In all Israel no natural wonder is more awesome or beautiful. From these heights Mount Hermon, the entire Sea of Galilee, and even the Valley of Jezreel are all within sight. So too, at night, so are the lights of Tiberias, Capernaum, and Nazareth. The cliffs tower fifteen hundred feet above a valley below. Through the valley runs a millenniums-old road connecting the Sea of Galilee with the Mediterranean Coast. It passes through Jesus' hometown of Nazareth, today a modern city. The most direct route between Nazareth and Capernaum, then and now, is over this old road. There is no doubt that Jesus passed below many times; it is

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Revelation in the Parking Lot

"God will move the Church in God's own time, but only if we are willing to be leaders led by Wisdom."

AS THE FACILITATOR for our dream group at Second Presbyterian, I am continually watching my own dreams for guidance concerning not only my role in the group, but the place and purposes of dreamwork in the Church. Interestingly, lots of these dreams are set in the church parking lot. It's a perfect image, for our group is on the property, on holy ground, but not really "in"—not really part of the structure and tradition and worship life of the church as a whole. Sometimes this bothers me, but mostly it doesn't. I figure change takes awhile, and things will happen in God's time, not mine. Besides, sometimes things happen in the parking lot that could never happen under the church roof.

One night in October, our dream group was in that parking lot, talking a little more as we dispersed to our cars. Suddenly we heard the hoot of an owl, an eerie, piercing, but gentle, sound. Then again, very near. We looked for it in the trees, along the roofline. It was unsettling to feel this bird so close and be unable to see it.

Then, "Look up!" whispered Priscilla, pointing. And there, perched on the cross on top of the steeple, silhouetted in the cloudy moonlight, was a great horned owl.

It was huge.

It did not fly away.

We all stood in the darkness, amazed.

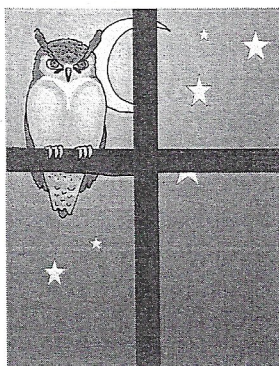
It was there when we met again the next week.
And the next.

The owl frequented that steeple cross all fall and into the winter, usually quiet, sometimes calling, once lifting its magnificent wings and launching into the darkness.

Eventually, and with gratitude, we began calling it "Sophia," the Wisdom of God. Her presence on the cross on the steeple over the sanctuary door was an affirmation and a beautiful image of what we feel we are about in our dream group: we try to listen for the living Wisdom of God through our dreams, to follow Christ's call to continual spiritual rebirth and active compassion, and to carry this on in the context of both the traditional Church and our own specific congregation.

For us, the presence of the owl was a blessing. For others in the church who saw it and remarked, it was a wonder, a curiosity. But most people, I suppose, didn't notice it—after all, she appeared when owls do appear—at night.

As Scripture attests, some things are best perceived at night. The stars of God's covenant with Abraham. The divine wrestler at Peniel. Pillars of fire. The voice of God calling our name. The multitude of heavenly hosts. The liberating angel in the prison cell. And the Wisdom abundant in dreams upon dreams, visions upon visions. So it is with us: Wisdom is there in our own dreams as they illuminate our nightly ascent from our strange and sacred darkness. She is there in the



synchronicities that astonish us into new perceptions. Divine Wisdom, like the owl, is always alive and breathing, day and night, and her presence is manifest to anyone who hears her call and searches her out.

"She goes about seeking those worthy of her, and she graciously appears to them in their paths, and meets them in every thought." Thus says the writer of The Wisdom of Solomon (6:16), the apocryphal book whose place in the Bible, like the place of natural spirituality in mainline religious practice, is neither "in" nor "out," but right in the middle, though largely unacknowledged.

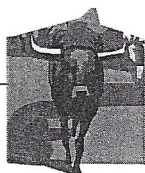
There is a what-nextness to this story. God will move the Church in God's own time, but only if we are willing to be leaders led by Wisdom. When pastors and elders are ordained in the Presbyterian Church, we vow to serve the church with "energy, intelligence, imagination, and love." For me, this has meant lots of continual learning, prayer, and inner work, starting a dream group, facilitating a spirituality class, requesting and transforming space for a beautiful prayer room, and hanging in there when things don't go perfectly. Maybe, though, my best offerings—the best offerings any of us can give—are simply those unpredictable moments when we feel the Spirit moving us to bold and grace-filled connection with others, and we say, "Yes. Here I am."

So, here we are, my group, your group, lingering and listening after hours in the parking lot, on the

edges of holy ground, knowing how to look for the owl, how to say, "Look there!"—knowing how to articulate something of what She means. Sooner or later other people will wonder what we're doing out here, and once they pause awhile with us, they, too, may hear Her call. And eventually, I hope and believe, our sanctuary doors will open wide to God's illuminating night Word.

Nashville, TN *Laura Hileman*

Laura Huff Hileman was introduced to dreamwork five years ago, and, after completing the Dream Leader training program at The Haden Institute, she initiated the dream group at Second Presbyterian. In her former life as an English teacher, she loved bringing students into the real-and-not-real, two-things-at-one-time world of myth and symbol. Now, she enjoys the ordinary miracles of being family with her husband and two young sons.



Natural Spirituality Comes to West Texas

IT STARTED SLOWLY, a mere trickle, but gradually grew till it resembled a West Texas gully washer. After reading Joyce Hudson's book *Natural Spirituality*, Francie Lowe, in Lubbock, Texas, passed it on to me. My husband Dale and I felt that the book challenged our inner walk in a very practical way, and we wondered how we could share it with others.

Then, in October 2001, a Lubbock couple, Ada Wre and Art Foster, invited Dale and me to attend the Journey Into Wholeness Conference in Kanuga, North Carolina. Unexpectedly—synchronistically?—we met Joyce Hudson there! After attending her sessions on beginning a natural spirituality group, we resolved to start our own in West Texas.

Back in Lubbock, we soon found twelve people who wanted to pursue the study of *Natural Spirituality*. A majority are Episcopalians from St. Christopher's Church, yet we have a few members from other denominations. We are a very diverse group, since some of us have heard of Jung before, while others are encountering his ideas for the first time. We meet weekly in the home of Ada and Art to discuss Joyce's book.

With a cross on the table to remind us of Christ's presence, we begin and end our weekly sessions with prayer. Different people act as moderators to ensure that we stay on track. As Francie said, "We need someone to help us stick with the subject matter so that we don't end up sharing blueberry muffin recipes!"

As a group, we have discovered that each chapter is so rich in important concepts and challenges that we spend two or even three sessions discussing it. We want to be sure that we understand Joyce's application of Jung's basic concepts to our Christian journey.

Enthusiasm is high. Interesting, exciting, and thought-provoking discussion emerges in our weekly sessions. We can hardly wait to begin sharing our dreams. We feel that we are moving toward a deeper understanding of ourselves and of how the Holy Spirit works in our lives as we share and learn together.

Lubbock, TX *Joan Davis*

Joan Davis is a retired language therapist who, besides giving several papers on dyslexia in the United States, has presented a number of seminars on the subject in China. A member of St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in Lubbock, Texas, Joan is a vestry member, convention delegate, Lay Eucharistic Visitor, and Natural Spirituality group leader. Her husband, Dale—retired Director of Interdisciplinary Humanities and Professor Emeritus of English—used Jungian concepts in his literature courses at Texas Tech University.

Besides their church activities, Joan and Dale keep busy with grandparenting, gardening, reading, writing, and traveling. Last summer their travels took them to Einsiedeln, Switzerland, for a two-week Jungian conference in the marvelous Swiss Alps. As a couple, they are devoted to encouraging their mutual spiritual growth and, in their joint ministry, facilitating the growth process in others. Their involvement in the natural spirituality movement is an extremely important focus of their efforts. Both have dream journals to track their inner life. Joan's dreams seem deeply concerned with journeys; Dale's with gardening.

