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The Wren and I

by Patricia Thomas

“While I do not believe that there is a predetermined program for our lives, I believe there is a path. That path arises only as we walk...we are not passive; our lives are making the path.” (Elaine M. Prevallet, SL, Weavings Vol. XXV No. 3)

As I sit on my back porch in the early morning cool-before-the-heat-of-the-day in southwest Ohio, the wren couple is busy preparing for its second batch of babies. They are by far the most vociferous of our neighbors, chattering constantly as they tidy up the domicile and rebuild for Round Two. I am amused by their ability to “talk with their mouths full;” they transport bits of twig in their beaks all the while managing to sing without ceasing. I am not the first human to be moved by the melodious song of the bird who seems to effortlessly combine rejoicing with working. The male flits between the rough gray roof of the little Wren House securely attached to the porch post and the circular top of my wind chime a few feet away serenading me all the while with his ‘stuttering, gurgling song’ (Peterson’s delightful description). And here comes the missus, gracefully bearing a tiny, crooked stick twice her length. Without batting an eye lid, the female slips through the hole that’s just-right-size-for-a-wren, to arrange ‘the furniture’ in her summer nursery.



Photo by Patricia Thomas.

Twelve years ago I flew from Columbus, Ohio to Seattle in order to participate in my first Good News Associates Board meeting. As the plane slipped down out of the high clouds on our approach to SeaTac, I closed my book and glanced out the window wondering if there was anything to see. I think I must have gasped out loud when I spotted the snow white mountains rising beneath us because my seat mate turned to me with an amused grin. “Is this your first time in Seattle?” she asked and commenced pointing out and naming the peaks rising to greet us as we prepared to land. After more than 15 such landings my heart still breaks out in thanksgiving and praise to the One whose creation has set forth such spectacular formations.



Mount Rainier as seen from Seattle. Photo by Jan Wood.

I'd been in the Northwest a few times before, but this felt different. I was taking up a new ministry as a member of a brand new Board, ready to accompany the fledgling Good News Associates on its journey. Both the organization and I were starting off on a new adventure, prepared to 'make the path' as we walked. Though we were few in number, each one of us had experienced the joy which comes from listening to and following our Guide, and we stepped out in unity totally committed to conducting our business in group discernment, seeking the mind of Christ.



Patricia Thomas (second from right) with GNA Associates and Board members, 2006. Photo courtesy of Jan Wood.

And what a miraculous, empowering journey it has been to travel alongside folks who make it a habit to ask in their own individual ways, "God, what would you have me do in this particular situation?" Along the way there were storms with lightning and thunder, but together we heard the 'still, small voice'. Given courage to tackle the task at hand, we proceeded confident that we walked in the Presence and trusting that our longing to be faithful stewards is indeed pleasing to God. (Thank you, Thomas Merton.)

So now, as I leave the Board, I like the wren have completed the specific task given me by our Creator and Guide. She

has sent her fledglings out into the world, and I hope she feels as I do in her own birdie way, the sense of a job faithfully undertaken. The little wren is already building a nest for her second brood and I . . . ? As the happy grandmother of seven grandsons, surely not to produce another brood. But to take up another ministry focus? Yes, of that I am certain.

It has been a privilege to minister with and to the members of the Board of Good News Associates and with and to the Associates. As we gathered each year to delight in the work God is calling each of us to undertake, I marveled at the myriad ways in which ministry beckons to each of us, inviting us to use our God-given gifts, to build upon our strengths, to spread our wings and flap furiously, to proceed in spite of our fears. Sometimes we climb the ladder to the high diving board. Upon reaching the top we inhale deeply and courageously "take the Nestea plunge," falling backwards with arms outstretched smack dab into that deep pool of water, the security of God's loving Presence. And we bob back to the surface refreshed ready for the next step of our journey in the adventure of faithful living.

Patricia Thomas served on the Board of GOOD NEWS *Associates* from its inception in 1998 until June 2010. She was President of the Board from 2004—2010. A 1990 graduate of the Earlham School of Religion, she is the outgoing Presiding Clerk of the Board of Advisors. She is an active member of the Wilmington Yearly Meeting of Friends (Quakers) and joyously living into her retirement years on her husband's family farm complete with hogs, cows, chickens, ducks, dogs, cats and horses.



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