



seasons

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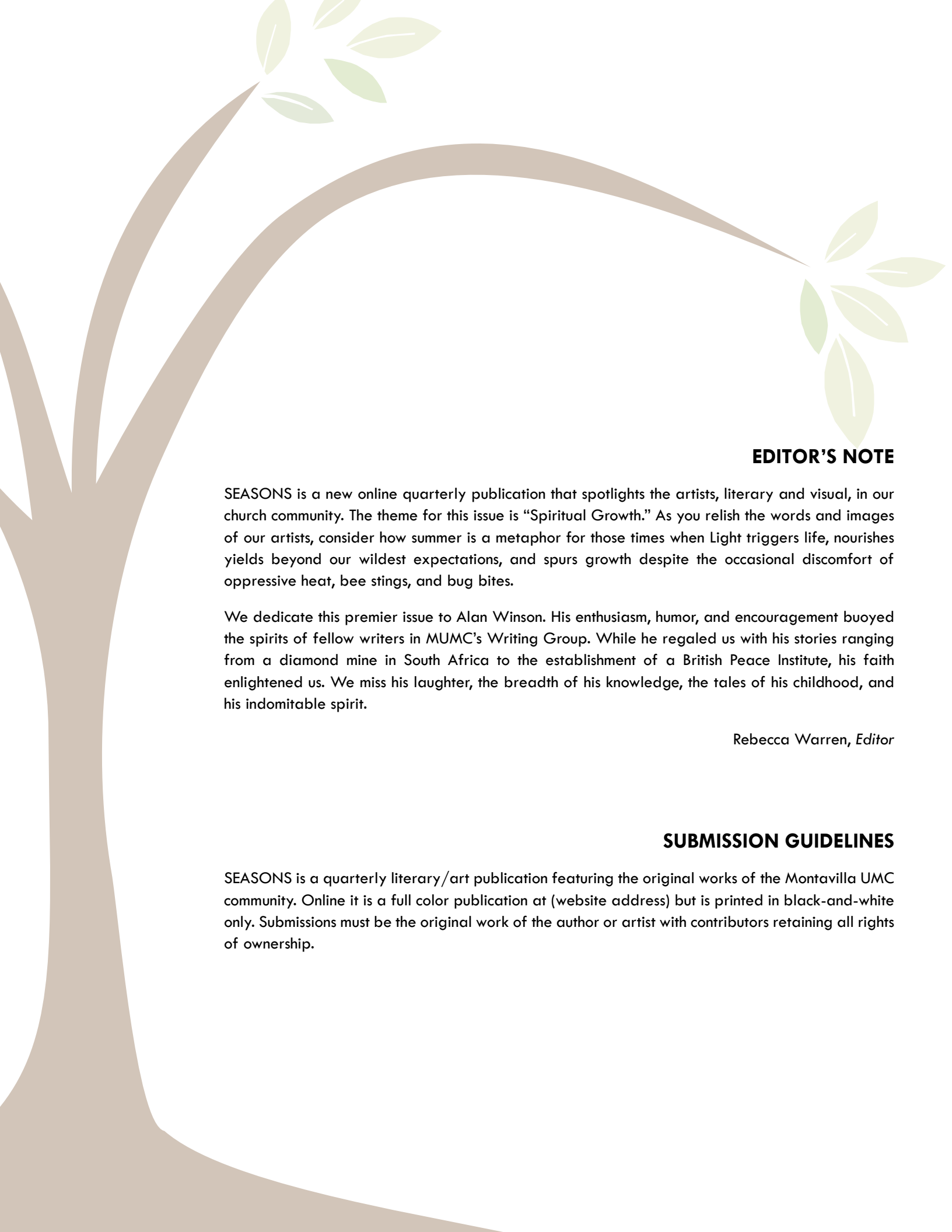
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EDITOR'S NOTE

SEASONS is a new online quarterly publication that spotlights the artists, literary and visual, in our church community. The theme for this issue is "Spiritual Growth." As you relish the words and images of our artists, consider how summer is a metaphor for those times when Light triggers life, nourishes yields beyond our wildest expectations, and spurs growth despite the occasional discomfort of oppressive heat, bee stings, and bug bites.

We dedicate this premier issue to Alan Winson. His enthusiasm, humor, and encouragement buoyed the spirits of fellow writers in MUMC's Writing Group. While he regaled us with his stories ranging from a diamond mine in South Africa to the establishment of a British Peace Institute, his faith enlightened us. We miss his laughter, the breadth of his knowledge, the tales of his childhood, and his indomitable spirit.

Rebecca Warren, *Editor*

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

SEASONS is a quarterly literary/art publication featuring the original works of the Montavilla UMC community. Online it is a full color publication at (website address) but is printed in black-and-white only. Submissions must be the original work of the author or artist with contributors retaining all rights of ownership.

Guest Artist | Velma McConnell

Each issue of Seasons will feature a guest artist. This issue's guest is Velma McConnell, a member of Lake Oswego United Methodist Church, a Social Action mission coordinator in United Methodist Women, chair of the UMCOR/Fair Trade sales, and a member of the church's Membership-Connection Committee.

Velma composed "The Locks at High Tide: Retirement," in 1996 as she and her husband, Bishop Cal McConnell, contemplated retirement with the possibility of owning their first home together (they married in 1988—each having lost a spouse to cancer). In Seattle, the Pacific Northwest Conference provided a condo overlooking the Ballard Locks and the ship canal to Puget Sound.

THE LOCKS AT HIGH TIDE: RETIREMENT

Like the tide rushing in, to meet the lake water
Am I feeling immersed in the clashing currents
 of salt water and fresh flowing streams?
Must I resist at this juncture of rushing schedules
 and retirement?
What is there to fear?
Each is God-given (so far I haven't drowned!)
Soon the tide is pulled once more
 by lunar strength,
 and flows complacently,
 companionably with the spillway torrents.
So, will not our journey be a merging of will,
 of choice: Ours and God's?



photo: Kate Shirley

Sun on the ocean

As a resident of the Willamette View Retirement Community, Velma serves on the Pastoral Care Team and participates in the Great Decisions study, in a weekly “questers” interfaith community, and in an interracial/cultural study-and-dialogue group. For fun, Velma reads, cooks, hikes in all kinds of terrain and weather, designs cards, and writes poetry. Her life at Willamette View inspired “Old Growth Forest.”

OLD GROWTH FOREST

These Giants of the Ages

From “sprout” (my Papa’s nickname for me) to stalwart survivors
of Drought, Fire, Storm to Resting-in-place

Some becoming, others are Mother/Father Logs,
Nourishing, nurturing the next generations.

Layer upon layer of Climate-change, Ever-rotating Seasons,
Ages and Stages leaving indelible Rings-of-Time...
Creased, gnarled Bark.

These Giants of the Ages

Health-Center-Bound, but Free

Minds and spirits still soaring...

Or...Memories and Recognition stilled,

stilted by age and disease

the flowing, slowing sap

that no longer energizes the mind or body,

the diminished flourish of swing ‘n sway

in the winds of time.

Becoming, always becoming,

even when Hospice takes up residence

in the thin places between Life and Death.

Sacred Space—Holey, Wholly, Holy—

this continuum called Life...

This Old Growth Forest of Beloved Selves,

Our Sisters and Brothers in Common Unity:

This Community of Willamette View.



photo: Kate Shirley

Redwood forest

Michelle Frost has been writing poetry since 3rd grade. She has been published in Yoga Journal and Arizona Woman Today. She has lived in South Dakota, Arizona, and now—fortunately for MUMC—Portland.

A ROSE MAKES...

Nothing compares to the face
A rose makes cupped in your palm
On a rainy afternoon
Its open blossom shining
Perfectly in your hand
Completely fragrant and
Trusting

Michelle Frost; 1996



SMALL BIRD AT THE FEEDER

Birds are used to things moving
beneath them like the sky
They sway on fragile twig legs
Cling with tiny claws to phone lines
and branches in wind
bird feeder hung in the tree with twine

Quick beak dips into seeds
Black bead eye keeps watch
Orange-pink tea rose breast
opalescent against solid browns it's wings
tucked-in and the old wet wood of the tree

A single leaf conceals his small body
How large the tree and that dangerous cat
How alert Mrs.Sparrow she becomes
A flick a blink a dart through trees
One bird scatters seeds on wet leaves
Two cats sleep inside on fat cushions

Michelle Frost; 1996



photos: Kate Shirley

*Unfurling rose at
Bonneville Fish Hatchery*

Robin at Namanu

CONSTRUCTION OF DRYING LAUNDRY

Her sky is sliced by clotheslines
She stands with a basket in grass
Looks up between the wires
Another laundry day in wind

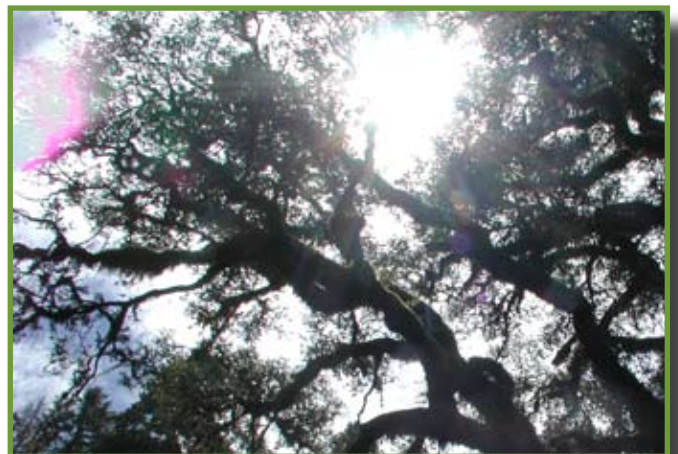
Arms wide and a mouth of wooden pins
She shakes out clean flowered sheets
Reaches up and clips a corner
Sheet to line, step aside, sheet
to line. She walls herself in
Pink pillowcases and plaid dishtowels
some underwear worn thin odd socks
Wooden clothespins in her teeth
She bends to pull the basket along
Builds a house of bedsheets
with the rhythm of a bricklayer
Bend shake reach clip
Side step clip side step clip
The construction of drying laundry

Billowing sails on a stationary ship
Flapping angry pinned-down ghosts
Her mind gives her a pirate's life
as she looks to an ocean of blue sky
The clean cotton smell is a closer cloud
Gathering her skirt from the wind
she crosses the yard
Gracious in her ordinary days

Michelle Frost; 1996

photo: Kate Shirley

*Majestic oak tree in
Southern Oregon*



HILLTOP CONGREGATION

Congregation of villagers on a hilltop
Sun shines through a clearing in trees
Illuminates their faces and lends them halos

Tuba leads the band of red jackets
White shirts seated on folding chairs in grass
White cross on the red Swiss flag
Waving in wind in the treetops

After the sermon the priest removes his smock
hangs it on a branch by the flag
He joins the men for the business of bratwurst
at the grill they laugh in the clouds of smoke

Hard-scrubbed cheeks and hands
Round faces like these rolling hillsides
Villagers forget their chores today
Babies cradled in arms
They toast to apfelwein and sunshine
A red-faced man blows into the alp horn

Michelle Frost; 1996



photo: Becky Warren

*A meadow west of
Zurich, Switzerland*

Quilting | Emmy Lou Johnson

The play “Quilters” features a pioneer woman and her six daughters. “This is “almost my story,” explains Emmy Lou Johnson. “My five sisters and I learned to quilt at our mother’s knee. She taught us to help make quilts.” Emmy Lou was eight years old when her family moved from Minnesota to Oregon and she started quilting. Prior to that she accompanied her mother to a quilting group in Ortonville, Minnesota, where Emmy Lou played under the quilt frame while her mother stitched and talked.



In this quilted photograph, Emmy Lou stands on her front porch surrounded by some of the quilts she has made.

That stitching and talking with sister quilters spans three generations in Emmy Lou’s family since her grandmother was also a quilter. Amazingly, her grandmother, mother, and Emmy Lou were part of the same quilting group, the Lake Oswego Quilters.

At the invitation of former Montavilla UMC member Vivien Terry, Emmy Lou joined the group 28 years ago. Every Tuesday for almost three decades she has gathered with these quilting friends. “A quilt group is a grief and a sharing group for its members. Many of us have become widows while in the group. We attend funerals to support our friends and their families.” In addition to a weekly show-and-tell of quilting projects, they share quilt patterns and fabric, help with color combinations, tell stories, and give encouragement. Other MUMC members of Lake Oswego Quilters include Helen Grubb and Verlene Ross.

Emmy Lou quilts most days. She has made full-size quilts for friends and family, including sons, daughter, and grandchildren. Photographed here is a Bear’s Paw Quilt for her grandson in Florida. His color choices were earth tones. And the green, blue, and white quilt held by Emmy Lou is a Stack ‘n Whack Quilt, a pattern requiring stacking fabric, cutting the layers, and then sewing the pieces together again. While the quilt top is machine quilted, the making of the quilt – sewing top to back can be done by either machine or by hand. It takes about a year for Emmy Lou to make a king-size quilt by hand.



Emmy Lou Johnson with one of her Stack ‘n Whack Quilts.

Is quilting an art or a craft? Emmy Lou thinks that those who design a quilt and paint the fabric are artists. She requires a pattern so regards her quilting as a craft. Her advice is practical: new quilters should start with a simple pattern; the border of a quilt is like a frame around a picture; and a label on the quilt should give “the name of the pattern, who pieced it, who quilted it, who the quilt is for” and the year it was made. Do this, Emmy Lou avows, “for the sake of history.”

While her advice is practical, her experience with quilting has brought her into a “thin place” where God is near. In the 2007 Advent Devotional, Emmy Lou wrote:

“At the Fall Retreat at Magruder the theme was ‘Christ and the Wilderness, Discovering God in Thin Places.’ ‘Thin places’—that was a new idea to me. What is a thin place? A place where God is near. Like in a camp setting? Or a quiet time?...This new idea of a ‘thin place’ made me realize I like the quiet time of working with my hands while deep in my thoughts—communing with God...I treasure my quiet time with God. I feel richly blessed.”

Emmy Lou has been quilting for more than seven decades. She has been at Montavilla UMC for 70 years. “I guess you could say I’m a joiner in more ways than joining pieces of fabric together into quilts. I’ve been pretty steady in both groups ever since. I love both.”

By Becky Warren



*Bear's Paw
Quilt for Emmy
Lou's grandson
in Florida Her
grandson's color
choices were earth
tones.*

Poetry Review | Sara Teasdale's "Morning Song"

I like short poems that set the scene and complete a life statement as clearly as "Morning Song" by Sara Teasdale. By my count, her opening stanza uses just 23 words to describe the morning sky when daybreak has shuttered the stars. Her final stanza of 25 words parallels the lone moon and her life as a poet. Her life statement is that freedom comes only with loneliness.

Sara Teasdale was born in 1884 and lived 48 years, mostly so frail as to require a nurse companion. Born and educated in St Louis, Missouri, she married a businessman and settled in New York City. Her poetry was published at her age 23 and eleven years later, at age 34, she received a Pulitzer Prize. A collection of her poetry was published after her suicide, and 316 of her poems can be found at www.poetryhunter.com.

A famous short story by Roy Bradbury was inspired by her poem of the same name, "There will be Soft Rains."

Enjoy with me now "Morning Song" for both its clarity and its penetrating phrase—O *white moon*, you are *lonely*—as Teasdale makes her case for freedom. Freedom at a high cost: the cost of loneliness.

By Roger Warren

MORNING SONG

A diamond of a morning
 Waked me an hour too soon;
Dawn had taken in the stars
 And left the faint white moon.

O white moon, you are lonely,
 It is the same with me,
But we have the world to roam over,
 Only the lonely are free.

Sara Teasdale (1884-1933)



Photo: Kate Shirley

Moon from Namanu

JULY CERTAINTIES

Every summer evening
the bug parade commences.
There must be forgiven sin
in squashing the slow ones
even if you aren't afraid.
As startling as sparklers
here and then gone
delivering gifts of red bumps
and bites that sting.
Summer apparel and bare feet
leave abundant territory
for creatures seeking blood
and your disrupted dinner.
There is no holding back
in their eternal quest
to disrupt human joy
every summer evening.

Sue Dolan; 2010

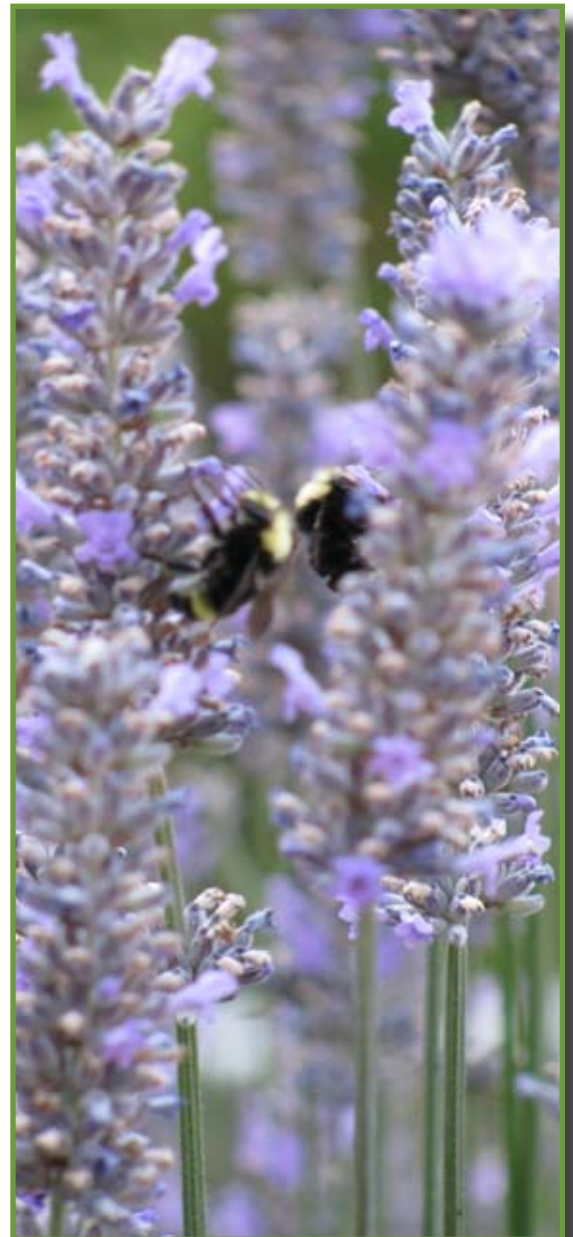


photo: Kate Shirley

*Bees enjoying my
mother's lavender*

AUGUST ANGST

Summer's heat produces
music in your head.
The dizzying rhythm begins
the hum of bug buzz,
and clicking floor fans
the tink of ice tea
music in a glass
the squeal of kids
frolicking in pools.
A longing sigh
and the eternal search
for an ocean breeze
absent in city concrete
and cubical work space.
Vacation dreams are interrupted
the dizzying rhythm begins
time clocks predicting summers end.

Sue Dolan; 2010

SPIRITUAL GROWTH

A spot on an old potato
Withered and dry
Creates a sprout of life
Alone in a dark cold tomb
It grows and curls up
And reaches out seeking light
Finding resurrection
Pushing out stem and leaf.
Buried in the soil
Alone in the warm earth
It grows and curls up
Finding strength
Producing leaf and flower alike
Undisturbed in the quiet earth
It creates a secret blessing
You must grope to find
Food to feed body and spirit.

Sue Dolan; 2010



Sue Dolan loves working on behalf of the church with Christian Education coming first in her priorities. She also likes words since they touch people's hearts.

THE GIFT OF LOVE

For God so loved the world He made

After seven days of toil

Filled with plants and creatures wild

Then mankind to tend God's soil

With love God created our earthly globe

He placed a pole at the south and at the north

So that nothing could pull his globe apart

Though man tries for all he is worth

God needed some place to hold all His love

And He gave each of us a heart

So when we decide to live in harmony

That's the place we know we should start

So if perfect love I seek to find

How much so myself should be

For the only perfect love so far

We hung on the cross at Calvary.

Stan Clayville



photo: Kate Shirley

*Russian icon from
Juneau, Alaska*

Parables of Nature | Ruth Bajema

When Ruth Bajema was working, commuting downtown on a bus, she spent the time either reading her Bible or meditating on what she saw. She began writing “Parables on Nature.” Most of the parables were about trees. Here are two she wrote:



Ruth Bajema finds modern-day parables in everyday life. When Ruth was quite small—even before she read—she loved going to church; she knew Love was there.

The trees were leafing out. . . a sign that the gray of winter was ending. I rejoiced in the soft colors that showed among the black limbs. But later I realized it was not leaves but flowers, Lord, coming out, expending the last of winter’s store to begin new life, confident that the sun, the rain, and more food was to come. . . an act of faith. . . risking the last bit, relying on you for more when needed. We need to be that confident, that sure of your love.



The green was so pretty against the wintry bushes, so attractive and inviting. I marveled at the hardiness of the first signs of the coming spring. But as I looked closely I realized that the green that beckoned to me was to be feared: Leaves on brambles, full of stickers to catch and tear or even poison-filled to torment the unwary. That is like sin, Lord. So attractive, so inviting until you become caught in its grasp; marked, hurt, tormented by its evilness. How to get rid of it may become the all of your existence. It is much better to look closely and see it for what it is... before it is too late.

Photography | Becky Warren

These three photographs are windows from the Reformed Church in Bulach, Switzerland.

