



# The Circle

Women's Centre for Spirituality, Activism and the Earth  
at Brescia University College

Spring 2011

Volume XX Issue 2

## Attuning to the Awe...

### Exploring Ordinary Miracles

A sunset may seem ordinary, simply by virtue of its daily occurrence, and yet on a given evening that liminal and transitional event can become a sacred moment that invokes the miraculous. It can become a time to pause and take notice, to become a conscious witness of the unique display of light, radiance, and colour dancing before us. Somehow through this deliberate observation, an ordinary event can be transformed into a miraculous encounter where we can feel touched by transcendence.

So many of life's "ordinary miracles" appear in our natural world: the earth reveals daily how the ordinary is wonder-full, if we take the time to notice. It takes care and thought to tap into the miracle of it all, but when we pay attention, we can see things differently. By taking a moment to experience awe, the earth and all of her creatures - human, animal and plant - become awesome.

At the same time, it is not always beauty that prods us into viewing the world and the life within it as miraculous. Sometimes sadness or tragedy brings the world into sharper focus, which makes us feel more acutely and take stock of that which we have perhaps been taking for granted. We often develop a new appreciation for people around us, and how they provide wisdom, compassion, and caring. It can make visible what has been overlooked and allows us to cherish that which we now see...

Last year, when The Circle hosted Stephanie Nolen for International Women's Day, she shared with us that in numerous African languages, their casual greeting to one another would translate into "I see you" (this form of greeting was also mirrored in the movie *Avatar*). Obviously, the greeter is not about commenting on her/his capacity for vision, but is articulating a deeper recognition that acknowledges the whole person. Stephanie further shared that when the greeting took on a more formal or respectful tone, it would translate to "I see you and all of your ancestors within you." Our editorial circle loved how this ordinary greeting captured within it an acknowledgement of the miracle of the life within us: of the spiral of ancestors coded

into our DNA that make themselves present through our bodies within this time and space. Similarly, the Hindu *Namaste* is a greeting that communicates the belief that the divine spark resides within each of us: that we are living, breathing ordinary miracles in and of ourselves and we see that in each other.

So, how do we harness and maintain a perspective of the ordinary miraculous when it is so easy to be overwhelmed by the very large problems and struggles of our time? And why should we anyway? For our editorial circle, we felt that being aware of ordinary miracles led us to feeling more open and joyful, less greedy and afraid. To practice this is not about living in a "la-la land" but about choosing, developing, and cultivating a consciousness that is rooted within the (wo)manifested life around us, in all of its complexity, mystery, and reality. How we perceive and experience moments is how we re-cognize the miracles in what would otherwise be deemed ordinary. It can begin with simply becoming aware of the phenomenal mechanics of our body, the interconnectedness of organs and systems and the capacity for consciousness to reside there (wow!). Feminist and women's spirituality is most often not ethereal or other-worldly, but rooted in the ordinary: nature, our bodies, our experiences. Doing ritual, therefore, is a tool with which we can engage to help

cultivate our perception of ordinary miracles. Entering ritual space can remove us from the fast pace of daily life and bring us into the present moment. It provides space for reflection and the potential to amplify the perceptions that lead us to relationships with ordinary miracles - love, kindness, connection, vulnerability, wonder. We do not need to be able to walk *on* water for the miraculous to be evident but perhaps understand that we *are* walking water and understand that this ubiquitous element animates and connects all life on the planet- and *that* is miraculous.

There are ordinary miracles amid, inside, and all around us just waiting to be witnessed.  
I see you. Namaste.





# Down to Earth

## Stories and tips for inspiring action:

### From nuclear to new, clean energy...

With the recent tragic events in Japan, the world is now rethinking our dependence upon and expanding use of nuclear power. Now more than ever, there is the need to create new, clean energy sources if our global community is to make the shift into an era of sustainability. At the same time, we are witnessing a demand for further clarity and transparency on the risks associated with nuclear power, especially in the event of a catastrophe. As a society, we need to ask ourselves if our energy gluttony is worth the possibility of radioactive contamination, nuclear accidents, or in the worst case scenario, a meltdown. Although proponents of nuclear keep reiterating how it is a safe, clean source of power, it is reasonable to ask "how safe is anything that has the potential to contaminate the water and food supply of the host region for decades or more in the event of an accident? Is this the best solution to our energy needs? Does this supply fit with sound environmental stewardship?" One of many good organisations that is looking at this issue is The Nuclear Guardianship Project, a citizens' educational effort aimed at developing the political, technical, and moral understandings required for the responsible care of radioactive materials. To learn more, visit: [joannamacy.net/nuclearguardianship.html](http://joannamacy.net/nuclearguardianship.html)

**Dis-May!** Once again, Elizabeth May has been excluded from the participating in the Leaders' Debate for our upcoming federal election. Despite successfully reversing this exclusion in 2008, this year she was forced to remain on the sidelines. In our opinion, this

signals a silencing of a party supported by close to a million voters in our last election and restricts access to voices at work (and funded) in our democracy. According to UVic political science professor Dennis Pilon, her exclusion from the televised April 12 and 14 leadership debates are inherently wrong. "When TV executives decide, 'no, we're not going to let you in this broadcast, they're interfering with the democratic process," he said (blocalnews.com).

With the great variation in each party's platforms, especially from an environmental perspective, consider visiting The Green Market blog for a synopsis of their stances: [thegreenmarket.blogspot.com/2011/03/environmental-platforms-of-canadian.html](http://thegreenmarket.blogspot.com/2011/03/environmental-platforms-of-canadian.html)

**Divide & donate!** With the arrival of spring, many of us will be heading into our gardens for some wholesome dirt-under-the-nails therapy as we prepare our green spaces for the summer to come. **Are you splitting any flowers or plants that you would be willing to donate to The Circle garden?** In an effort to contribute to the already beautiful green space surrounding us, a few years ago, The Circle created a flower garden in front of our centre. We would love to expand this garden and make it a truly collaborative endeavour. Just like The Circle itself, we wish for the garden to be a mirror of our membership: diverse, beautiful, and full of life. To donate plants, please drop them off at The Circle (you can do this anytime - if it is during a time when The Circle is closed, please leave them outside on the back deck. If you need someone to pick them up, please call 519-432-8353 ext. 28288 to make arrangements.

Connect with us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook!](#)



## Working Circles & Staff 2010-2011

### Thank-you to:

#### Planning Circle

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Mary Hagan  
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Kim Young Milani

#### Centre Staff

Director  
Kim Young Milani

#### Work-Study Students

Cait Bionda  
Lea-Ann Daugavietis  
Danielle Hickey

## MORE Than Just a Book Sale—Our Most Successful Fundraiser Yet!

The Circle would like to express our sincerest thanks to:



- ☞ The **many** volunteers who gave their time to set up for and organize our sale.
- ☞ To everyone who **donated books** and draw items.
- ☞ To our **publicity** web weavers—thanks for forwarding/postering/spreading the word about the sale
- ☞ To **all who attended** (and spent your money at!) the event
- ☞ To **all artisans, vendors, and organizations** who had booths at the event.

We are happy to report that we raised **\$5223.17** for The Circle's programs and resources!



- ♫ Congratulations to Circle member **Alice Brona** for having her submission "Me, the Radical Feminist" be included in the book *Feminist Journeys* that was recently published by the Feminist History Society. The Feminist History Society is a project of the Women's Education and Research Foundation of Ontario Inc. whose aim is to describe, document, preserve, and celebrate the work and character of the women's movement in Canada over the last 50 years.
- ♫ Congratulations to Circle Member **Sandi Caplan** and her husband Paul (who is a member of Brescia's Council of Trustees) for being the recipients of this year's Laudable Londoners Award given by Participation House. They are being honoured for their many years of community engagement in both the health care field and the non-profit sector. She founded Heart to Heart, a national self-help program of education and support for cardiac patients and has served on numerous boards within London. Sandi was a long time member of our "Planning Circle" (the Circle's board).
- ♫ We would like to note that Brescia Alumna **Dr. Margaret Chan** was recognized in the UK's *Guardian* newspaper as one of the world's top 100 inspiring women. Dr. Chan is the Director of the World Health Organization.
- ♫ This July (3-7), Ottawa-Gatineau will host the **Women's World Conference 2011**. WW 2011 is an opportunity for feminists and allies from around the globe to discuss globalization as it relates to women, strengthen connections, and collaborate on approaches to advancing women's rights, women's empowerment, and gender equality. The first Women's World congress was held at Haifa University in December 1981. It was the first world-wide interdisciplinary gathering to focus on research pertaining to women's issues. Since then, WW has taken place every three years in a different part of the world; this is the first time WW has been held in Canada. ([www.womensworlds.ca](http://www.womensworlds.ca))



## On Our Shelves...

### New DVDs in The Circle Library

The following documentaries are now available for loan to our members. Loan period: 10 days

**Marie Hélène Allain - Speaking with Stone** - a nun and professional artist who sculpts stone into works of palpable life force. This doc. recounts her career revealing her ability to unite her spirituality and her art.

**The God of Our Fathers** - There is nothing natural or innate in male domination. This classic documentary explores the evolution of patriarchy as one effective way of organizing mass societies. The patriarchal order was not inevitable--it was merely functional. But the world is different now, and it's time to find alternatives to hierarchies and militarization.

**The Kitchen Goddess** - Throughout the Maritime provinces of eastern Canada, neighborhood fortune-tellers and village wise-women are alive and well, and their practices have survived intact. These women often work at the kitchen table--and today, they're more sought-after than ever.

**Indigenous Plant Diva** - Cease Wyss of the Squamish Nation reveals the remarkable healing powers of plants growing amid our urban sprawl.

**Sisters in the Struggle** - featuring Black women who are active in community organizing, electoral politics, and labor and feminist organizing. They share their insights

and personal testimonies on a legacy of racism and sexism.

**The Water Bearer** - through the simple quest for clean running water, Catholics and Muslims on Flores Island, Indonesia work together to introduce a direct democracy and sustainable autonomy.

**Avenue Zero** - examining the sad reality of human trafficking in Canada. Featuring candid interviews with victims, witnesses, and perpetrators, Avenue Zero weaves a spellbinding portrait of a dark and sinister trade flourishing in the shadows of the law.

**Waterlife** - follows the epic cascade of the Great Lakes from Lake Superior to the Atlantic Ocean, telling the story of the last huge supply of fresh water on Earth.

**The Fight for True Farming** - crop and animal farmers in Quebec, the Canadian West, the US Northeast and France offer solutions to the social and environmental scourges of factory farming.

**Silent Messengers** - this documentary explores the mysteries of the Inuksuit, those powerful objects that mark the pristine landscape of the North. As enigmatic as the stone slabs of Stonehenge, the Inuksuit are sacred signs of the Inuit and their ancestors--the first people to inhabit the Arctic.

## SEEKING SPIRIT

in churches  
in temples  
in Rome  
at the altars of commerce  
and on the wide screen  
we seek  
not knowing what  
yet driven to fill  
a deafening need  
that neither gold nor oil will sate

then you must get more!  
Acquire! Possess!  
lose weight, use this potion  
the insidious capitalists croon

until we can no longer  
run faster, higher, harder  
and the need for breath brings still  
new sensing causes calm  
as we attune to the music of silence  
witness sunlight prism through leaves  
feel breezes dance across our aging flesh  
taste waters flowing free

the driven need evaporates  
as fog fingers drift away  
replaced by  
an ancient whisper of wisdom  
plain and pure and profound  
a truth stunningly simple

What you seek lies in wait within.

-Mary Sander/Danamar ©



## Upcoming Events at The Circle...



**Open Circle**...ritual, spirituality, activism & the mystical experience of women gathered to reflect on the sacred in our lives. Last Wednesday of the month, Merici Lounge, Brescia, 7:30 p.m. Members: free, Non-members: \$2. **All Women Welcome!**

**27 April**

**Listening to Mother Earth...Feeling her Pain, Dreaming her Dream**— A ritual that examines the earth gifts, ways that the human community is polluting these gifts and most importantly, way we can transform our behaviour to live in mutual harmony. Facilitated by Julia DePaz

**25 May**

**Kundalini Yoga**—The yoga of awareness... combining sound, movement, breath and presence, this yogic science is designed to take you beyond any physical blockages and through anything your mind can throw at you. Facilitated by Jocelyn Brock ([www.freewebs.com/jocelynbrock/](http://www.freewebs.com/jocelynbrock/))

**Note: There is no Open Circle in June, July or August**

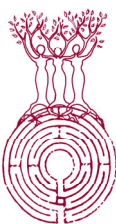


*Jeanne Adamson Memorial Event of The Sophia Series*

**Emma Donoghue - Variations on the Theme of Motherhood in Her Life and Works**

Thursday 19 May, 7:30 pm, Brescia Auditorium, Admission by Donation, Free Parking

Emma Donoghue is an acclaimed author playwright and literary historian. She has written many novels, including the award-winning *Slammerkin* and *Hood*, and has received international praise and recognition for her most recent novel *Room*, for which she was nominated for the prestigious Man Booker Prize. She was born in Dublin, Ireland (as the youngest of eight children) but is now a resident of our own London, Ontario. Join us to hear Emma speak about the parent-child bond in her life and works, her inspirations and to read from her novels. Her books will be available for purchase at the event and an opportunity to have them signed will take place after the lecture.



**Red Tent Ritual: Celebrating Maiden, Mother & Crone**

Saturday 4 June 2011, 1:30 - 5:00 pm, Gather in the Brescia Auditorium; Admission by Donation (Suggested: \$5.00 or PWYC); Free Parking. RSVP to 519-432-8353 x28288 or [circle@uwo.ca](mailto:circle@uwo.ca)

The story of the Red Tent stands as a powerful symbol of women gathering in community to hold and celebrate the sacred feminine. The Circle will symbolically erect a Red Tent as an invitation for women and girls to gather and share how maiden, mother, and crone lives in each of us and celebrate the life cycles with ritual and a labyrinth walk. Come into the tent with us and re-member.



*The Living Centre and The Circle present*

**Earth Eros & the Sacred Feminine: Living Passionately in a Rapidly Changing World**

27-28 August 2011, More Info Soon! Stay Tuned! [www.thelivingcentre.com](http://www.thelivingcentre.com)

This unique weekend event will be held on the beautiful grounds of the Living Centre, just outside of Lambeth.

*...and Beyond*

**20 April - Brown Bag Lunch Lecture on Equine assisted counselling** by Lynne St. Jacques, 12 pm - 1pm, Merici Lounge.

**23 April, 14 May & 5 June - Permaculture 101 Workshops:** No Till Gardening, Designing and planting your Garden & Indoor & Outdoor Composting respectively. Facilitated by Bonnie Wodin & Becky Ellis, 1-4 pm, \$40 each. Info & registration: [bonnie@goldenarrow.com](mailto:bonnie@goldenarrow.com)

**1 May - Women, Wine & Magic** facilitated by Synergy-in-Motion, 3-7 pm, \$75, The Harriston, 500 Ridout St. N., Info & Registration: [www.synergy-in-motion.info](http://www.synergy-in-motion.info) / 519-690-1479

**7 May - Bitchfest**, 9am - 6pm, Brescia University College, \$75, featuring Susan Meehan, Jocelyn Drainie, Las Chicas and Louise Fagan, fundraiser for 2 animal care orgs., organised by Wise Woman Events. Info: [www.bitchfest.ca](http://www.bitchfest.ca)

**7 May - Sing it Sister! Music with Attitude** sung by WomenSpiritSong Choir, Christ Anglican Church, 7.30 pm, \$15 @ the door. Info: [womenspiritsong@gmail.com](mailto:womenspiritsong@gmail.com)

**7 May - Handmade Festival**, 11am-4pm, Central Library.

Info: [handmadefestival@gmail.com](mailto:handmadefestival@gmail.com)

**8 May - Living from Your Heart**, facilitated by Lorenna, Bousquet-Kacera, 9am - 5pm, The Living Centre, \$125. Info & registration: [www.thelivingcentre.com](http://www.thelivingcentre.com) or 519-652-9109.

**9-12 May - All Our Sisters:** A National Conference on Women and Homelessness, London Convention Centre, Speakers (Keynote: Buffy Sainte Marie), panels, forums, etc. Info: [www.alloursisters.ca](http://www.alloursisters.ca) or 519-652-0364

**6&7 June - Pornography - It's Impact on Feminism, Women, Men and Children.** Keynote Speakers include Gail Dines and Robert Jensen. Sponsored by the London Abused Women's Ctr. Info: [slcoulter@lawc.on.ca](mailto:slcoulter@lawc.on.ca) or 519-432-2204

**10-12 June - Start with the Heart....Workshop for Women,** Heartwood Equine Connections, Melbourne, ON, \$495. Includes indiv. & group interactions with horses. Info: Lynne, 519-852-4377 or [www.heartwoodequineconnections.com](http://www.heartwoodequineconnections.com)

**24-26 June & 26-28 August - Goddess Retreat** in Ingersoll, hosted by Inner Insights. Info: [www.innerinsights.com/goddess.htm](http://www.innerinsights.com/goddess.htm)