

THE CIRCLE

The Circle Women's Centre

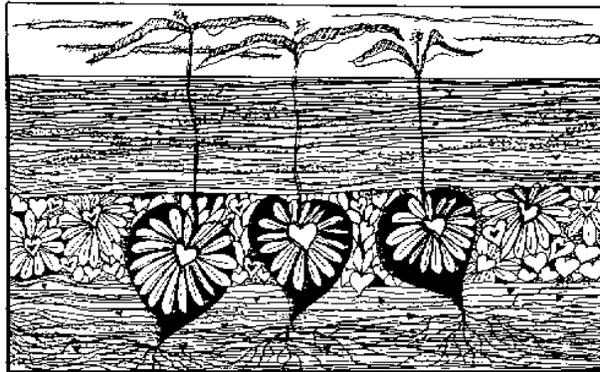
Brescia University College, London Ontario Vol. XII Issue 2 Winter 2003

SACRED SPACE IN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

"It's hard to describe but we know when it's not there."

These words spilled out of our latest editorial circle's discussion on the rather abstract concept of sacred space in personal relationships. What exactly do we mean when we speak of sacred space in relationship? Can it be described? Even if we can describe it, where do we begin to explore this concept? Why do we feel the urge to investigate this thought?

Our mission statement contains the words – "The Circle is a space...where the seed of the sacred is released, shared and celebrated..." How is it that when we come to a Circle gathering we recognize that we are entering sacred space? This experience is not only in the physicality of the building but also in our consensus that we, as two or more, are creating sacred space. Women coming together in a book club recognize that where they gather, they create sacred space. Friends may 'know' this experience. What makes this so?



jean m ladevito

First, to try and make tangible a definition of an intangible thing. We know what sacred space is – that physical space where the boundary between the sacred and the mundane, the ordinary and the extraordinary, is keenly felt – majestic scenery, a historical 'holy' spot, our window garden... and we know what personal relationships are - the fabric and glue of our lives, the source and locus of our deepest sorrows and greatest joys, and everything in between. But the attempt to put these two perfectly-clear-to-us concepts together in one definition leaves us flummoxed. "It's hard to describe but we know when it's not there."

**"We create tolerance, a safe container,
a depth of loving and empathy."**

Certainly the old descriptor "and the two shall become one" is no longer helpful imagery for any relationship. As one woman said, "so which one of us are we going to become?!" Sacred space is not created by fusion or melding and definitely not by wearing the same jackets!

In fact, it is a paradox that the separateness in a relationship creates the fertile soil where the relationship is nurtured.

When our relationships respect that sense of self, when persons are honoured for who they are, a new thing happens. From that respect and honouring a new sacred space is born. Within this space, one never 'gives up' one's self. Rather, there exists a mutuality of giving and receiving. As we nurture our sense of self, we honour our separateness. The strength and beauty and health of the redwood trees is attributed to the way in which their roots intertwine with each other deep in the earth. We come to understand separateness as something very different from the dreaded concept of separation. Although the trees stand separately, they are, in unseen ways, deeply connected.

In making room for the sacred in ourselves, the sacred space between us grows broader and richer. Rather than becoming one, we fashion a third place between us, from which we are each responsible and from which we each draw sustenance. We create tolerance, a safe container, a depth of loving and empathy. This is the sacred space where the fruits of the relationship can grow. The toil of nurturing the sacred in our relationships then becomes a need to reverence the space between us, to honour our differences. As the poet Kahlil Gibran writes "Love one another, but make not a bond of love: Let it rather be a moving sea between the shores of your souls. ... let there be space in your togetherness".

It is a wonderful way to journey together—as we dip into this sacred place, we are nurtured for our own journey. In the sacred waters, we mirror each other in order to see more fully who we are or are meant to be. What we create together is an intangible reality that we take with us even when not together. 



On Our Shelves...

The Secret Life of Bees

by Sue Monk Kidd

Set in Georgia and South Carolina in the early 1960s, Sue Monk Kidd's first novel is a beautifully written coming of age story, set against the backdrop of the turbulent struggle for civil rights.

Lily Owen decides to spend her fourteenth birthday accompanying Rosaleen, her black nanny, to town so that Rosaleen can register to vote, but unforeseen events forever change their lives. Compelled to run away after Rosaleen is badly beaten and arrested, the pair head to Tiburon, South Carolina, a place Lily knows only because it is written on the back of a picture of a black Madonna belonging to her dead mother, Deborah. Thus begins Lily's quest for information about her mother, and ultimately, a quest for the love and acceptance she has never known.

The Black Madonna leads Lily and Rosaleen to a house of beekeeper sisters, May, June and August Boatwright, who generously take in the two runaways. Surrounded by wise, loving and eccentric women, steeped in the lore of beekeeping, and the legend of the Black Madonna, Lily finds herself in a new and utterly different world. In this sheltered sanctuary she comes to know love.

Full of memorable characters you will hate to leave behind, *The Secret Life of Bees* is a pleasure to read and reread.



- the **Winter Hibernation Book Sale**, our fall fundraising event, raised \$851.02. Thanks for donations and support!
- History Making Women—organized in 1897 in Stoney Creek, Ontario as an educational society for poorly educated rural women. Branches sprang up quickly, all advocating issues that affected women's families—garments labeled for quality, bread wrapped, music in schools, white lines painted on provincial highways, poisonous containers marked and milk pasteurization, etc. They issued an era of social changes in Canada - **The Women's Institute**
- A dear friend and ardent supporter, **Mary Sue Butterworth** died in October. She was in our Editorial Circle ('91—'93). Mary Sue was a woman of strength, beauty and integrity. She was the best!
- **Michele Landsberg**, a Toronto Star columnist, was honoured with a Persons Case award for her tireless advocacy for women's rights.
- **Penn Kemp**, Londoner, wrote *The Poem for Peace in Many Voices*. It has now been translated in fifty-six languages. *Poem for Peace* was carried to the UN in October..
- "Well, flap my antimacassar and knock me over with a crocheted doily! Everything old is new again, and all the womanly ways that we feminists supposedly scorned in our youth are hot, hot, hot again." Women's crafts - sewing, crocheting, embroidery and knitting is on the rise. "Knit, purl, go grrl." (Michelle Lansberg, The Star 01/07/03, "Women Pick Up Knitting and Go With the Flow")
- Vox Feminarum: The Canadian Journal of Feminist Spirituality has been reborn! Subscribe and support this gutsy project. Voxfeminarum@sympatico.ca or 519-576-4588
- London's **Paris Meilleur**, 18, is one of the youngest riding association presidents in Canada. Inspired to "do democracy differently", Meilleur brings openness, vitality and substance to the political scene in Canada. Go Paris!



The Circle affirms the experience and hopes of women, and the creative process we choose to explore and mirror the sacred in our lives.

The Circle is a space that can be entered actively and imaginatively with limitless possibilities for involvement, where the seed of the sacred is released, shared and celebrated as power for transformation and change.

Planning Circle

Sandra Aylward
Sandi Caplan
Mary Fran Damaren
Mary Hagan
Pauline Maheux
Patricia McLean
Pat Mooney
Wendy Rostas
Ann Sinclair

Staff & Volunteers

Lisa Casaubon
Esther DeNijs
Marnie Sutherland
Patricia McLean
Kim Young

Hours

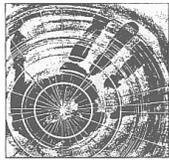
Monday - Thursday
9:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Closed on Fridays

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phone:
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web:
www.uwo.ca/brescia/womencentre



Events at The Circle...



Open Circles ...a tapestry of story, laughter, silence and the mystical experience of women gathered, where we can reflect the *sacred in our lives*. Last Wednesday of the month, Merici Lounge, Brescia UC, 7:30 p.m. Present your 2003 membership card for free admission. Non-members: \$2.00 **Everyone Welcome!**

- 26 February *Women of Wisdom and Power*, Video & Discussion
- 26 March Family Recipe and Remedy Trade Off - share a piece of your family herstory
- 30 April Exploring New Creation Stories - new stories for new times
- 28 May Journalling — "Writing for Your Life"

The Circle needs You & Your support! Help us through our slump in 2003 memberships. Join today!

Spring Events

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| <div style="text-align: center;">  <h3>Tea with a Twist</h3> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Featuring</i> Tea in the Rose Room Dr. Monika Lee "Writing the Body, Woman as Poet" Sr. Mary Lou McKenzie Brescia's Story in Stained Glass</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Donations Accepted</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Thursday 13 February 2003, 2-4 pm Brescia University College, Main Building</p> </div> | <div style="text-align: right;">  <h3>Reclaiming the Feminine</h3> <p style="text-align: center;">...a varied program of ritual, discussion, interaction, activity & reflection</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Led by an amazing Presenting Circle: Sandra Aylward Barbara S. Booth Sylvia Brightwell Therese Chatelain Pam Hill Susan MacPhail</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Refreshments provided...bring a bag lunch 2003 Members: \$25.00, Non-members: \$30.00</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Limited space, Register early!</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Saturday April 5 2003 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.</p> </div> |
| <div style="text-align: center;">  <h3>International Women's Day</h3> <p>Friday, March 7th— I.W.D. Breakfast & Silent Auction at The Hilton. Sponsored by the L.A.W.C. \$30. ? 432-2204 — <i>CHRW 94.7 All Women's Voices, All Day</i></p> <p>Saturday March 8th I.W.D. March and Gathering at Victoria Park, 11 a.m.</p> <p>The Vagina Monologues - tkts \$25. 439-0844, Althouse College All proceeds going to Sexual Assault Centre London.</p> <p>Button Awards. Honour an Exceptional Woman for I.W.D. On sale all during February & until March 8 at The Circle Centre. \$5. <i>Watch for more details and events!</i></p> </div> | <div style="text-align: center;">  <h3>Circle of Friends</h3> <p>Thursday April 10th, 2003 at 7:30 pm, Merici Lounge</p> <p style="text-align: center;">An annual event to share & to celebrate this past year ... & to create and plan the year ahead.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>A Special Invitation to</i> All Circle Members and All Working Circles</p> </div> |

...and beyond

February 15— **Rally for Peace** in London. Watch for details!

- **Wed. February 5 - Afghanistan: The Women and Children Are Not OK**—with Sally Armstrong, editor-in-chief of Chatelain magazine. London Public Library (Wolfe Hall) 7 p.m., donation. Sponsors: Londoners for Afghanistan's Women
- **Sat. March 9—A Poem for Peace in the Afternoon**—An afternoon of poetry and peace to raise funds and awareness for the *Poem for Peace in Many Voices*. Elsie Perrin Williams Estate, 101 Windermere Rd., London, 2 p.m. Suggested admission: \$15.00; parking is free. More info: 434-8555 or penn@pennkemp.ca. Sponsors: Heritage London Foundation and Pendas Productions
- **June 6 - 8 - "Seeking and Celebrating Together" A Feminist Spirituality Conference**, University of Waterloo, ? - Fiona at 519-472-1672 or www.ontariowomensconference.ca. Sponsor: United Church of Canada
- **Exploring the Topic of Homelessness**—Call for Artwork submissions of any medium. Submissions due by *March 19* to Julie, 338 Dundas St., 2nd floor, London N6B 1V7. ? - art4homelessness@hotmail.com. Sponsor London Homeless Coalition.

presence to all beings



spontaneity in action

capacity for relatedness

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One Eighteen: Hoping the Day of Peace Becomes a Household Word

by Loretta Pellizzari

In this dark time, with the rhetoric of war ringing in my ears I find myself struggling to remain sensitive, aware, connected. It is especially challenging in the dead of winter to move beyond my intimate circle of awareness to hear the truths of suffering and hope from different contexts. But on a cold Saturday in January, I joined the London Peace Coalition, which brought together a diversity of NGOs, political parties, faith groups and labour unions, to stand in solidarity for peace.

On the 12th anniversary of the Gulf War, Londoners gathered despite the chilling winds to listen, and to remember that the words “beating swords into ploughshares” are most meaningful when the challenges of peace are most difficult. Michael Moore’s recent film, *Bowling for Columbine* elucidates how fear erodes our ability to trust others, leading to self-absorption and numbness.

This culture of fear stands in stark contrast to the vision we espouse in feminist spirituality, to recognize the other as our self and work toward the well being of all societies.

Gathering with the wider London community to stand for an alternative vision for humanity than that disseminated by the mainstream media, we were linked

with thousands of Canadians in cities across the country and thousands more around the globe in Washington, Tokyo, Paris, Cairo. These courageous people come from a diversity of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds and all age groups. Looking around, I was struck by the many circles, each with its own particular focus, linked together in this larger circle by a hope for peace and a belief that our attitudes can be transformed. United in the common struggle to birth a liberating vision, we listened to speaker after speaker name the real victims of war and economic sanctions as the women and children of Iraq, assert the right of nations to establish their own governance without outside interference, and expose the euphemism of pre-emptive strikes for the self-serving action it is.

As I collect these thoughts, on the eve of Martin Luther King Day (coincidentally this is also the anniversary of the death of London peace activist, Joe Barth), I feel the weight of King’s words written from Birmingham Jail in 1963: “We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people.” Let us not lack the courage to open our eyes even amidst the chaos, to name evil actions for what they are no matter which governing bodies support them, and to remain silent no longer.



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I.W.D. Button Award

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www.coc.org—Centre of Concern Website features “Spirit-a-Movin,” a column highlighting acts of goodness and justice in each day’s news.

www.suemonkidd.com - Excerpts, forums, news, journals and contacts for Sue and *The Secret Life of Bees*.

www.davidsuzuki.org –Take the Nature Challenge and incorporate the 10 most effective ways to conserve nature into your life. You are probably already doing some of them!