

INTERN MINISTER NEWS

by Katie Romano Griffin, Intern Minister

A Message From Chrissy the Christmas Cactus

I was a mud-loving, tree-climbing, Earth child growing up who spent hours in the backyard. Nature was my wonderland, my connection to the great Mystery. My gospel. I had a song for every plant, feathered, furred and slimy creature. I enjoyed picking the wild grapes and berries that grew untamed. Even rain could not dampen my outdoorsy spirit. A good solid rainstorm was perfect for creating mudslides that my Star Wars figurines could be whisked away in.

A few weeks ago, while staring at “Chrissy” my Christmas cactus, I caught myself reminiscing about those “good ole” days when I felt connected to the earth. A barren leafed Chrissy, seemed to mock me. For three years I had dreamed of her finally blooming again. Yet for three years she remained forever green. Eight year old me would have had songs for her, eight year old me would have had time for her, and she would have bloomed for eight year old me.

I started to feel a little sorry for Chrissy for being saddled with my perpetually preoccupied middle-aged self. Then I started to feel a little sorry for myself. I live such a busy life now and often long for those simplistic days of singing to the plants around me, getting my hands in the earth, and even playing in the rain. I mumbled a few complaints to Chrissy, she remained still and I realized that I envied her stillness, her strong roots, and the way the breeze rustled through her green spiny leaves. We stayed like that, Chrissy and I, for a good ten minutes before I realized that I had become still while watching her, and with that stillness came a sense of peace. The same kind of peace I had been hoping to recapture from my girlhood days.

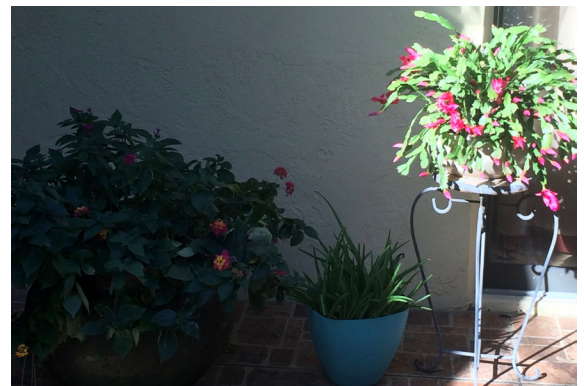
The 10-minute stint in nature caused me to re-evaluate my calendar. Between work, school and family life, I wasn't quite sure what could come off of it, but I needed more space. How, I wondered, would I find time for being in nature? The answer came after another “conversation” with Chrissy, while I processed some learning from my New Testament class. When my mind became silent, the thought occurred to me that we have entered the Christian season of Lent. During this time, many Christians release something from their life for 40 days and/or adopt a new habit. For Christians, this is a time of purification, and strengthening of belief. The process of “fasting” is honored not just in Christianity but also in many religions

as a means of cleansing the mind and spirit. What, I wondered, could I fast from? I allowed my eyes to focus on Chrissy. After a few minutes of enjoying the way the breeze made her leaves dance, the answer came to me: I could fast from Facebook and Television for 40-days.

I believe my husband laughed when I first told him, and my children thought I had completely lost it. My conversations with Chrissy seemed normal to them, but no Facebook or TV for 40 days? Highly improbable! They knew how much I loved my favorite shows and as a former Public Relations and Marketing company owner, they knew how attached I was to networking on Facebook. I could also see the worry set in on their faces. My husband says that my schedule abhors a vacuum, I am one of those people who seems to always have something to do except for when I settle in to watch a favorite program. Was I about to fill my time as a taskmaster at home? Would I demand 24-7 clean rooms and sparkling baseboards?

To the delight of my family and myself I am finding that I feel more relaxed than I have in years. The decreased input from social media and television has helped make way for me to clear a few other things from my schedule so that I can spend more time in my courtyard garden meditating and getting my hands in the dirt, and more time on my studies and with family. Profound thoughts are no longer quickly shot into the fray of my Facebook and Twitter feeds; they are mulched into the soil around my sprouting okra seeds. As a result, my inner landscape is looking less like a media bull pen and more like a fertile garden. As you can see from the first photo of my small garden, there are still some blank spots where there is room for growth. I think I'm going to keep that space for now. I think I will be still for a bit and let my leaves dance in the cool breezes we are enjoying. I invite you to join me in this practice for the remainder of this Lenten season. What might you release to make room for your inner garden to grow?

Oh! If you are wondering how Chrissy is faring, take a look. She is in full bloom.



FOUNDERS' DAY - CELEBRATING 15 YEARS!



Rev. Beard, Katie Romano Griffin and Membership Coordinator, Pat Nuding look on as Diane Cartwright (next photo) welcomes new members on Founders' Day.



Joining our Beloved community are (from left) Jane Broadstone, Eileen Moran and Jeff Moran.



Joyce Ramay reading the names of our founders, both past and present.



Over 100 members and friends joined us for service and a boxed lunch from Little Lilly's on Pine Island.



Our vibrant Intern Minister, Katie Romano Griffin also participated in the service.



Our Founding Minister, The Rev. Dr. Wayne A. Robinson, was back in the pulpit.



The wonderful special music was provided singing group, Tropical Storm, back for the second time by popular demand.



The beautiful flowers were provided by Joyce Schaffer.

[Photos courtesy of Tom Fortin]