

Rev. Jean L. Leih

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My preparation for the work of spiritual restoration lies in my forming and training in the ministry of spiritual direction and in theological education. My certification for spiritual direction is from the Cenacle Retreat House in Wayzata, MN, and my theological education is from Bethel Seminary in St. Paul. I earned a Master of Divinity degree from Bethel and am an ordained minister in the Baptist General Conference. I am licensed for pastoral ministry. In addition, I have completed the Doctor of Ministry program in Spiritual Formation and Leadership from Haggard Graduate School of Theology at Azusa Pacific University. My writing is focused on creating holy space for the inner work of the Spirit of God to be brought forth out of the heart and expressed in daily work and relationships. My work and my personal faith is centered in Jesus Christ and his atoning work that makes the way for freedom, healing and restoration in the hearts and lives of those who come to Him. My spirituality is of the Holy Spirit of the Trinitarian God – one God, three persons - with whom I live and breathe in a dynamic and growing relationship of love, grace and truth.

As Restoration Ministries has emerged my desire has been to shape a ministry center and community that is centered in Word, Worship, Prayer and Discernment. I have a love for the Holy Scriptures in the Old and New Testaments of the Hebrew and Christian Bible. I was shaped in my early years by these Scriptures, memorizing and meditating on them, listening and learning from them as they were read in my home, my church and in my own times and places of quiet. The stories in Scripture have become places and spaces of healing and freedom for me as I have personally encountered the living God in them. I love to offer that to others. My worship has expanded beyond something to show up for, into an awareness of the continual presence, fellowship and communion with Jesus, the living Christ. “Showing up” to His Presence is now within the rhythms of grace of my everyday life.

I am grateful to have received my early life foundation in the open spaces of farmland in southwestern Minnesota. My memories are rooted in the quiet rustling of orchard grasses, havens in the branches of tall trees, rhythms of farm life and community gatherings that felt safe and peace-filled. Our life centered around a deep faith in God, regular communal worship and service to our community. Seasons of the land, preparation, rocky soil, planting, cultivating, weeds, harvest, all speak wonderful metaphors of the spiritual life and the seasons of spiritual development. Simone Weil once wrote about the spiritual life being one quite like the sunflower as it grows and is nourished by the sun, its head turned into the face of the sun for its growth, nourishment and resting place. I think this is what God is like in our lives. God’s Holy Spirit is the agent of our spiritual growth. Our “work” seems to be to stay turned into God, seeking God, paying attention, discerning and cooperating with God’s Spirit.

This spiritual work seems challenging in today’s life and culture as we are inundated with busyness, distractions, the constant barrage of stories of war and threats to us; violence that is escalating, drug and alcohol abuse fragmenting personal lives and families; sexual choices seemingly uninhibited or perpetrated against another. My husband and I have parented two

children in a very different cultural environment, one not as idyllic as the one that rests in my memory. We now have grandchildren being launched in this new time. I can see that our freedom is inhibited by deepening fears, anxiety and walls of protection. Effects of personal trauma and personal choices imbed deep within us and remain held in by shame, fear and secrecy. We humanly cope by building our worth and identity on false premises and foundations. Emotional and spiritual development become arrested by wounding within, and yet we long for healing and movement into new and fresh life. The same Jesus Christ, of yesterday, today and forever offers a different way, one of real, authentic true life.