

Earth Care and Spirituality
Reflection for May 2021

Witness

Karyl Condit

It is early July at Small's Falls on the Sandy River, just north of Madrid and south of Rangeley by Rt. 4 in Western Maine. Three of us, in three generations, join eager families at the popular falls in search of our own little piece of the torrent, by which to eat our picnic or even play in the quick-running water.

We climb up the well-worn trail over rocks and roots to the top of the falls. Drawn to the water sliding over the smooth rocks, my daughter pretends to be a seal and gets carried farther down the sluice than expected - which leads to a search for safer waters.

Just over the knoll of tall red pines to the south is a tributary to the Sandy River, the Chandler Mill Stream, beckoning us with shallow waters and quieter pools at the bottom of its own course through the gorge. We note the abundance of waxy-green Trailing Arbutus and Wintergreen along the trail. Recent rains have sent an abundance of water down these streams, heading for the Kennebec River near Madison - and from there on to the sea.

Although the sun does shine, spring-like showers come and go, each droplet a little diamond in the sun, the air filled with heavy mist. It feels very magical. I, the grandmother, sit on a mossy log on the stream's edge, under a hemlock branch, watching the crystal clear water swirl and deposit grains of sand into the little safe harbor at my feet. It is a rare moment, to be purely an observer, - of the sun on the water, my daughter and my 12-y.o grandson splashing one another and enjoying the rushing stream, the rain showers, and the lush greenness of early summer.

As I sit just above the safe, sandy harbor, a dragonfly appears, barely an arm's distance away. The dragonfly hovers, then suddenly descends to plunge its abdomen into the shallow water. Bounce up, hover, plunge down. Bounce, hover, plunge. I am mesmerized. After numerous plunges, the dragonfly moves quickly out of sight, having deposited her eggs into the shallow water and entrusted them to Nature's plan and their own destiny. (When I returned home I researched this event and learned about the Golden Winged Dragonfly and her reproductive cycle.)

I remember this time as a gift for which nothing was expected of me but to be present. In that presence, my eyes were opened to witness for the first time a sacred moment, as one of God's creations did exactly what is required to secure her future...she laid her eggs in the cradle of the pristine stream.

Once in a great while, perhaps when we least expect it, we find ourselves in witness to the extraordinary — or so it seems to us—that is but one example of the perfection of Creation....one of countless miracles bestowed to us through Nature.

In these unexpected moments I witness God's Love in action, whether it be the Golden Winged Dragonfly laying her eggs, or a mother's playful time in the stream with her child. There is always something miraculous to witness in the natural world when we take the opportunity to be fully present. God's creation is perfect in its function and complexity and balance.

Sitting quietly with this perfection I feel a new responsibility for the dragonflies, the clear streams, and my children, and a deep gratitude for the joy they bring to my life. In a sense, I, too, am "laying eggs" in the waters of life, sensing the call to preserve the richness of Nature.

Karyl Condit and her husband Roger, are members of First Congregational Church of Farmington (Old South) UCC. She is quick to say: "I wasn't born in Maine but got here as soon as I could." Karyl grew up in rural N.H., with parents who taught her the names of wildflowers and trees, and where to find old cellar holes to explore. With their three adult children, she and Roger enjoyed many an outdoor adventure in Western Maine, and now find much joy in grandparenting. She lives just minutes from trails through the woods, and from the lovely Sandy River, for walks that feed the spirit.