



Words from Janie

YES

by William Stafford

*It could happen any time, tornado,
earthquake, Armageddon. It could happen.
Or sunshine, love, salvation.*

*It could, you know. That's why we wake
and look out--no guarantees
in this life.*

*But some bonuses, like morning,
like right now, like noon,
like evening.*



Janie Brown
Executive Director

If I ever adopted a mantra of some sort, this would be it--an incantation to soothe and calm my busy mind and worried heart. I recite this poem to myself frequently when I get myself wrapped up in the what ifs, the worries, the uncertainties of an unknown and unpredictable future. This poem reminds me to return to the present moment and helps me when a personal or global earthquake has hit. No guarantees in this life, but countless bonuses!

In our most recent Callanish Writes series, the group has been exploring the conditions that can amplify happiness in our lives. The Buddha taught that if we deliberately cultivate the qualities of integrity, generosity, gratitude, trust, mindfulness, and a relationship to mystery, we will be happier humans. The Callanish writers thought this topic was definitely worth investigating through the written word! We have had very interesting, poignant and, at times, hilarious writing sessions about these six qualities of being.

I think that Stafford is talking about the fifth condition--mindfulness, or presence, in his poem "Yes". Spending our lives pondering the potential horrors that lie in our individual and collective futures, often prevents us from seeing the bonuses of the present moment--like morning, like right now, like noon, like evening.

Janie's story cont. on pg 2

A Table for One

by Dace Starr, retreat participant,
February 2017



Dace Starr

Three years ago on a frosty, sunny day, I drove off the highway on to an unpaved lane leading to The Brew Creek Centre. As I drove into the parking lot, I was greeted by two smiling people pulling a little green wagon towards my car. I had no idea how much my life would change as I followed Tessa and Danielle across the little wooden bridge towards the main lodge. Upon entering, I could hear the crackling fire in the stone fireplace and see tables set for an evening meal. My throat constricted with emotion.

The door to my room had a beautiful, handmade sign with my name on it. The bed with its tall, honey-hued headboard was spread with crisp, white pillows and duvet. A card on the night table and a vase of pink roses, gerbera daisies and white hydrangeas welcomed me. I was suddenly overwhelmed by the beauty and relief of landing in this sanctuary. I wept quietly. I felt that the months of cancer trauma and years of other traumas would have a respite.

This aura of warmth, kindness and thoughtfulness flowed in abundance everywhere. The staff made me feel that I was the most cherished, worthwhile person that deserved their concern and attention. What I came to understand later was how different this caring was from that of family and close friends which is much more complicated. Expectations, obligations, misunderstandings colour those connections. But here I was held with compassion and encouragement to reflect, listen and feel deeply. To take my first wobbly steps of a journey towards my authentic self without judgment, without expectations, without obligations or recriminations. To just be with what is - sorrow, grief, joy - the whole catastrophe of life!

The palpable kindness and pampered setting softened and rewarded the difficult inner work. Writing a Letter to Death, releasing Sticks of Sorrow from the bridge into the creek, creating a song or using art to express myself- all the activities prompted me to look gently at my pain, my fear, my longing.

Dace's story cont. on pg 2

Words by Janie cont.

A few evenings ago, I had a direct experience of how this condition of being in the present moment evoked happiness in a situation that I had not expected it could. Danielle and I learned that one of our beloved Callanish friends had been admitted to the B.C. Cancer Centre for her last days of life and we very much wanted to say our farewells. When we arrived her room was full of people—her husband, her three kids, her brother, her sister-in-law, her sister and niece. Laura was propped up on pillows in bed, eyes closed, breath raspy, sleeping. She had apparently been asleep for most of the day and had not spoken more than a few words in several hours. Her oncologist thought she was fading.

Knowing how much Laura had loved to sing in her life and at Callanish, Danielle brought her guitar and Callanish songbooks in the hopes that we could sing some of Laura's favourites to her. The family nodded when Danielle suggested that we sing together. Laura's eyes popped open. "Sing?" she said. "Yes, let's sing."

What happened then defied belief. For forty minutes, Danielle and I and Laura, along with ten of her family members sang everything from *Let it Be*, to *Hallelujah*, to *Somewhere Over the Rainbow*, and *Imagine*. Laura followed along in the songbook and sang almost every word with us. In between songs she asked for song requests from her family, and she checked in to see how we were doing and whether we wanted food, and she looked into the eyes of her kids and her husband and stroked their hands and faces. The notes drifted out into the hallway of the 5th floor and every so often a face appeared from another room with a smile, and a thumbs-up.

That evening could have been perceived as a tornado or a personal Armageddon for this family, but instead this room that courted death had become a temple to life, imbued with music, and love and family and spirit. There was no need to be caught up with an endpoint in a future that was unfolding in its own timing, but more to let ourselves be inspired by the bonuses of those heavenly moments with Laura, and her amazing family, as we sang our way to happiness, amidst the deep sadness of losing her.

A Table for One cont.

I was letting go of the intellect and learning to listen to what my heart was crying out for. There were no lectures, no teachings, no repercussions. Only the expression of raw feelings in a circle of other courageous, hurt souls in silence and careful, respectful listening.

It became clear that my fear and unhappiness lay less with cancer and more with the thought of returning to live with an alcoholic husband. I had stayed with him for logical reasons - primarily financial. I had retired with a small pension and I wanted to live in Vancouver. I had no family to rely on and the possibility of earning money was remote. And yet, the idea now, of returning to live the last chapter of my life in quiet desperation was too much to bear. I needed to nurture the spark of trust and clarity that the week had gifted me.

Once I was home, I told my husband I needed to leave. I knew that it would be difficult to find an affordable place, but I was already feeling the shift within, a feeling of more compassion towards myself, more attentive listening to what I needed and a growing, trembling trust that I could find it.

There were dark moments and disheartening obstacles along the way. But there were also unexpected kindnesses and synchronicity. And today, I live happily in a tiny studio apartment with large windows facing old trees that I can almost touch. I found work as an on-call librarian. I've nurtured my friendships so my calendar is filled with delightful adventures. I am healthy at the moment. I am still working on healing the emotional pain through Callanish's writing, meditation and other special events. I have never regretted my decision - only that I didn't listen to my heart sooner and believe in my inner strength. There are times when I am lonely, but never the crushing loneliness I felt living in a trapped marriage.

The following is a poem I wrote at the recent Callanish writing retreat to remind myself that the heart knows what it longs for and that it is never too late.

Trust the Journey

May you boldly invite the fear to reveal its secret powers
And gently place them in the midst of the chorus of those
who know the strength of your kind, warrior heart.
May you rest in the remembrance of battles won
And listen in the stillness to your heart's desire.

Trust in the movement forward without attachment to the outcome.
Your voyage will unfold in ways you cannot imagine.
Trust the pursuit, not the goal.
Too long has the false story clutched you in its merciless power.
It's time to fly again.



Ollie and Shirlee

Dear Death

by Shirlee Law

Well, Death, here we are in a dance together. To even write your name fills me with dread. I think I might be in a different place, a different relationship with you if I wasn't a Mom. Because now it's not just my life you're taking but my son's. The Mom in me wants to fight you like a lion. The scared little girl in me wants to surrender, like I have some sort of power over you if I do. Then the fear grips that you've heard the little girl, not the lion and you will take me. I know you will take me one day, maybe we could make a deal. Let me make the most of my time here with my son, my family, my friends, the world. But help them to not suffer when I'm gone. Hold my spirit, my force close to them. Let it give them gentle lessons to be happier and more present in this life. Let them find peace. Do not haunt them. And if I get the privilege of many more years on this planet, tethered to this dear body, I hope to learn to dance with you with grace, having lived a generous and meaningful life.

Written on November 2017 Callanish retreat



Gluten-Free Chocolate Chip Cookies

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| ½ cup smooth almond butter | ¼ cup arrowroot flour/starch |
| ¼ cup plus 3 tbsp maple syrup | ¼ cup almond flour |
| 3 tbsp virgin coconut oil, softened but not hot | ½ tsp baking soda |
| ½ tsp vanilla extract | ½ tsp sea salt |
| ½ cup gluten-free rolled oats | 150 gms dark chocolate chips |
| ¼ cup plus 2 tbsp gluten-free oat flour | |

Preheat oven to 350°F (180°C). Line baking sheet with parchment paper. Makes two dozen cookies.

Combine the wet ingredients (almond butter, maple syrup, oil, and vanilla) in a mixer bowl until completely smooth.

Combine the dry ingredients (oats, oat flour, arrowroot, almond flour, baking soda, and salt) well. Add dry ingredients to the wet mixture, 1/4 cup at a time until thoroughly combined. The dough will be a bit wet/oily.

Mix all but 3 tbsps of the chocolate chips into the batter until combined.

Using a medium retractable cookie scoop (or simply a spoon and your hands), scoop dough onto baking sheet, about 2 inches apart. Press the remaining 3 tbsps of chocolate chips onto the tops of the cookie dough mounds, evenly distributed.

Bake for 8 to 12 minutes (8 1/2 to 9 minutes for gooey and soft cookies or 12 minutes for a crisp cookie).

Cool the cookies on the baking sheet for about 5 to 6 minutes. The cookies will be super delicate until they are cooled. Transfer each cookie directly onto a cooling rack for another 10 minutes. It's normal to have a small amount of oil on the bottom of the cookies due to the almond butter. Allow the cookies to cool completely before storing.

Adapted from: Oh She Glows Cookbook by Angela Liddon

Tip A Wee Dram 2018 Tickets on Sale Now

On Saturday March 10th, 2018, **Tip A Wee Dram** will bring together whiskies from around the world for a festival-style tasting event at the Scottish Cultural Centre, with food, silent auctions, an additional Master Class, Whisky 101 tastings, and more, all to benefit the Callanish Society.

Founded in 2010 by Al Jones and the amazing **Cycling Team Hope**, the event has grown substantially over the years into what local whisky lovers consider to be Vancouver's only springtime whisky festival. Tip A Wee Dram is organized and executed entirely by volunteers, and has contributed over \$200,000 to Callanish and other cancer charities, over the past 8 years. Please come out and support this wonderful event!



Richard Wozny

Words from Richard

Richard Wozny was diagnosed with Stage IV lung cancer in August 2016 and attended his first retreat in May 2017. In his words, Callanish “taught me to change the self-focussed context of my despair and become again fearless and unique.”

Excerpt from a longer piece called “Notes on Despair” written by

Richard Wozny, on the Callanish Writing Retreat, September 2017.

I learned to carefully unwrap and examine my own death. Rather than finding a nightmare, I was surprised to find it was rather like a Christmas cake in the shape of a house with many rooms to explore. When I get tired I can sit down and break off a piece of the wall and eat, and have more energy to explore further.

The lessons learned may be summarized as:

1. Love myself fully and without reservation.
2. Forgive myself for dying and leaving family, friends and my lost potential to share and create more love for another twenty years. A foreshortened life makes me feel like a failure but I am not.
3. Focus only on love as nothing else has meaning in this context. There are only ends, no means or complex plans, thus I make few judgments. This releases me from many self-imposed delusions---a big recommendation of all wisdom literature.
4. Accept that one or ten years of life are essentially the same thing. This is not negotiable so do not regret the missed years. They are the same, as it is unknown. I let go of fear and cracked the mystery of the greatest and oldest line of wisdom ever: “Don’t cry over spilt milk.” Indeed, now I am mostly free of fear and regret and longing. A big part of the answer seems to be courage and some time without pain which is a terrible distraction.
5. Continue to be positive and take all actions to extend life and be happy about it because that is the rational and loving thing to do.
6. Prepare my mind for death so when I go I can enter it without limiting words or ideas or individuality. It will be majestic, wondrous, or awe-inspiring---to be passive/passionate and completely swept away in the full experience it offers. Petty words or ideas will limit the experience of death and make it sad, small and even pathetic. I will try and leave my rational mind behind a few days before. My goal and the only way I can see to take away the sadness is to dissolve into nothingness, as if I walked into a river and disappeared.
7. Despair and sorrow are subjective and context-based so I am removing the subject and the context. I’ve learned again that love endures and lives on in all those you love and who love you. The flailing insect analogy is entirely false, as love ensures we are never alone with our despair. We are not abandoned. Love is our substance and despair is the illusion.



James Coverdale

Grief Circles at Callanish

Trust

by Lynn Buhler
(grief circle participant)

*When I lost my trusted friend and lover
I lost for a time my own trust in myself
My sense of self went missing
Caution moved in
I questioned trusted relationships
I stepped carefully so as not to be
ambushed by others' grief
or to ambush them with mine*

*The unexpected explosions of
sadness frightened me
and I feared it frightened others*

*Like a quiet stream meandering through the forest
Like the movement of the ocean on a still day as the tide comes in
My grief is becoming a more trusted companion*

*I am trusting my grief can be held calmly and comforted
This trust settles my soul
I feel my own sense of myself returning
My caution is retreating*

We feel very grateful to offer a monthly grief circle at Callanish, to keep building a safe and loving community for those who are grieving the death of a loved one (from any cause), because grieving is hard work. Mourning can be lonely, confusing, and isolating, and there is no question that it is much harder to go through grief alone.

If you would like more information on our monthly grief circle, or wish to let us know you are coming, please call Callanish 604-732-0633 or e-mail info@callanish.org. The circles are offered by donation.



Doug and Liz Evans

Honouring a Volunteer Doug Evans

We got to know Doug, soon after his wife Liz Evans came on her first Callanish retreat in 2001.

Liz, Doug and their wonderful kids Jacqueline and Will quickly became core members of our Callanish family—Liz came on the Callanish staff and retreat team ten years ago, Doug was a regular attendee

at Callanish events usually with his camera, and Jackie and Will were recruited periodically to help with retreat pack-up. Since Liz's death a year and a half ago, Doug has continued to support Callanish, arriving on the last day of retreat, usually with his brother-in-law Gerald (whose wife Jenny also attended Callanish), and his truck, to help us pack up our retreat at Brew Creek. Doug says he feels close to Liz there, as we all do. We know how happy Liz would be to know that Doug has continued to back us up, not just with his amazing practical help but also with his huge heart. Thank you Doug!

We Remember with Love

Rima Andre

Wendy Dwyer

Sarah Gatzka

Laura Startup

We send our love and thoughts to the family and friends
of these remarkable people.

Special Thanks to:

The Family and Friends of Ashley Brear and Keep on Swimming for their incredible ongoing fundraising efforts in honour of their beloved daughter

Susie Frank for so generously leaving us **\$25,000** as a legacy from her estate

The Kitty Heller Memorial Trust for the continued generosity

Colleen Kirkham and family for asking for memorial donations to Callanish, in honour of her mother **Joanne Kirkham**

The family and friends of Rima Andre and **Laura Startup** for their generous memorial donations

Sarah Kramer of Tattoo Zoo for yet another fabulous fundraiser for Callanish

Martha Lou Henley for her ongoing commitment to bringing food and flowers to our young adult group every month and for her wonderful concert tickets

The Lotte & John Hecht Memorial Foundation for their generous scholarship support and matching funding

Michael Luco of Earthrise for providing beautiful flowers for retreats and events

Michelle Grace for the great art supplies for our studio

Stephanie Sauvé for her generous support in backing us up with our website needs

Eva Matsuzaki for writing such beautiful thank you cards to our donors

Bill Sutherland for taking such good care of our garden and our roof, and along with **Don Matsuzaki, Doug Evans, Buddy Sakamoto** and **Gerald Eiers** helping us with retreats

Renee Mitchell at Choices market for their discount on retreat food shopping

The generous and supportive team at **The Brew Creek Centre**

Allison Prinsen for her many hours helping us with our design needs

Our fabulous baking team of **Sherri Silverman, Janet Silver, Susan Stine** and **Karen Hoffman** for donating their time and the ingredients to bake the much-loved Callanish cookies

Tori Cook, Sarah Sample and **Stephanie Sauvé** for volunteering to wash dishes on retreat

Suzanne Hong at Granville Island Florists for her beautiful flowers

Neil Prinsen and **Ros Best**, for driving participants to retreat

The BC Centre for Palliative Care for awarding us a grant of **\$5000** for our project on Strengthening our Circles of Support: How to become more culturally-responsive