

voices

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Alice Eckles 2019

CONTRIBUTORS



Deborah Dickerson regularly writes letters and sometimes poetry. She attends weekly Otter Creek Poets workshops. She had a poem published in Zig Zag Lit Mag in 2018.



Matthew Dickerson is a fiction and non-fiction writer, song-writer, and digital-storyteller. He was selected as artist-in-residence at Glacier National Park in 2017 and Acadia National Park in 2018 to do digital storytelling through word and image. His most recent book, *The Voices of Rivers*, was released in April, 2019.



Peter Dickerson is a recent graduate of Saint Michael's College, with a degree in Art and Design. Peter specializes in 3D fabrication and has a growing interest in photography and film.



Alice Eckles is the author of *The Literature Preferred by Wild Boar*, a novel and *A Phrase Book for Spiritual Emergencies: essays*. She sells her books, artwork, log grown shiitake mushrooms, and honeybee products from Dancing Bee Gardens booth at the Middlebury Farmers' Market market.



Faith Gong writes when she has time. Some of her writing has appeared in *The Longridge Review*, *On the Willows*, *Minibury*, and *The Addison Independent*. She also blogs on *The Pickle Patch* when she isn't chasing girls and chickens.



Caroline Kimble is a junior at Wheaton College studying Spanish and Psychology. She enjoys exploring Chicago and creative writing in her free time.



Christine McDow is a senior Middlebury College student from North Carolina who enjoys science, riding her bicycle, and serving as a hospice volunteer.



Jack Nop is a junior at CalArts, focusing on stop-motion animation. His film collaboration with Peter Dickerson won an international competition hosted by the LEGO group, and he continues to make LEGO stop-motion animated films at CalArts.



Jean Panicucci has been writing poetry since she was a child. She enjoys reading and playing piano.



McKenna Poppenga is a senior art and design major at Saint Michael's College. She works as the student manager at the SMC MakerSpace and as the studio assistant for the art department. She works in a variety of mediums including oil painting, sculpture, and nature photography.



Meg McFadden Smith writes short stories and poetry in order to pay attention to the beauty and brokenness around her. Her work was published in *The Willow Review* in 2014. In addition to writing, she bears witness to others' stories as a mental health therapist and attends to her family.



Melinda Rowe Williams is a graphic designer and musician. She has been making posters and tinkling the ivories from a young age.

Layout and Design by Melinda Rowe Williams and McKenna Poppenga

Contributing Editors: Deborah Dickerson and Alice Eckles

Singing in the Silo

Meg McFadden Smith

Previously published in Willow Review, 2014

Sometimes in June, in the blueness of night,
we would sing songs acappella inside

a vacant grain silo. What acoustics--
what grace -- each sound found its echo in space.

Before we used it, the silo had stood still
as a windless field, quiet as a barn

emptied of cows. It leaned like Pisa and
all the adults had said not to enter

but we agreed to ignore the adults --
somehow it seemed the silo was hollowed

so that it could be filled. The ground, although
covered in dirt and hay, was as sacred

as St. Peter's marble floors --give me that
musty domed chapel anytime over

a grand cathedral. Let me hear voices
again, those of my brothers and my friends,

as they echo off metal walls, ricochet
through space that has lot its place in the world.

Let me return to that old silo, some
North Country night, with this husk of a heart,

that I might once again be made new.
Let us worship in song and let us long

together as the Spirit makes a church
out of the husk of an old grain container.



McKenna Poppenga

"Road Maps and Tire Tracks: Home", Acrylic and Ink



McKenna Poppenga, *oil paint*

A Good Year for Monarchs

Faith Gong

It was a good year for Monarch butterflies. Throughout the summer and into mid-October – far longer than seemed reasonable, given the fall chill in the air and the trees beginning to shed their chlorophyll – we’d be startled into delight by the sudden flash of orange-and-black wings against the blue sky, or dipping and soaring amid the tall brush bordering our field.

“Do you notice that there seems to be less milkweed this year?” my neighbor asked in mid-summer, during one of our walks along our shared driveway. She has a longer history with this land than I, and recalled a photograph taken when she was pregnant with her son, twelve years earlier, in which the milkweed along the driveway grew abundantly -- nearly as tall as her. On this particular day, we saw only a scant scattering of milkweed stalks, most of them barely two feet tall. Milkweed is what Monarch caterpillars eat in preparation for metamorphosis, gathering energy from its smooth, thick, ovoid leaves that leak milky liquid when broken.

But as summer wore on and nearly every day brought at least one Monarch sighting, the knot of concern created by my neighbor’s comments began to loosen. Whether or not the milkweed crop was booming, the Monarchs appeared to be doing just fine.

The driveway along which my neighbor and I walk is a quarter-mile curve of white gravel. After a series of Vermont winter freeze-and-thaw cycles, the potholes on our driveway had begun to outnumber the smooth stretches. Every so often, we’d load our pickup truck with gravel and recruit the children to help fill the holes, but these were temporary fixes: a couple of hard rains, and the potholes gaped wide once more.

When we called in the professionals for estimates on re-grading the driveway, everyone said the same thing: The weeds growing along the drive should be mowed down. These plants pushed right up into the gravel, breaking apart the driveway’s edges. Their roots acted as sponges, soaking up water and storing it just below the road’s surface, where it would freeze and expand, making the smooth places rough.

To my husband, mowing the weeds was a logical solution -- and a chance to put his new brush mower into action. To our neighbor, the situation was less clear, as it involved the destruction of much of the milkweed whose scarcity she’d already noted.

“What’s more important?” my husband asked one night, after walking the driveway patiently while our neighbor pointed out all the milkweed she’d like preserved. “Our driveway, or the milkweed?”

I knew the answer he expected -- the answer he’d decided upon. But I felt that his question embodied the tension of being human on this planet. Do we alter habitats in exchange for a smooth ride down our driveway? Do we mow down milkweed for the sake of our vehicles’ suspensions? How do we rank our own comfort against the health of the natural world?

I didn’t answer him.

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Because the Monarchs were so numerous this year, we became a foster family to two Monarch caterpillars over the course of the summer. Although my daughters have observed the transformation from striped caterpillar to regal butterfly many times in the past, it never gets less magical.

For the first day or so, the caterpillar munches the milkweed leaves that we put into my daughter's large mesh bughouse. One morning, we find the caterpillar hanging from the top of the bughouse in a J-shape. And then, in a step that nobody in our family has ever managed to witness firsthand, the caterpillar splits its skin to reveal a shiny green chrysalis with a delicate band of gold around the top. There it remains for a week or two, until – again, in a step we've never managed to catch firsthand – the butterfly pushes through and unfurls its wings.

Once the butterfly's wings are dry, we release it into our field and bid it a safe flight down to Mexico.

This summer, I began to question our motives when we gather these monarch caterpillars from among the milkweed alongside our driveway. I tell myself that we're being environmentally responsible, protecting them from predators and the elements, insuring their safe metamorphosis and releasing them on the other side.

That's the story I tell my neighbor. But another version is that we're interfering in a natural process for voyeuristic pleasure.

I was alone at home when I first heard the noise: a scratching and scabbling. The noise was loudest in the part of our house where the kitchen meets the living room. Oh no; must be an animal in the walls.

Upon further investigation, I was able to pinpoint the noise, which came from within our woodstove. Oh no; must be a bird stuck in the chimney. It was late summer; our chimney sweeping wasn't scheduled for another month. By then, I figured, whatever was trapped in there would be long dead.

When my family returned, I reported the scratching and scabbling. One of my daughters settled down with a book in the overstuffed chair by the woodstove. A few minutes later, she shrieked, "Mommy! There's a bird in the stove!"

"I know!" I called back. "Didn't you hear me tell you that?"

"No! I mean there's a bird in the stove!"

This brought the whole family running. Sure enough, through the smudged glass of the woodstove door, a sparrow beat its wings among the ashes of last winter's fires.

What to do? How could we extract the sparrow without it flying loose around our house or falling prey to our very excitable dog?

Thankfully, my parents came to dinner that evening. My father – one of the cleverest fix-it people I know (and a bird lover, to boot) – hit upon the solution: We cracked open the woodstove door, taped a clear plastic bag baited with bread over the stove's opening, and waited.

We waited all night: Apparently the bird had sensed evening's fall from inside the stove and found a place to roost.

The next morning, as I was making coffee, I heard a rustling behind me: There was our sparrow, floundering around in the plastic bag. I called the rest of the family together, and we carefully removed the bag from the stove, carried it outside, and released the sparrow. He wobbled tentatively for half a second before swooping toward the trees on the edge of our field.

What clever bird saviors we were! We spent the next several minutes basking in the glow of our own benevolence, our status as caretakers of the natural world.

Of course, if the flat part of a forested ridge hadn't been cleared a couple decades ago to build our house, there would never have been a chimney for that sparrow to get stuck in.

After the butterflies and the sparrow came the dragonflies.

We had just pulled into our driveway after a late August trip to the pool for one of the final swims of the summer. The afternoon sun was turning everything golden, with hints of the autumn to come.

It's so rare that we look up: Too often our gaze is fixed straight ahead on the task at hand – that is, when our heads aren't bowed downwards with the weight of it all. But that afternoon, I happened to look up. And I couldn't stop looking up for the next hour.

The air was full of dragonflies. The summer sky hummed with them. Their iridescent wings sparkled in the sunlight. And they were dancing, darting crazily to music only they could hear, in patterns that appeared random to me, but which were embedded in their DNA eons ago. There were hundreds of them, all up and down our driveway.

The next day, the dragonflies had gone.

What was all that about? Why had the dragonflies thrown a massive dance party along our driveway for just one afternoon?

A quick bit of research revealed that these dragonflies were most likely either migrating, or congregating to devour clouds of insects. Neither explanation captures the magic of the experience.

I have questions that I cannot answer. I try to tread lightly on this earth and to take care of living things, but my steps are clumsy and my motives questionable.

None of my uncertainty mattered on that August afternoon when I raised my eyes to the sky and witnessed the wild and beautiful freedom there. ■

Testimony Alice Eckles

My Heavenly Father is always shining down on me, finding a way even into my darkest night. I can find a rainbow in the clouds and show you the true colors of my God. You might have heard his name is Jesus and not believed.

I've seen a ribbon of white light dance away a demon. I've seen a shaft of light fill me in a dream coming in on my breath. I've seen the moon follow me on a dark walk only to wink out once I was home. Even in balls of lightening that zipped through the house I saw The Light without quite believing, or accepting Jesus.

Not until I tried every other explanation, and I recognized him in a dream. The one I learned of as a child, yes, now I know my friend is Jesus. He is the light of the world. Who with me my burden shares? None but thee Lord Jesus.

He saved me with His grace many times even before I was born again. I return and say His Name without embarrassment or doubt because this time I know exactly where to turn no matter where I find myself. My eyes are on my savior and I see God's beauty and grace working everything for the good of his beloved family, friends, and creation. Let us dedicate our lives to God the father, Son and Holy Ghost who gives us full life, saves us, provides for us, and delights us forevermore. I see a rainbow and I know now how to accept. Thank you Jesus! Hallelujah, Amen!

Early Risers

Deborah Dickerson

March 14, 2019

I chose the burgundy robe from her closet when she died,
picked white strands from the shoulders and sleeves,
loosed them out of doors as she had done.

A finch's nest lined with her hair graces my bookshelf.
Never cold when nestled in Grammy's robe,
I treasure dawn's stillness with psalms and prayer.

She rose early too-- brewed coffee, waited for dawn.
Still and silent, camera at hand, she waited for the deer,
a solitary fisher or fox, a turkey flock.

We vacationed together on Sunapee decades ago.
I'd hear Grammy shush the squeaky screen door
as she headed to the porch for the sky's brightening.

I would slip out of bed, pad to the porch barefoot,
scoot onto the wicker couch, slip my smooth hand
into hers, lean in and draw warmth.

Mantel Holdings

Deborah Dickerson
February 2019



Deborah Dickerson, photograph

On the mantel in our bedroom
candlesticks resembling birch bark hold
beeswax faintly smelling of honey.
Dry flowers sit in the matching vase
holding the colors of summer--
fuschia, yellow, orange and garnet.
Another vase of Romanian red glass, etched
and notched, holds only morning light.
But an antique dish cradles smooth stones
from the Taff River in Wales--
some are the gray-blue of our son's eyes,
the rest brick red. I collect rocks-- wanting
to dwell in a stone house that holds me
the way you do, steadfast and immovable.

Release

In memory of TBD

Matthew Dickerson

So, what if I'm fishing?
What if I'm fly fishing,
and it's catch-and-reliease?
What if I hook a beautiful fish,
full of life,
and it leaps and dances
across the surface of this river--

And what, then, if it breaks the line--
that fine strand that can seem so strong
and be so tenuous --
and drops
with a great splash back down,
down into the mysterious depths?

And now my net is empty
because the fish is gone.
How can I release the big emptiness
from the net, let it swim off
into the deep?

Can I let go of nothing?
A hole, a hollow, a space where
the fish should have been?
What if it isn't a net now empty,
but a heart?



"Fire and Flood"

Photographs by
Matthew Dickerson

"...from my artist-residence and writing journeys to Alaska and Glacier National Park. They speak to me of the beauty and healing and life in the midst of harsh places and after hard times."



Are we Losing the “Liberal” in Liberal Arts?

Caroline Kimble
November 2018

As application deadlines roll by, students across America are fighting the same battle I fought in my kitchen one year earlier. Is a liberal arts education worth it when you could attend a university that would shoot you into the money-making world with greater efficiency and focus? I did not have a better answer to give my parents than “I just don’t know what I’m interested in...I want to explore.” Graciously, and despite their inhibitions, they let me choose the small liberal arts college I dreamed of, but this question has nagged at me since I started college. I felt I owed them an answer. As students we don’t know, and as a society we have forgotten the value of obtaining a “liberal” education. We can’t articulate the importance of liberal arts because we have forgotten the original point of education: to educate the whole person and make us better citizens, not land us the “dream” job. To succeed in this we must educate the whole person, not just a narrow slice of them.

Many of our ideas about “liberal education” come from Aristotle who believed the crux of liberality was “learning for the sake of learning,” not to obtain a job, or for the “low aim of money-making.” Now we realize it is possible to enjoy learning skills you will one day need in your career, but if Aristotle did not nail the definition of “liberal education,” neither did we.

Our “liberal arts” colleges often teach learning out of fear and not love for the subject: fear that you will not do “well enough” to get into grad school, or have a successful career. Our educational system pushes students to choose a track so they can quickly check off their requirements and receive their diploma. They have forgotten the term liberal comes from Latin *liberalis* meaning freedom. We are educated liberally so that we will not be subjugated, oppressed, or exploited by those in power. By seeing college as solely “training grounds” for future jobs we are polluting the original meaning of “liberal.” We are no longer learning for political and mental freedom, but learning as a means to just one end: a good job.

Many will raise the objection that to advance our society maybe it is okay- even good- to learn this way. With increased specialization of education we can cure cancer, solve world hunger, and send humans to Mars. To push society to new heights we must push students to choose their track and focus their studies. Though this argument appears logical, applied realistically it makes little sense. How are you to solve world hunger if you can’t speak the language of the country you are working with, or if you do not understand their cultural fabric and individual histories?

How can you cure cancer if you haven't first learned the critical and creative thinking skills and breadth of knowledge that a liberal education can provide? Even "useless liberal gen-eds" such as languages strengthen your presence as a citizen or a job candidate because they connect you to the greater world so that you are more fully educated and able to communicate. Liberal education connects you to your history, language, politics, and the natural world while competency in only one subject can often hole you into your own private world of academia. Many employers recognize this and 80% say they would prefer to hire a candidate with a background of liberal arts and sciences over one who has just taken classes in their specific and narrow field. As technology changes at astronomical rates, what you learned in college just a few years earlier could be antiquated and irrelevant, but your ability to think creatively and critically will always be of use.

It is clear there are both societal and economical advantages to a general liberal arts education, but I would argue a true "liberal" education, one that educates the entire human, cannot be achieved through secular means. To educate the whole person you must nurture the mind and spirit. This is where the Christian liberal arts comes in. David Brooks, a Yale professor, said that his students had "overdeveloped ego, and underdeveloped souls." Their minds had been fed, but upon graduation their hearts were hungry. They wanted to know if there was more to their life than a prestigious resumé and career. Christian colleges have the liberty to do what secular schools cannot: talk about beliefs. They have the ability to train student's minds, and steep their souls in Christian thought through classes, lectures, and chapel services. They strive to send Christian students away with a hunger and passion for their faith and the knowledge of where fulfillment comes from, rather than a bucketload of unanswered questions. They teach students to discover, refine, and use their gifts for the only purpose with eternal value: the glory of God.

Desk

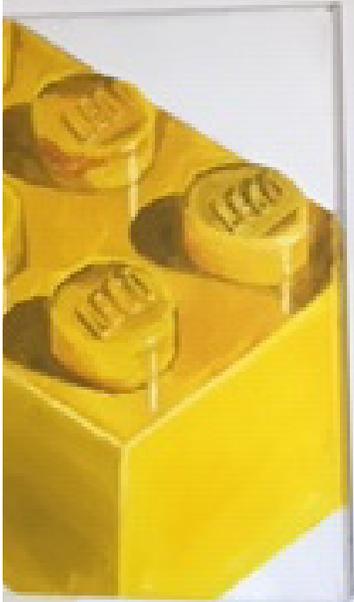
Jack Nop

December 2018

To see this stop motion short film, refer to the URL below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=le0NWqP1toY>





Peter Dickerson, *oils*

The Body

of Christ
{Destruction of the Temple}

Let me be the best tree
Then the tree understood

Liturgical colors
Lent
Draw closer to God

What's Taking
my attention & time?

What could compromise my faith?

apain & trauma
desiring comfort
debt

Dangerous Calling by David Tripp

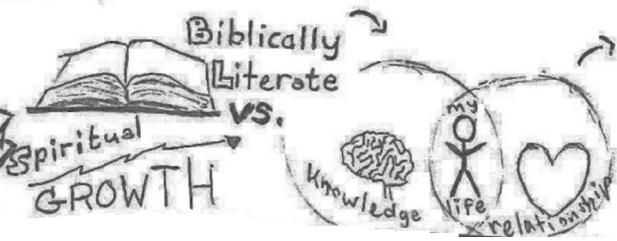
The Body of Christ Mark 13:1-20



God in His love, writes a better story



NO TURNING BACK!
NOT LOOKING UP ON MY OWN LIFE
vv 14-16



Mark 13:1-11
1 John 1:5, 8-9

NOT YET
all that will grace make us
Rebuilt

Now
Fully Forgiven
Waiting for Christ to Return
Matt. 25:1-13

Promise
Take up your cross

COMFORT
HOPE
search
savior

FOCUS
on GOD
New temple

DISTRACTION
{2nd Temple}



Peter Dickerson
Winooski, photography

Wonder

Jean Panicucci

I read the Word and often doubted it.
I read the Word and wondered about it.
I read the Word and tried to feel it
And hoped God would soon reveal it.
I read the Word and closed the book,
I felt the urge to take another look.
One sleepless night I stepped outside,
The stars were oh so bright and spread so wide.
I've heard of stars called Orion, Aries and Gemini.
Who put them there and keeps them side by side?
Was this GOD'S artistry presented in the sky?
I felt the chill of winter melting into spring.
As dawn appeared a bird began to sing.
Did it return from some far off land
Traversing vast seas and sand?
My mind began to ponder
All the beauty of the earth.
I was now filled with awe and wonder
How each season brought rebirth.
A sudden joy filled my heart.
Who but GOD and JESUS could create such a starry night!
I felt my darkest doubts depart,
I was now filled with His glorious light.



Peter Dickerson, *photoshop*