



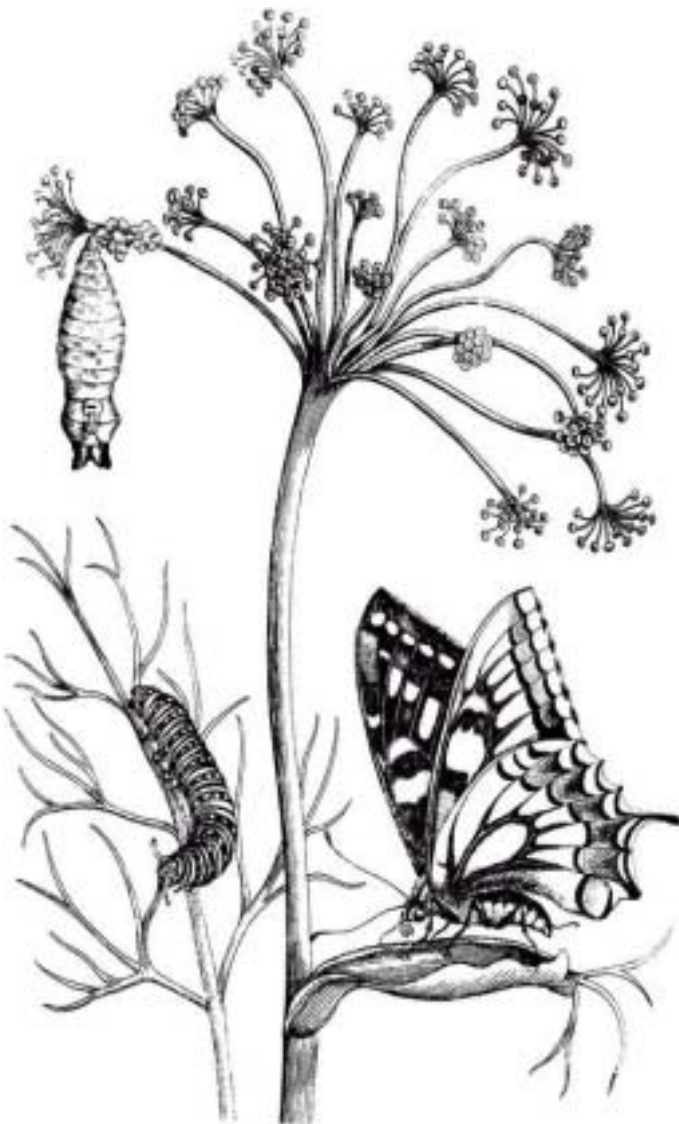
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## Metamorphosis

In nature, transition from one form to another occurs in various ways. The transition made from tadpole to frog, for instance, is a gradual, visible, orderly developmental event. By contrast, the transition from caterpillar to butterfly is a mysterious, hidden, startlingly unexpected transformational event.

Generally, the development from tadpole to frog can be captured by time lapse photography, making it clear that “what is” came from “what was.” If, however, you open a chrysalis a caterpillar has wound about itself, you find only a mass of cells whose ultimate form and function cannot be identified. Although a biologist might not be completely comfortable with this description, we could say that the caterpillar disintegrates into cells that must reorganize to become a butterfly. Inside a chrysalis, there is neither a caterpillar sprouting wings nor a husk dropping away to reveal a butterfly. Yet all the caterpillar was and all the butterfly will become are contained in the chrysalis.

From *Recovering the Sacred Center: Church Renewal from the Inside Out* by Howard E. Friend. Valley Forge PA: Judson Press, 1998; page 85.



## Editor's Reflections

Rather than exploring a particular theme or topic in depth, this issue includes a variety of shorter pieces and updates. Think of it as a smorgasbord, or potluck supper.

Those of you who are members of the Spiritual Formation Network (and others, I hope) will be interested to learn of the revisioning that is happening, and how we will be moving toward the development of a Spiritual Formation **Leadership** Network (page 4).

We have news of the Sabbath Keeping project, whose final report will be considered by the General Assembly when it meets in Long Beach, California, at the end of June. From our Fall 1999 issue you will remember that one of the books that inspired and educated the Sabbath Keeping Work Group was Wayne Muller's *Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest*. On page 6 you will find the announcement of Wayne's acceptance of our invitation to be with us at the General Assembly at our Spiritual Formation Dinner — truly a blessing and a gift of his presence.

Also related to the Sabbath Keeping project, you will be impressed (I think) by the list of people who responded to our call for "sabbath sachets" to bring to the General Assembly. Cathy Duncan, our administrative assistant, can testify that we almost literally have been overwhelmed by the response, as each day new packages arrive. Everyone who shares our mail station and fax machine on the second floor has learned by now about the source and purpose of the wonderfully aromatic packages that arrive in the mail! We hope to have enough sachets to distribute not only at the General Assembly but also at the Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women (Louisville, Kentucky, July 15-19, 2000). This is fitting since most of the sachets have been sewn by circles of Presbyterian Women who have taken on this project in a big way. THANK YOU so much! (And keep those sachets coming — we can use a lot more!)

Not only have people provided us with sachets for the Assembly, but they have found ways to use them in their own congregations, as you will read in the letter from one educator in West Virginia.

Another reader sent a very thoughtful E-mail note in response to a previous issue. I thought it was so helpful that I asked her permission to share it with you. I hope this will be just the first of many letters you will send as a way of deepening our reflections and engaging in genuine conversation.

Verna Smith shares her poem, "Memory Alive" and writes, "I am a Presbyterian elder and certified spiritual director from San Francisco Theological Seminary. I lead spiritual formation groups and Bible study, and am a member of the First Presbyterian Church in Ramsey, New Jersey."

Another poem comes from Cecil Jividen in North Carolina, entitled (appropriately for this time of year), "The Resurrected Soul: Easter, Now What?"

And David Hartman of Arvada, Colorado, offers his reflection piece, "Job Forty-Two, Five." He writes, "This manuscript contains some radical thoughts on spirituality. These thoughts have arisen out of my weekly preaching, biblical and consciousness studies, personal meditation, and pastoral counseling experience. Of course the title of this piece comes from Job 42:5, to which these thoughts refer. I also refer to several passages in Paul's writings, one passage from John, and one from Isaiah. I removed the references so they would not interrupt the flow."

Poetry can become prayer, and I invite you to pray these poems. Read them aloud. Slowly. Several times. In the Benedictine tradition, when the Psalms were read there would be a silent pause at the end of each phrase, equal in length to the phrase itself. It takes time and patience for words to become more than verbiage, to become the voice of God.

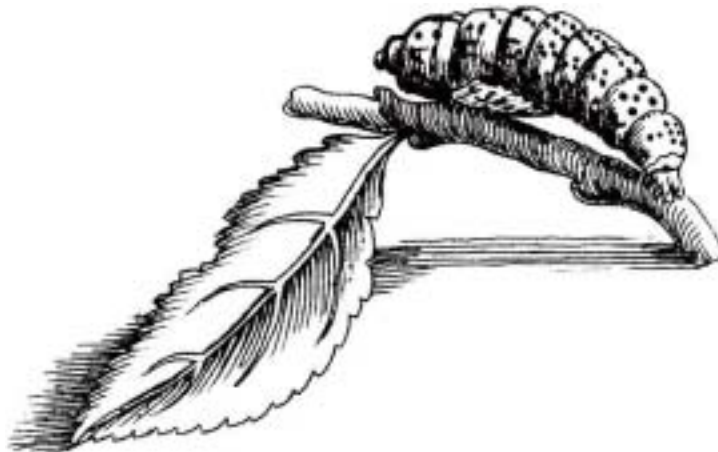
Listen.  
Listen deeply.  
What do you hear?

Kris



## JOB FORTY-TWO, FIVE

Holy . . . or unrighteous,  
Believer or no;  
a caterpillar is a caterpillar.  
A silken darkness envelopes,  
a metamorphosis of awareness;  
leap from hearing to seeing.



“My” awareness of this world is like being a caterpillar, in that “I” crawl around the ground. And as a caterpillar, I may turn around and move in the opposite direction. I may move from one opposite to the other; converted from being a bad caterpillar to a good one, from non-belief to belief, or from darkness to light. As I turn around, I am “born again (anew).”

But, “Am I not still a caterpillar; even though, through the hearing of the ear, I have been converted to the faith of the mothers and the fathers?” “As a caterpillar, don’t I require something more; something more than ‘hearing’?”

Now, it is time for a “second conversion.” What is required is a transformation and not a mere reversing of direction. I am to be “begotten from above.”

Therefore, I enwrap myself in the silken chrysalis of my nightly dreams. Deepening, “I” transform. From change to change, dissolving, the veil thins; a metamorphosing of awareness. Soon, there will be a transformation, a taking wing, flying, and an arising of “sight”; pure awareness, the matrix of this world, and . . . God.

*David T. Hartman*



### *Hungryhearts*

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“WWJD”

Dear Kris,

I'm writing in response to the Editor's notes in the winter issue of *Hungryhearts news*.

I wish I could examine my life each day and proclaim: “Look what the risen Christ has done!” Unfortunately most of the time I have to face the myriad of ways I chose to crucify His attempts to bring grace to the world through my feeble hands.

I have come to understand that the Word is made flesh each moment in my very own body only insofar as I allow my flesh to be dead. His ways are not my ways and in his gentleness he seems to most often choose to wait for my invitation to express himself through me.

The question “WWJD” for me does not imply that Jesus can't do something if he chose to nor does it indicate that he is not alive and working in the world today. It does however remind me that unless I tune my ear to him I will only hear my own voice. It also reminds me that I belong to him and he wants to operate through my life. When I ask that divine question of myself I am humbled to discover that what Jesus would do and what Sherry wants to do are often very different.

I guess for me it's a polite way of reminding the “old man” or Sherry's flesh to “drop dead.” “Not my will, Lord but thine.”

You may well be “uneasy” with this question still but I hope I have expressed another way of looking at it.

Thanks for your fine and important work with spiritual formation and the great newsletter.

Shalom,  
Sherry Hocker  
Woodlake, California

*Thank you for taking the time to share your reflections on “what would Jesus do,” and the perpetual struggle we all face of distinguishing between Christ's voice and all other voices, Christ's will and fallen human desires. The challenge, of course, is to know HOW to tell the difference! And then to act in freedom to choose Christ's way. Your letter highlights the inevitable tension in the journey of faithfulness, and the necessity of ongoing discernment, while also modeling the critical role that community plays and the importance of talking with others.*

– Ed



Rest is as holy as work.

Abraham Joshua Heschel.

Spiritual formation is the activity of the Holy Spirit which molds our lives into the likeness of Jesus Christ. This likeness is one of deep intimacy with God and genuine compassion for all of creation. The Spirit works not only in the lives of individuals but also in the church, shaping it into the Body of Christ. We cooperate with this work of the Spirit through certain practices that make us more open and responsive to the Spirit's touch, disciplines such as sabbath keeping, works of compassion and justice, discernment, worship, hospitality, spiritual friendships, and contemplative silence.

*Office of Spiritual Formation, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)*