

## A Snapshot from the SotS Spiritual Renewal Retreat (2013): The Spiritual Gift that Keeps on Giving

### Jane Sobie

*Who would have thought that attending the November 2013 Spiritual Renewal Retreat, I would realize – on a much deeper level – just how being in the two year program changed my life. I now call School of the Spirit, “the gift that keeps on giving.”*



My SotS nametag reads: *Jane Sobie, Episcopalian infused with Quakerism*. That is true. I spent two years at Pendle Hill, one year as a resident student, and the second year on staff. I came to love the Quaker way of being in the world, and the rich spirituality that comes from deep listening in silent worship. I was a natural to gravitate to 2009-2011 *On Being a Spiritual Nurturer* program. And I felt led to do it.

**The Snapshot:** It began the minute I walked through the doors of the Avila Retreat Center in Durham, NC for the November 2013 Spiritual Renewal Retreat. My spirit felt light. I felt whole. Healed. And very joyful! I didn't realize, until sitting in Meeting for Worship, that I had arrived for the first *On Being a Spiritual Nurturer* term in 2009, with an invisible, heavy backpack of grief, and veins full of exhaustion. My well was dry.

I thought I had come to the program to dig deeply into the spiritual journey of excellent writings and speakers. To be part of a close community of fellow seekers. And to do some soulful searching as to what might be calling me after the two-year program. I came open-minded and openhearted. *On Being a Spiritual Nurturer* more than met those expectations. But the priceless gift of healing was a gradual process, so gradual that I wasn't aware of the depth of it until the renewal retreat.

Healing occurs in a safe place. Over the years I had compounded many griefs in my life, the most painful being the loss of one of my twin sons, Steven, to suicide. In my K-

group, led by Carole Treadway, I was with eight wonderful women I could bare my soul to, and they could do the same with me. Attentive, compassionate, deep listening. Encouragement. Laughter. (We also ate lots of chocolate!)

When I was asked to be on the Grief Panel and unveil part of my journey of grief before my class, I'll never forget the palpable prayers of Margie Dingman, who elderd me. Looking out from the podium at my peers, I gazed into compassionate eyes. As nervous as I was, my backpack began to lighten. After closing my presentation with a poem I wrote about Steven, the room was silent - to the point of hearing a pin drop - for what seemed an eternity. "Oh no," I said to myself. "I depressed the daylights out of them because they aren't saying anything." Not being a Quaker, I later learned that this was the way Friends show respect and love. Another priceless gift.

How befitting that my SotS final project was on the John 4 story of the Samaritan Woman at the Well. I have always loved that story. Jesus treated her with compassion and respect. When Jesus asked the Samaritan woman for a drink of water, she thought he was referring to water from the stone well. But Jesus was talking about a spring of spiritual Living Water, one that would always quench her thirst. The *On Being a Spiritual Nurturer* program had become Living Water for me. My well was replenished.

Thomas Wolfe wrote, "You Can't Go Home Again." My response is, "Yes you can." And the homecoming can be all that much richer and sweeter.

Blessings on your journey, Friends.

Jane Sobie

November 25, 2013