

Friends of Silence

Vol. XXXV, No. 2

+++++

February 2022

"Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?"

Dear Friends ~ Last year I reconnected with Rick Ruggles, a former neighbor and a photographer of what he calls "found hearts". Some years back, he teamed up with Steve Godwin, a poet-friend who often visited Still Point (the home of Friends of Silence in the woods of West Virginia). Together they connected their photographic and poetic heart-work, creating a tiny book called FINDING HEART. I'm grateful both agreed to allow me to share a snippet of their work here to warm our hearts this month.



Rick Ruggles

In the crystal cold of February, the commemoration of St. Valentine, and the cacophony of shifting scenes and specters of our world, what does it mean to "take heart" for each of us, dear readers, especially as our earth heats up, and the pandemic continues around us?

Friends of Silence—as a nonprofit organization—is feeling the lingering effects of the pandemic, just as we all are. While many of you responded generously to our annual appeal—giving wholeheartedly—the donations so far simply are not enough to fill the deficit left by our inability to host in-person retreats, particularly the Wisdom Schools. And while revenue is down, mailing and printing costs have risen greatly. So, we are taking the extraordinary step of enclosing a second donation envelope in the hope that if you have not been able to respond to the first appeal, you may find it possible to "take heart" now so that we will have what we need to continue the legacy Nan Merrill passed to us. ~ Mary Ann



It could take a tribe
to find the way back
to what you love.
A day's wandering
could become a season,
then another. At times
it may all signal chaos.
But take heart.
Sometimes
there is intelligence
even in the crumbling
of things.



Rick Ruggles

~ Steve Godwin from "Fortune" in FINDING HEART

Those are red letter days in our lives when we meet people who thrill us like a fine poem, people whose handshake is brimful of unspoken sympathy, and whose sweet, rich natures impart to our eager, impatient spirits a wonderful restfulness which, in its essence, is divine...The perplexities, irritations, and worries that have absorbed us pass like unpleasant dreams, and we wake to see with new eyes and hear with new ears the beauty and harmony of God's real world. The solemn nothings that fill our everyday life blossom suddenly into bright possibilities.

~ Helen Keller in THE STORY OF MY LIFE

Human spirit is the ability to face the uncertainty of the future with curiosity and optimism. It is the belief that problems can be solved, differences resolved. It is a type of confidence, and it is fragile.

~ Bernard Beckett

**...Quick dance,
shuffle of losses and leaves,
only the things I didn't do
crackle after the blazing dies.**



Rick Ruggles

~ Naomi Shihab Nye from "Burning the Old Year" in WORDS UNDER THE WORDS

What if dying weren't a bad thing? Caroline's death had left me with a great and terrible gift: how to live in a world where loss, some of it unbearable, is as common as dust or moonlight. And then, finally, unwittingly, acceptance wraps itself around your heart.

~ Gail Caldwell in LET'S TAKE THE LONG WAY HOME

We may encounter many defeats, but we must not be defeated. It may even be necessary to encounter the defeat, so that we can know who we are. So that we can see, oh, that happened, and I rose. I did get knocked down flat in front of the whole world, and I rose.

~ Maya Angelou from an interview in *Psychology Today*, February 2009

Don't grieve. Anything you lose comes around in another form.

~ Rumi



Rick Ruggles

There are far, far better things ahead than any we leave behind.

~ C.S. Lewis in
THE COLLECTED LETTERS OF C.S. LEWIS

A fragment of fence long trampled
by those who needed most to pass.
Pilgrim, immigrant, refugee,
all journeys severe, all made in longing.
Most cross over what's already breached,
but the step is long and touches down
In a world that takes heart
in the breaking of what divides.

~ Steve Godwin from "What Divides" in *FINDING HEART*

**Sometimes I can sit under a tree
looking into the spaces
between branches,
And wait on the silence...**

~ Steve Godwin from "Just Another Song"
in *FINDING HEART*



Rick Ruggles

There is life without love. It is not worth a bent penny, or a scuffed shoe...When you hear, a mile away and still out of sight, the churn of the water as it begins to swirl and roil, fretting around the sharp rocks—when you hear that unmistakable pounding—when you feel the mist on your mouth and sense ahead the embattlement, the long fall plunging and steaming—then row, row for your life toward it.

~ Mary Oliver from "West Wind" in *NEW AND SELECTED POEMS, Vol. 2*

Lesson of the moment: I am not a little autonomous being, deciding this or that about my own life without interference. I am a thread in a tapestry of people.

~ Deborah Good in *LONG AFTER I'M GONE: A FATHER-DAUGHTER MEMOIR*



Rick Ruggles

Will you be my refuge,
My haven in the storm,
Will you keep the embers warm,
When my fire's all but gone?
Will you remember, And bring me sprigs of rosemary,
Be my sanctuary,
'Til I can carry on, Carry on.

~ Carrie Newcomer from the song "Sanctuary"



Rick Ruggles

The creek is wearing its usual disguise, braiding and unbraiding itself through narrows and pools as it pleases, proving its force by taking the path of least resistance, taking apart the stone one grain at a time.

If you were water, what part of your will would you be willing to dissolve?
Which of your ways would you have to learn not to want to have?

And how, if you always ran downstream, would your desire know how to live?

~ Steve Godwin from "If You Were Water"
in *FINDING HEART*