



Celebrating our Relationship
with Those Who Have Died

Cover image
by Iris Sullivan
www.movingthesoulwithcolor.com

*“The Magenta Heart allows one to
see into the life beyond death”*

With deep appreciation to The Christian Community
in Cape Town for inviting me share at your
Remembrance Celebration.

With utmost gratitude for the support, inspiration and
guidance that I continue to receive from our invisible
helpers who love us immeasurably.

To my son, Simon, 16 December 1981 - 14 October 2006:
Without you none of this would be possible.

Susan Vos
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November 2014
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O do not seek me here

O do not seek me here.
You will find me within yourself,
in the warmth of being,
in the beat of heart and lung,
in the sacrificial deed of love,
there is my true existence,
in and through you.

Hear my being
by listening inwards
in the stillness of existence.

I am the cosmos
I am the star
I am the light
I live within:

beholding being countenance.

Gerhard Reisch

Thoughts on being present for our dead

Contemplating this sacred theme would suggest that the world in which our dead reside is not some distant unreachable place but rather a world within and all around us. It also implies that our relationships continue after physical separation through death and further, that perhaps our dead might have something to offer us and likewise that we might have something to offer them.

My own awakening to the importance of this consideration arose through the sudden death of my eldest son, Simon, eight years ago. Thrown into a place where physical eyes, ears and speech were no longer my means of relating to Simon, my questioning gesture of deepest love to him and myself was 'How can I be there for you? How can I be in life for you so that we're still living in togetherness, that you can be with me, find me, speak to me, work with me.' These love-heart-feeling-filled questions welled up inside me from somewhere quite clearly and simply. Alongside this was the crystal-clear knowing that I was to transform my grief and live with joy and love in my heart, that there was a way, and I would find it ... with Simon's help. The passion with which I took up my task to transform my grief and to share love in the world was immediate. The inner drive to do this was so powerful that I could not have deviated from this path. It was as if my life depended on it and for the first time in my life, I had a true passion for something. I knew my purpose.

My love-filled longing was to be there for Simon whom I saw as a teacher, a mentor, a wise old soul way beyond me in his 'human beingness'. He would be with me to help me. This was my truth. It was the truth by which I lived and did my work. It was my secret wrapped up in the mystery of a strong knowing that our physical separation was meant to be, and it was up to me to find my way forward.

My active inner work - my full-time 'occupation' - unbeknownst to others, of being and learning to be present for Simon, was an inseparable part of transforming my grief. I loved Simon beyond measure. I was so grateful to him for the gift of his life to me.

Transforming my grief, living with joy and love in my heart was to me the greatest gift I could give him.

I handed my life over and trusted. I knew with such certainty that I would receive all the directives I needed. I was open to acting on what came to me from within. The very simple driving thought that, 'There is a way of living in the physical world whilst at the same time living together with the spiritual world, and I will find it' guided me. Here lay a beautiful truth about my grief. It continually gave me opportunities and experiences which were ripe for transformation. This was how being present for our dead became so dear to my heart. Our loving gesture of being present for our dead is also a gift we offer to the divine beings who work tirelessly for our evolving selfhood.

The theme is vast. As I journey on I discover more and more. It is moving continually. Attempting to put words to such a sacred soul-spiritual theme leaves me wondering whether it is fitting to do so. Yet at the same time, I recognise that there may be something which could be of value to someone else. It also seems as if there is a request from the dead themselves that I speak for them.

Love drove me onwards and what I write can only come from that place of love. I write also from a place emptiness, of not-knowing. I have no particular answers for anyone. All the answers we seek and are ready to receive are given to us by those in the invisible realm and by Him who loves us without boundaries.

Questions and wonderings never fail us. In our questions lie the answers. Our questing hearts and longing to serve bring more questions and wonderings especially if we are in a state of grief.

What soul moods and ways of being might I cultivate?

What kind of thinking might I develop and what sorts of thoughts have relevance to the dead?

Can I still the chatter in my mind?

How might I enter into an activity so that the dead can experience it with me?

How might I read so that my loved ones can share in it with me?

What would bring them joy?

Out of my own wondering and personal experiences, I share some thoughts below in response to those questions; a snapshot of a much larger picture.

Moods of soul

The ever grateful heart expresses thankfulness to the dead for the gift of their life in our life and to all that life offers us. It is a heart aligned to Higher Self experience, which sees all of life as a gift.

The trusting heart knows no fear and is wide open. It greets each day with anticipation, expecting miracles of all forms.

The devotional heart lives in a state of awe, wonder and reverence.

The radiant heart knows unconditional love as its true state of being - pure love.

Our thinking and thoughts of relevance

Open thinking, questioning and wondering allows the mind to explore the expansiveness of possible meanings. Our spiritually aligned thoughts have relevance for our dead. This includes our questions on the theme of being present for our dead. Thoughts about material concerns have no meaning, nor do negative thoughts and worries about issues; in the greater scheme of life, they are unimportant.

The still mind

The still and quiet mind creates a space for insights and inspirations which our dead might wish to convey to us. We can also become observers of our thought life. We wonder about how a particular thought arrived and who might have given it to us.

Deepened experience of doing

Our dead can be with us when we are fully engaged in our tasks or creative activities. We raise our experiences to a higher level, feeling deeply into our activity, with reverent attention and joy. Our deeds and actions can grow into gestures of love - gifts to our loved ones who have died. We cease to do things just to get them done. Our deeds are conscious and not burdensome.

Living reading

Each of us is drawn to texts which meet our heart and enrich our soul. These could range from sacred texts such as the Bible, meditative verses or poems to literature which speak to us. Our loved ones are able to be with us in our reading if we allow the text to meet us beyond the level of mere words so that it enters deeply into our hearts and souls. Our reading is attentive and not strained. Our dead can experience and “hear” the words resonating within us, in our innermost being.

What brings joy to our dead

*“Laugh and be glad for all that life is giving and I though dead will share your joy in living.”*¹ Those words speak volumes. Living with joy brings the dead such joy, as does our own spiritual striving and living in the authenticity of who we are.

These questions and thoughts have perhaps given a glimpse of the endless possibilities for being present for our loved ones who have died. Your seeking soul will open the doors for more questions and personal revelations.

It is wonderful to open up to this sacred work which is a gift not only for our dead, but for the whole universe.

With love from my inmost heart,

Susan Vos

November 2014

1. Anonymous poem “Though I am Dead”, page 11

From Benedictus

When the soul leaves the body, it is no longer under the burden and control of space and time. The soul is free; distance and separation hinder it no more. The dead are our nearest neighbors; they are all around us. Meister Eckhart was once asked, Where does the soul of a person go when the person dies? He said, no place. Where else would the soul be going? Where else is the eternal world? It can be nowhere other than here. We have falsely spatialized the eternal world. We have driven the eternal out into some kind of distant galaxy. Yet the eternal world does not seem to be a place but rather a different state of being. The soul of the person goes no place because there is no place else to go. This suggests that the dead are here with us, in the air that we are moving through all the time. The only difference between us and the dead is that they are now in an invisible form. You cannot see them with the human eye. But you can sense the presence of those you love who have died. With the refinement of your soul, you can sense them. You feel that they are near.

John O'Donohue

The dead are all around

The dead are all around and are as much our neighbors as the family next door, the tree at the corner, and the birds on the feeder. We need not be on speaking terms with all our neighbors, but the recognition of their presence, if only in the form of a nod, a smile, or a thought of appreciation or thanks, can go a long way. When we acknowledge each other, we affirm and quicken life in each other. Though we may not be able to see the dead inwardly or outwardly, openness to their presence means a great deal to them.

Claire Blatchford

I Am There

Look for me when the tide is high
And the gulls are wheeling overhead
When the autumn wind sweeps the cloudy sky
And one by one the leaves are shed
Look for me when the trees are bare
And the stars are bright in the frosty sky
When the morning mist hangs on the air
And shorter darker days pass by.

I am there, where the river flows
And salmon leap in the silver Lune
Where the insects hum and the tall grass grows
And sunlight warms the afternoon
I am there in the busy street
I take your hand in the city square
In the market place where the people meet
In your quiet room – I am there.

I am the love you cannot see
And all I ask is – look for me.

Iris Hesselden

Do not stand at my grave and weep

Do not stand at my grave and weep,
I am not there, I do not sleep.
I am in a thousand winds that blow,
I am the softly falling snow.
I am the gentle showers of rain,
I am the fields of ripening grain.
I am in the morning hush,
I am in the graceful rush
Of beautiful birds in circling flight,
I am the starshine of the night.
I am in the flowers that bloom,
I am in a quiet room.
I am in the birds that sing,
I am in each lovely thing.
Do not stand at my grave and cry,
I am not there. I do not die.

Mary Elizabeth Frye

... I did not leave ...

I did not leave, I have come inside,
I have not gone, I am still near.
Listen inwards in the silence
To your beating heart, for I am there.

Jehanne Mehta

Though I am Dead

Though I am dead
Grieve not for me with tears
Think not of death
With sorrowing and fears;
I am so near that
Every tear you shed
Touches me although
You think me dead
But when you laugh
And sing in glad delight,
My soul is lifted
Upwards to the light
Laugh and be glad
For all that life is giving,
And I, though dead,
Will share your joy in living.

Anon

“Every thought that concerns me penetrates to me.
This is so beautiful! Even when I am far away,
suddenly such a thought wings itself to me as
a tender, lovely greeting from the physical world.”

The Bridge over the River

On the Death of the Beloved

Though we need to weep your loss,
You dwell in that safe place in our hearts,
Where no storm or might or pain can reach you.

Your love was like the dawn
Brightening over our lives
Awakening beneath the dark
A further adventure of colour.

The sound of your voice
Found for us
A new music
That brightened everything.

Whatever you enfolded in your gaze
Quickened in the joy of its being;
You placed smiles like flowers
On the altar of the heart.
Your mind always sparkled
With wonder at things.

Though your days here were brief,
Your spirit was live, awake, complete.

We look towards each other no longer
From the old distance of our names;
Now you dwell inside the rhythm of breath,
As close to us as we are to ourselves.

Though we cannot see you with outward eyes,
We know our soul's gaze is upon your face,
Smiling back at us from within everything
To which we bring our best refinement.

Let us not look for you only in memory,
Where we would grow lonely without you.
You would want us to find you in presence,
Beside us when beauty brightens,
When kindness glows
And music echoes eternal tones.

When orchids brighten the earth,
Darkest winter has turned to spring;
May this dark grief flower with hope
In every heart that loves you.

May you continue to inspire us:

To enter each day with a generous heart.
To serve the call of courage and love
Until we see your beautiful face again
In that land where there is no more separation,
Where all tears will be wiped from our mind,
And where we will never lose you again.

John O'Donohue

If I be the first of us to die ...

If I be the first of us to die,
Let grief not blacken long your sky.
Be bold yet modest in your grieving.
There is a change but not a leaving.
For just as death is part of life,
The dead live on forever in the living.
And all the gathered riches of our journey,
The moments shared, the mysteries explored,
The steady layering of intimacy stored,
The things that made us laugh or weep or sing,
The joy of sunlit snow or first unfurling of the spring,
The wordless language of look and touch,
The knowing,
Each giving and each taking,
These are not flowers that fade,
Nor trees that fall and crumble,
Nor are they stone,
For even stone cannot the wind and rain withstand
And mighty mountain peaks in time reduce to sand.
What we were, we are.
What we had, we have.
A conjoined past imperishably present.
So when you walk the woods where once we walked together
And scan in vain the dappled bank beside you for my shadow,
Or pause where we always did upon the hill to gaze across the
land,
And spotting something, reach by habit for my hand,
And finding none, feel sorrow start to steal upon you,
Be still.
Close your eyes,
Breathe.
Listen for my footfall in your heart.
I am not gone but merely walk within you.

Nicholas Evans

This Body is Not Me

This body is not me.
I am not limited by this body.
I am life without boundaries.
I have never been born,
and I have never died.

Look at the ocean and the sky filled with stars,
manifestations from my wondrous true mind.

Since before time, I have been free.
Birth and death are only doors through which we pass,
sacred thresholds on our journey.
Birth and death are a game of hide-and-seek.

So laugh with me,
hold my hand,
let us say good-bye,
say good-bye,
to meet again soon.

We meet today.
We will meet again tomorrow.
We will meet at the source every moment.
We meet each other in all forms of life.

Thich Nhat Hanh

“We meet in everything be it in art, in prayer, or in the beauty of nature, it is all the same. I still feel every great thought. You have to understand that I am able to maintain our connection from every sphere because the loftiest, purest love is uniting us, and it will endure eternally, you must believe me!”

The Bridge over the River

Learning to Fly

The walls of birth and death
were too high for me to see over,
and I didn't know that my heart had wings.
As I hammered on those walls,
demanding to know their meaning,
I was aware that there was something inside me
cramped up, waiting to be unfurled,
and I could feel against my heart,
a need that was deeper than instinct,
to fly above my own questions.
But my wings were well hidden.
They needed Love to release them,
the breath of Love to shake them free of fear,
and that took time.

Knowledge of those wings came slowly.
Taught by Love and held by Love,
my heart began to fly a little at a time,
just enough to know that flying was possible,
and that a higher vision did exist
somewhere beyond me.

Then came the day of Love's surprise.
Love swept my heart up and away,
far above the walls of birth and death,
to a point that was beyond time.
And from that distance I discovered,
that birth and death were not walls at all,
but little ripples coming and going,
on an eternal sea that has
neither beginning nor end.

In that moment I saw
that the meaning of birth is forgetting,
the meaning of death is remembering,
the meaning of life is growth,
and the meaning of the eternal sea
which holds everything in its embrace,
is Love.

Joy Cowley

The Company

So many gathered in my room last night.
I felt them close all round me, existences,
Living presences, invisible essences,
Each centred in its own peculiar secret joy,
Each joy given being by a peculiar wisdom
Pertaining to its nature like a dimension,
Or like a world, enclosed within a spirit,
But none a spirit enclosed within a world.

Not in the world, and yet they gathered in my room;
Some stood still, inside the door, some
Thronged the firelight and the shadows; some hung
Like resting birds, in the curtains, perched high
On the bookshelves, poised on the opening flowers
Of a hyacinth, others hid in their own fiery darkness.

Where had they come from?
Out of my joy, out of my sorrow,
Living entities sprung into life from the dust
Of my existence, taking wing, making song?
Or were they there already before I came
Alone into my room, waiting
Until my joy should open eyes to see them,
Until my sorrow should reach down
Into the depths of being, and there find them,
Find such a company of living multitude?

Kathleen Raine

Old Friends

Old friends
Companions of the heart
Are present with us
Long after their earthly frame
Returned to ashes.
Time and space
Lose all meaning
When hearts are really united
In the nameless, formless
Love.

True friendship
Revealed in names and forms
Is the most exquisite gift
Life
Bestows upon us
In its boundless, benevolent
Grace.

Yosy Flug

No barrier can separate

No barrier can separate
What, united in the spirit,
preserves
The light-shining
Love-streaming
Eternal soul bond:
Thus I am in your thoughts
Thus may you be in mine.

Rudolf Steiner

Into the spirit

Into the spirit will I send
The faithful love we found on earth,
Uniting soul with soul
And you will find my loving thought
When from the Spirit worlds of light
You turn with seeking soul to mine.

Rudolf Steiner

I am not on Earth as soul

I am not on Earth as soul
but only in water, air, and fire;

In my fire I am in the planets
and the Sun.

In my sun-being I am the
sky of the fixed stars —

I am not on the Earth as soul
but in Light, Word, and Life;

In my life I am within
the being of the sun and the planets, in the Spirit
of Wisdom.

In my wisdom being I am in the
Spirit of Love.

Rudolf Steiner

Let heart love

Let heart love press its way through
to soul love,
Let love warmth pour through
to spirit light;
So I approach you,
thinking with you spirit thoughts,
feeling in you world love,
willing spirit through you,
weaving oneness being.

Rudolf Steiner

May my heart's power of love

May my heart's power of love
stream to you,
dear souls of friends
in the spirit worlds,
and also the light filled cosmic thoughts
of my I,
so that the paths on which you travel
through the worlds
may be full of light,
so that you may feel:
we have not been forgotten.

Bonds of love are woven
indestructibly through the spheres.

Gerhard Reisch

Softly

Softly on delicate feet it approaches,
Before sleep like a fluttering:
Listen, oh soul, to my counsel,
Let luck and comfort smile on you -:
Those bound to you in love,
Will always remain near you,
Truly entwined with you they will
Encircle you with small and large orbits.
They will rely on you
Unrelated, like you to them,
And awakened to beholding
You will in emulation serve them!

Christian Morgenstern

My eyes be unto you

My eyes be unto you, beloved soul, as windows,
that through them you may see the earthly beauty
My ears be unto you, beloved soul, as doorways,
that through them in hearing you may enter Ether's weaving realm,
When you behold through my eyes the earthly beings
through you I listen upward to the starry ways
When you through my listening enter into the weaving Ether light –
then I behold, through the mirror of your soul
with mine inner eye the realm of angels
And the here and the yonder,
Find themselves in loving harmony
If the sun is in the middle
If the flame of love glows full of sacrifice.

Maria Reimann

I was united with you

I was united with you;
stay now united in me.
So shall we speak together
in the language of eternal Being.
So shall we work together
where deeds find their fulfilment.
So shall we weave in the Spirit
where human thoughts are woven
in the Word of eternal thought.

Rudolf Steiner

The dead and the living need one another

The dead and the living need one another
as day needs night and night needs day.
Beyond all comings and goings,
the dead and the living are one.
Both must work together for the whole of humanity,
your Earth cannot exist without this.
When those in heaven and those on earth are brought together
in my name and my light,
real work can be done.

Claire Blatchford - words heard within

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About Susan

Susan was born in Cape Town, South Africa. Her move to Brisbane, Australia, in 2001 brought many new challenges to her life, the greatest being the death of her eldest son, Simon, in 2006.

Susan is a healing facilitator, spiritual companion and former state and Waldorf (Steiner) school teacher. Her personal transformation through Simon's death opened the door for her to respond to an inner calling to serve in the world, sharing a message of love and inspiring others to find the light in the darkness. Susan's work carries within it the fruits of her life's ongoing quest for truth, her personal research into the nature of the human being from a spiritual viewpoint, combined with the gifts born out of her own life challenges.

Susan provides sacred consultations for those who are grieving, and gatherings and workshops for those seeking new ways to work with their grief and transform their lives.

