

**NEXT Church Annual Conference
Kansas City, March 13-15, 2017**

Verse & Vision Workshop
Nancy Arbuthnot and Gerry Hendershot

Meditating with a Pen: Writing from Scripture (Nancy)

In keeping with this year's theme of "Wells and Walls: Well-Being in a Thirsty World," in this workshop we read several passages from Scripture to help us "meditate with a pen" and composed our own thoughts and poems about opening ourselves to others, refreshing our spirits with the Holy Spirit, taking new roads to new life—in short, finding and offering well-being.

We first read the passages from Scripture aloud, three times. The first time, we simply listened. The second time, I asked listeners to pay attention to a single phrase. The third time, we focused on a word in that phrase. Then we wrote down the phrase or word on a blank paper, took a minutes to free-associate on that word or phrase, writing down quick memories or experiences that came to mind. Then using those words and phrases, we wrote for five minutes. I also suggested how writers might think about literary devices such as repetition (and here I'll include image and metaphor, and rhyme or off-rhyme or alliteration). At the end of the writing time, I asked participants to look over their writing, make any additions or changes, then share with others. At the end of the workshop, after Gerry's discussion on choral reading and using poetry in liturgy, we composed a group poem from individual words and phrases of our writings from Scripture.

Scripture passages (CEV):

Luke 8:17: There is nothing hidden that will not be found. There is no secret that will not be well known.

John 4:13-14: "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again. But no one who drinks the water I give will ever be thirsty again. The water I give is like a flowing fountain that gives eternal life."

John 6:35: I am the bread that gives life! No one who comes to me will ever be hungry. No one who has faith in me will ever be thirsty.

Isaiah 42:16: I will lead the blind on roads
 they have never known;
I will guide them on paths
 they have never traveled.
Their road is dark and rough,
 but I will give light
to keep them from stumbling.

John 14:6: I am the way, the truth and the life.

Memory

*(a group poem of the Verse & Vision workshop, from participants'
5-minute writings relating Scripture passages to personal memories)*

Fragile

“ I want that pita!”

Do our eyes deceive us?

The people of this world

A circle of love

Nourished

Poems from *Spirit Hovering*, by Nancy Arbuthnot

The Way (*John 14:6*)

I try to write the words, the stories
But they escape as dreams on waking

As the rainbow trout I once caught barehanded
In a clear mountain stream wriggled away

I will tell one more story
From the war zone

Of the father who thinks he sees
His young daughter

Returning with her satchel from school
Or bending to stroke the stray cat

That comes to the patio each evening
For its saucer of milk

Or pausing in the doorway to toss off a smile—
Though nothing can bring her back
He will never leave his house, his city

How can you live here the reporter asks
And the father answers
There is only one way

Bread (*John 6:35*)

Bread breathing through a thousand
small holes—

bread his father baked
mixing yeast, sugar, flour, water
letting the dough rise
punching it down
the sweet moist aroma
filling the apartment

May I have some? the boy asked
and his father slicing
the still-warm loaf
placed a piece in his hands

What was wanted, asked for
What was asked for, given