

Workshop Title: Vocation: Reflections on Leading a Spirit-Filled Life.

Workshop Description: How does one create a life, a vocation, and a spiritual path that weaves the threads of our beliefs, values, dreams, skills, experience and knowledge? How can we grow, develop and evolve into our authentic selves while engaging both in the world and the portals between the worlds? Katrina Messenger will share what she has discovered as the seeds of her sacred vocation, a spiritual journey within a secular life.

My Notes: Culled from previous writings

My Journey:

- Short bio

Why am I a witch? Well that is a long story. It begins with my quasi-Catholic upbringing in southeast DC in an area called Anacostia. I call it quasi mostly because my parents were what I call Archie Bunker Catholics. Instead of being C&E Christians, only attending church on Christmas & Easter, they felt covered as long as someone in the family attended church. And since all six of their children attended Catholic schools at least till the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, my parents only attended church for baptisms and confirmations as well as the occasional funeral – my parents seldom attended weddings. And since I was considered the good kid, i.e. straight A's and not brought home by the police on a regular basis, I was the one to attend church. You see by my parent's logic, one sends the good kid so the family looks better to God. The fact that it never even occurred to them to send the bad kid so he could be saved is indicative of my parents belief system. One could almost call it pagan at some level, offer your best to the gods and hope that they will bless you in return.

What is truly interesting, in a family who descended from field slaves, itinerant farmers and the eastern band of the Cherokee nation, is the sheer amount of folk magic and psychic phenomenon that was present without comment. It was considered normal for members of my family to complete each other's sentences and for our dreams to be prophetic. My Dad routinely dreamt the number, and my grandmother always knew when one of us was ill. We answered phones before they rang, answered unspoken questions and as my father called it we routinely spoke with our eyes. This latter skill my father did not possess, so of course he was the one to name it. One of my favorite stories about my dad was his angry retort to me of "don't look at me with that tone of voice."

Even with all the magic within my childhood, I became after a time a very religious child. I prayed constantly, mostly for finished homework, good grades, a sober father and for my parents to stop fighting. So it was heart wrenching when I discovered the history of American slavery and found that "good" Christians were the source of so much suffering. As a preadolescent I began to question the official line about everything culminating with my renouncing all religion as the opiate of the masses. It was through my years as a street gang member, a black nationalist, a Marxist-Leninist, a union member and later as a feminist that I came to see all religion as basically supporting the white-supremacist, patriarchal, colonial, capitalist system. Baby, bath water . . . all gone!

- 21 years w/o a spiritual life
  - Doing what was expected of me
    - Material success, Promotions, Awards
    - Acclaim, Recognition, Confidence
    - Notoriety – Covers of newspapers, on TV, lots of face and name recognition
    - At Work, Politically, Academically – First, Only, Best, Against all the odds
  - And fighting every step of the way
    - Racism, Sexism, Health issues, Family strife, Burn out, Stormy Relationships, etc
- 18 years to rebuild it
  - One day I woke up tired
    - Heartache, Grief, Exhaustion, Injury, Illness, Betrayal, Abuse, Loss, etc

And so it was with great despair that in 1986, as I found my life crumbling around me, that I discovered the one place capable of restoring me -- the twelve step movement. If you are unfamiliar with this movement, it is so

named from the original twelve steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. I joined the Adult Children of Alcoholics, known as ACOA and began my quest to rebuild my life. And lo and behold my first hurdle was the acceptance of a higher power.

- And I kept searching till I heard my heart's song
  - ACOA, STC, DFC, Reclaiming/Feri, and Reflections

To make a long story short, I created a personal spiritual practice that restored me to sanity and helped me to rebuild not only a higher power, but also helped me to regain a sense of a higher purpose. When I began sharing with others my personal concepts of divinity, evolution and spiritual growth many said my views were not only pagan, but also Wiccan. And I so I began reading about Wiccan spiritual beliefs and traditions; and I came to see myself as a witch. Most folks connect with Wicca the other way around, they discover Wicca and find a home, I on the other hand found a personal spiritual path then discovered its name.

- Now
  - Full time shaman
  - Ordained minister
  - Poet, priestess, warrior and witch,
  - Mother of my own tradition and mystery school
  - Student of divine mystery
  - Dancer at the crossroads

#### Lessons

- Gaping Maw of Need will never be satisfied/ Can not base your life's purpose on this need
- All true spiritual paths begin internally/not a survey of what is popular or even what is "needed"
- If that which you seek . . .
- Your path must be a priority to you, not others; must be respected by you, not others
- Although it is more than reading or taking classes, you must still study
- Consider teachings and networking outside your path or tradition
- Spend time engaging in the activities you enjoyed in your childhood
- Savor the someone in your life who can still see the child in you
- Learn to see the child in yourself
- Each time you are willing to leap into the unknown, the universe opens a door for you to new levels of learning, healing and evolution – leap as often as you hesitate
- Perfection is not the goal, authenticity, the real you is what is required
- It is not how long you can be centered, grounded, compassionate and present, but in how you return to grace
- Never forget that your students are not your peers, it harms them
- Cultivate connections with true peers and elders, remember to look outside your tradition or faith
- Delve, not dabble – spend time, take time to truly integrate new teachings – know, use, master, integrate (wisdom)
- Dream work, meditation, self reflection, physical movement, periods of solitude, physical rest, creative outlets, journaling and a network of support are key to my practice

I see my life as a journey toward self-knowledge and self-completion. At each juncture, at each edge, I have faced an ordeal that challenged me to grow. I choose consciously to expand my knowledge, experience and skills, not simply to collect them like a beanie baby collection, but to integrate them into my ever expanding, ever changing definition of self.

Whatever your faith, religion or belief, your own spiritual path should help you to do the same. Because, in the final analysis, humans are spiritual beings. Everyday we come face to face with the gods and have an opportunity to consciously participate in our own evolution. In other words, we are perpetually heading towards the crossroads. I invite you to join me there. It is a wonderful place, this point where the roads meet. Join me; join us, the entire human family, in the dance of life.