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Excerpts From "Death Journal"

Nancy Olthoff

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Nancy Olthoff / Excerpts from "Death Journal"

Ripples

Death strikes us like a stone hits a pond. The point of entry is definite, but the stone quickly sinks from sight. The ripples keep spreading out further, invading coves of placid water, inundating protrusions, washing over low-lying beaches, changing surfaces forever.

Old Year's Lament

This year is ending—

This pain-filled, love-filled, sad, graced year—

This rollercoaster year—

This diverse locales year: Mexico, North Carolina, South Carolina, Europe—

This friend-filled and friend-left year—

This teary, tired, triumphant for some year—

This disease-ridden, dis-ease contoured, uneasy, careless, ebbing year—

This son-emptied, mother-lessened year—

This daughter stretching, father focused year—

This year of great loss yet carrying on—

A Grief Expressed

I need to do some unpacking from my soul's sorrowful suitcase. All signs of you leave me sobbing: your painting, sculpture, computer bug, dictionary; clothing, room, picture, desk, toilet seat. All that you touched. But I cannot touch you.

I held you as a child and you hugged me as an adult. The promise of who you would become is no longer here. That grieves me to the depth of my being, through all the facets of my life today and forever.

It makes no sense to me, your death. The chaos of this world has impinged on my life as horrible and divisive. It threatens my concepts of self, my direction, my purpose, my relationships with others, and, God knows, my intimacy with God.

Do I deserve this? The ache, the piercing pain, the compression in my chest, the gasps, my groans. Everything in me says I don't think so, but I don't know. With hurt this deep, why would I look ahead or want a future, except for the others I love.

I didn't want him to die, but this man of joy and love and honesty and adventure did. This precious son, who we called Timothy, gift of God, was stolen from us, detached from us, from all he loved. He adjusted nobly. I cry his tears, the ones he felt and didn't shed because he lived fully. I cry because he took care of us during his intense suffering. He could promise that we would be okay.