

**Seeds for Celebration
for the
JUBILEE! Community
Asheville, North Carolina**

**VIA TRANSFORMATIVA
“SAILING”**

...just a dream and wind to carry me ...

Spring, 2008

VIA TRANSFORMATIVA: SAILING **..just a dream and a wind to carry me ...**

When it comes to romance, some things are very clear:

- ☉ Moon glow is better than sunshine
- ☉ Smell of campfire smoke beats smell of disinfectant
- ☉ Cashmere sweaters edge out polyester anything
- ☉ Walking through woods tops walking through Walmart
- ☉ Romantic comedies take documentaries
- ☉ Paris beats Frankfurt
- ☉ San Francisco whoops Des Moines
- ☉ Candlelight trumps incandescent
- ☉ Willy Nelson, yes. John Phillip Sousa, no.
- ☉ And sail boats hammer cruise ships

There's something compelling about the sounds and the absence of sounds when you're sailing: No engine sound. No engine sound at all; only the creak of the boom, the slap of the sail and the call of the gulls. No ear-gouging horns; just the rustle of rigging and stretching of ropes. No clunks with the shifting of gears; simply the swoosh and thwap of the waves, the wind across the bow and the sound of the cooler being opened. Again. And again.

Our species has spent far more time in sailing vessels than in motor craft. Many more hours mending sails than repairing engines. Much more time mounting masts than fueling tanks. The earliest representations of sailing that we know about are on Egyptian pictographs dating from 5500 years ago. But chances are, we biped bozos have been trying on sea legs from the moment we waddled and waded in puddle, pond, river or sea.

When you're sailing, you're riding on the liquid essence of life. Dancing on the surface of the juicy juju from which we all emerged. Skittering across that H₂O – be it stirring or stagnant, salty or sweet, potable or putrid - which makes life possible.

And not only are you scooting across one gift of life, you're being carried forward by the wind – by that which not only wafts your sweet butt from here to there, but graciously offers you your next breath, your next heartbeat, the next moment, another chance.

You can meditate at the Taj Majal, pray at Machu Picchu, roll your rosaries at the Vatican, yabber in your yamulke in Jerusalem, shave your head in Nepal or squeeze a snake in the mountains of North Carolina; but you'll be hard pressed to find a more satisfyingly sacred act than sailing. Hard to connect with anything more holy, life-giving and undeniably indispensable than a time at sea with a sail.

Picture your self as a sailboat: Made to be lifted by the water and carried by the wind. Made to scurry from port to port. Made to ride the waves and bask in the sun. Made for pleasure and purpose and purposeful pleasure.

Picture your self as a sailboat: Not made to be tied up or grounded. Not made to be toted around behind some land yacht. Not made to be sitting in a warehouse or garage waiting until retirement or until you have the time.

Picture your life and the changes you go through as sailing, using the rudder to try and get where you want to be; but knowing you're always and forever at the mercy of the wind and the water.

Fact #1: The universe is in the change and transformation business 24/7.

Fact #2: You can't run away from the universe.

Suggestion: Keep sailing; and chances are that through the storms, the calms, the exultation and the exhaustion, you'll get maybe not where you thought you were going, but where you need to be.

VIA TRANSFORMATIVA: SAILING**March 23, 2008: TO INFINITY AND BEYOND (Easter Sunday)**

Psalm 118: 15-24

This is the gate of the Lord...

Matthew 28: 1-10

They left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy...

Call it perspective. Call it point of view. Call it standpoint, viewpoint, strong point, weak point, melting point, boiling point, freezing point, pencil point, fine point, knife point, or... miss the point. Whatever you call perspective, you gotta admit, it's a moving target.

Puking over the toilet at 2:00 a.m. in mid-stomach flu offers a different perspective than, say, watching a mountain sunrise from a hot air balloon. Waiting to get a doctor's cancer diagnosis presents a whole different perspective from waiting to open a birthday present from a hottie honey. Waking up after a good night's sleep with some fascinating dreams gives a radically different outlook from waking up with a horrific hangover headache and an 8:00 a.m. appointment with the I.R.S.

The truth is, you and I and every stinkin' part of creation are sailing through infinity right now. 67,000 miles per hour, thank you very much! No matter what you're going through in your tick-tock perspective, be it yuk or yum, goofs or glory, the get-down-and-boogie truth is: you're sailing through the stars. Around sun, moon, galaxies, comets, asteroids, black holes and quasars. Whatever they are. You are quite literally traveling through infinity. And your only job is to take care of the ship, keep the cooler stocked and share with your shipmates.

Maybe the whole mind-boggling Easter story is simply there to give us a little perspective: to remind us that we are part of something far greater than mortality. Far more vast than our time-measured trip from cradle to grave. Maybe the stories of Jesus' death and resurrection are there to underscore what he said all along: The kingdom of heaven is right friggin' here.

9:45

11:15

VIA TRANSFORMATIVA: SAILING**March 30, 2008: OPEN TO THE WIND**

Psalm 105: 1-7

Seek God and God's strength; seek God's presence continually.

John 20: 19-29

Receive the Holy Spirit.

If you're going to get anywhere in a sailboat, Sweetcakes, you gotta hoist them sails. A roll of furled sails on a boom ain't gonna do squat to get you where you want to be. You take that halyard and pull 'em up so they can catch the wind.

And what works for sailboats, works for life as well. If you wad yourself up and tie yourself down with ideas, opinions, doctrine, dogma, bias and plain-old mule-headed stubbornness, you can be pretty sure you'll never get out of the harbor. Even education and beliefs can hogtie you. Sometimes, the things we hang on to "for dear life" are the very things that squeeze the dear life out of us and keep us from opening our sails to catch the life-giving wind.

Not to say, of course, that some essential values aren't good to always have up your sleeve. Love, forgiveness, compassion, for example, are certainly good to have along for the ride. As is, a joyously goofy sense of humor.

But, too many times, we get anal about the way we think, the way we act, the way we do things. We clump ourselves into an obsessive/compulsive glob and then wonder why we feel stuck. We close ourselves off from the vital and enervating breezes which never stop blowing around us.

You got a choice: sail or stay tied up at the dock. If sailing's the way you want to go, Matey, you better open dem sails.

9:45

11:15

VIA TRANSFORMATIVA: SAILING

April 6, 2008: ON WATCH

Psalm 16

You show me the path of life.

Luke 24: 13-31

Then their eyes were opened...

Bad things happen. Oh, yes they do. Some very bad things. And when life drops a stinky pile of poop on your plate, you can try to write it off by saying, "There's a reason for everything," or "It's all good," or "There's something I'm supposed to learn from this." And blah, blah, blah. But, finally, you gotta admit: poop stinks.

Bad things happen to sailors, as well. That's why good sailors always keep somebody on watch. 24/7. Unless you're anchored, moored or otherwise tied down, there's gotta be somebody checking the scene. Watching the water. Scoping the clouds and skies. Checking the wind. Even the smell of the wind. Experienced sailors know that without someone on watch, you can get yourself in big ol' pile of watery doo-doo.

Keeping watch doesn't mean that you're expecting the worst. There are all kinds of perks when you're on watch. Sunsets, for example. Or moon glow undulating on the roll and swell of the waters. And there's always the wind, the sounds of the boat, the quiet of the night and the subconscious profound sense that you are close to where you came from... close to your source... riding on the bosom of your mother.

Staying on watch is one way of keeping yourself aware. Aware of what's out there. Aware of where you're headed. Aware of the infinite possibilities inherent in each and every moment.

Some of those possibilities can hurt you. Some can bring you incredible happiness. But the sailor knows it's all part of the journey. All part of what makes it an adventure.

9:45

11:15

VIA TRANSFORMATIVA: SAILING

April 13, 2008: COURAGEOUS TRUST

Psalm 23

You are with me.

John 10: 1-10

I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

Do sailors fear the sea? You betcha. Afraid of the Big Pond? Yep. Any sailor worth her chowder knows that the sea can take you under. Can smash, splinter and sink any vessel. Canoe, catamaran or cruise ship... doesn't matter. Even the unsinkable Titanic bumped the bottom even before her shiny new patina had worn off.

Do sailors love the sea? If they're really a sailor, they do. Love it so much they can't stay away from it. Love it so much, they pour heart, soul, strength and a big chunk of change into crafts that will gliding and slide across its calm, ripples and surges.

Now, the emotions of fear and love don't usually end up on the same platter together. We don't commonly associate fear with love. If anything, we tend to think that fear keeps us from and love and vice-versa.

But, sailors know different. Sailors know that it's the fear factor that kicks in the adventure. That turns on the exhilaration faucet and lets the *joie de vivre* flow. In a crazy kind of way, it is indeed the fear of the sea which turns on the joy juju and causes sailors to love the sea even more.

It's really a faith thing. Not a necessarily religious faith thing (sailors not being known for their piety – how many sainted sailors can you name?); but, it's faith nonetheless, that enables these rum-guzzling, sun-darkened, wind torn, toilet-tonguing goofballs to gladly face the danger and uncertainty, the challenge and the adventure day-after-day-after-day.

Sounds like true love to me.

9:45

11:15

VIA TRANSFORMATIVA: SAILING**April 20, 2008: ADVENTURE**

Psalm 33: 1-11

Sing to God a new song.

John 14: 8-12

The one who believes in me will do the works that I do and greater works...

No one builds statues of critics. No one makes bronze busts of whiners and complainers. No one erects large memorials to mall shoppers, penny pinchers, tooth brushers, recycling sorters, weight losers, movie goers, book readers, nose pickers, butt scratchers or TV watchers (no matter how big the screen). You won't see stone carvings in public squares of people who did nothing more than work, eat, pay the rent, poop and procreate.

We build statues of people who did things differently. We erect monuments to folks who went out on a limb, tried something new, colored outside the lines, sailed around the bend and ended up making some sort of contribution to our species, to the earth or to some segment of Big Mama's inhabitants.

There's something in us that likes adventurers. We like to read about these adventurers, talk about them, fantasize about them, make up stories about them. Whether it's Moses, Muhammed or Ghengis Khan. Be it Joan of Arc, King Arthur or Helen Keller, we all like to be reminded that there are members of our species who are gutsy enough, clever enough, creative enough and maybe even caring and compassionate enough to try something new and possibly make the world a different place.

When you picture yourself as an adventurer, challenges can seem less daunting and more part of the story. Whether you're sailing through a storm – be it on the sea or in your heart and mind - adventurers know that that's what they do. What they're made for. And you never know how your own adventure might just change the world.

9:45

11:15

VIA TRANSFORMATIVA: SAILING**April 27, 2008: DISCOVERY**

Psalm 66: 1-6

Come and see...

John 14: 15-21

The world will no longer see me; but you will see me...

There's something exciting about finding whatever you were looking for. Car keys, eyeglasses or cell phone. A good job, a new friend, a bargain on some new shoes, or a hot date on the weekend... when you get what you went out to get, ya feels good.

But discovering things you never knew existed double-times the heart and jacks up the adrenaline in ways little else could. Except maybe for the hot date. Discovering new things beats the hoot out of finding what you already knew existed. Coming across new discoveries – especially positive new discoveries – can whisk your sweet sassafras into a frothy foam faster than teen-agers can text their friends the location of a big party.

You can discover buried treasure. You can discover sunken ships. You can discover lands, rivers, species, cultures, secret passages, manuscripts, stars, black holes and galaxies. You can discover oil, diamonds, caves, hot springs, waterfalls, mushrooms or gold in them thar hills. But you can also discover new friends, new love, new ideas, new jokes, new songs, new books, new bands, new beer. You can discover new ways of living, new ways of thinking, new ways of communicating, new connections with yourself and the world... connections that you never ever knew existed.

In our not too distant past, many sailors were discoverers, because sailing could get you to places you'd never been before. When you leave the harbor of your home and sail into the day, it couldn't hurt to think of yourself as a discoverer rather than whatever you might call yourself otherwise. In fact, it could make all the difference.

9:45

11:15

VIA TRANSFORMATIVA: SAILING

May 4, 2008: EXULTANCY

Psalm 47: 1-7

Shout to God with loud shouts of joy.

John 17: 1-5

Glorify me in your own presence...

In my dictionary, there are 14 pages of words that begin with "ex." First one is "exacerbate" and the last, "exuviate" (look it up). Both great Scrabble words, by the way.

When you slap an "ex" on the beginning of word, you sometimes intensify the meaning. Exhilarate literally means to make more than hilarious. Exhort means to really, really encourage.

Sometimes, the "ex" means "without." Exosphere is outside the atmosphere. Exit is the act of going out. The "ex" on exult is one of those outies. Exult literally means to leap out of a dance or to leap as part of the dance. If you are going to exult in the Latin sense of the word, you is goin' to hop yo' little hoopy right up off the dance floor. To be exultant is be bounding, bumping and bouncing all over the ballroom.

Which is what your heart often feels like doing, is it not? Say, when the love of your life takes your hand and smooches it all over or the most perfect sunset ever is splendiforing itself right in front of your face. Or when a bird song gets your hoohah hopping to its tuneful twitter. Or when some crazy sensation baptizes you and you come up dripping, spluttering and wondering how the hell you got to be such a lucky goofball.

You don't have to win the lottery to feel exultant. Although it might help. But there are truly exultable moments which pop in on us without the teensiest bit of preparation or warning. Spontaneous sweetness. Serendipitous delight

Tom Robbins says we approach the Divine by enlarging our souls and lighting up our brains. Which is precisely what happens when you get splashed by or even immersed in some exultation juju.

9:45

11:15

VIA TRANSFORMATIVA: SAILING

May 11, 2008: COMPETENCE (Mother's Day & Pentecost)

Exodus 19: 1-9

You shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation.

John 7: 37-39

Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water.

Competence can be learned, inherited or acquired. Competence can come from training, experience, genes, aptitude, talent or dumb luck. You can be a competent plumber or joke teller. CEO or meditator. You can excel as a walker, talker, caulker, stalker, balker, gawker, hawker, blocker, mocker, knocker, rocker, flocker or defrocker. So many ways to be competent; so little time.

Nor is anyone – make that ANY friggin' one– competent in everything. Brain surgeons sometimes can't balance check books and hot jazz musicians inevitably have trouble being in a relationship. Best-selling authors frequently can't carry on a decent conversation and politicians can't give you an honest answer even if you bribe them.

But, sometimes, because we lack competence in one or more areas of life, we assume that we're not good at much of anything. So, we end up willy-nillying our way through our days: making excuses, creeping from job to friend to lover to God to therapist to bottle and sucking up to whatever poobah we assume to be competent.

No guarantees; but chances are, whoever you are, you got a gig in this world. Something you can do (or learn to do) well. Something the world needs to be done. Whether you want to spend your days gigging or groveling, of course, is your business. And right now, Sweetcakes, it's business time.

9:45

11:15

VIA TRANSFORMATIVA: SAILING

May 18, 2008: THE BIG PICTURE

Genesis 1: 1-28a

In the beginning...

Matthew 28: 16-20

I am with you always to the end of the age.

It's easy to forget what business we're in. Easy to get so caught up in the "how to live – how to survive – how to get by" that we blank on the "what's worth living for."

Sometimes, we forget why we're paying the bills and working our butts off so we can pay the bills. We forget why we do the laundry, gas the car, watch TV, go the doctor, wait in traffic, get our hair cut and continue to bumble our way through relationship after relationship.

Good sailors know you gotta do a lot of things to go sailing. You gotta scrape and paint the hull, swab the deck, mend the sails, study the charts, pump the bilge, check the lines, clean the heads, stock the galley and somehow figure how the hell you're gonna pay for this stupid boat.

But good sailors also know why they go through all this grunt-work. They do it, of course, to go sailing. To slip, glide and slide across surge, wave and ripple. To feel your craft and your body slap, rise and dip with the rhythm of the sea. To feel the sun and wind do the tango in your hair and salsa across your face. To look up and see infinity. To look down and see the womb from which we all emerged. To trace a tiny path between heaven and the deep blue sea.

The whole point of sailing, of loving, of belly laughs and gut-wrenching sobs... the whole point of hip-and-heart-stirring music, of art and poetry and whiskey and good friends... the whole point of point of savory food and rich conversation and candles and ritual may well be to remind us of the big picture. Of the business we're really in.

And when we catch even a fleeting glimpse of that picture, the "how to live" part almost always falls into place.

9:45

11:15

VIA TRANSFORMATIVA: SAILING

May 25, 2008: KEEPING THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING

Deuteronomy 11: 18-21, 26-28

Put these words of mine in your heart and soul.

Matthew 7: 21-29

...like a wise person who built a house on a rock...

Moderation has its merits. Some areas of life can use a bit of moderation. Daily hooch or drug consumption, for example. Or automobile speed. Number of sex partners, perhaps. Or how much chocolate cream pie you eat in an hour.

But, when your only mantra is "moderation"... when you measure everything you think, say or do by what is appropriate... when you begin to value reason and restraint more than passion and delight... when your only contribution to the world is a polite sip of judicious behavior... you can be pretty sure that, sooner or later, the Bland Gods will haul your sad and sensible self off to the Land of Vanilla where you'll live on Cream of Wheat and Saltines, watch sitcoms on TV, talk about the weather and listen to Barry Manilow for all eternity.

Moderation can be of use, of course; but it's not the main thing. It can, in fact, even keep us from the main thing. When we're so busy tempering our behavior, our thinking, our beliefs, our way of living... when we spend so much time modifying and mollifying our daily activities and even life goals to try and fit some goody-two-shoes cultural/religious norm... when we confuse what is appropriate with what's worth living for - confuse what makes us look good with what helps us see, it can lose us the ball game.

Heads don't have a clue what the main thing is, of course. But the heart does. And when you catch your heart's wind, Matey, and begin zipping across the waters, chances are that moderation will freak out, grab its carefully packed belongings, hop a lifeboat and head for shore.

9:45

11:15

VIA TRANSFORMATIVA: SAILING**June 1, 2008: JUST A DREAM AND A WIND**

Hosea 6: 1-6

God will come to us like the showers, like the spring rains...

Matthew 9: 9-13

I have come not to call the righteous but sinners.

Big rigs run on diesel; big planes run on jet fuel. Smart cars run on electricity; bullet trains run on magnets and submarines run on batteries. Hondas run on ethanol; Hummers run on arrogance and Harleys run on attitude.

Teens scuttle along on hormones, middle-agers move ahead on weight-loss programs and old folks boogie on Viagra and memories. Teachers need coffee, writers need ideas, musicians need ganja, romantics need tenderness, fashion models need anything without calories and politicians ain't goin' nowhere without a bellyful of B.S.

So many ways to fire our jets; so little time. So many ways to get our sweet butts moving; so much mojo to juice our juju.

So why do we feel stuck so often? Why do our wheels so frequently get mired down and spinning in one muck puddle or another? Jobs, relationships, habits, families, living situations... all provide countless mud holes in which to spin our days away.

Sailors know what carries them forward and what keeps them moving. The wind and water are, for the sailor, what makes movement possible. What makes the entire experience of sailing more than just an idea.

Feng shui are Chinese words for wind and water. When you work on the feng shui of your home, you are working to create a sense of flow. A feeling of movement. If you get your room properly feng shui'ed, you should never feel stuck on stalled there again.

Nothing wrong in scooting a few things around in your life to add a little feng shui. And nothing like dreams and breezes to sail you to where you wanna be.

9:45

11:15

VIA TRANSFORMATIVA: SAILING**June 8, 2008: STORMS**

Psalm 100

Make a joyful noise...

Matthew 9: 35- 10:4

They were harassed and helpless...

It's not as if everything about a sailor's life is rum and romance. Sure, you got your sunsets, your snap of the sails and slap of the water that stirs your stew and spices your chowder. You've got the call of the gulls and splendor of the stars that reminds your soul what the hell you're here for.

But, like any other endeavor, sailing also offers up some challenges that have to be dealt with. Big challenges. Along with the tasty dishes of exhilaration, peace and delight, sailing serves up some potent platters of poop. Dangerous poop.

Sailors know that no vessel is invulnerable. Sailors know that the sea can take you down... has taken far better boats than yours to the bottom. Sailors know that the sea can kill you in ways that are not pretty at all. Sailors, therefore, are always on the lookout for storms.

Some storms you see coming. From off on the horizon, you spot 'em. Sometimes, you can outrun them. Sometimes you can dodge the bullet. But sometimes, they can get you. Storms don't always mean the end. But they can. Many a sailor has ridden out many a storm; but many haven't.

But no sailor worth her berth would ever stop sailing altogether for fear of storms. Sailors know that storms are part of the story; part of what clearly reminds you of joy of sailing.

9:45

11:15

VIA TRANSFORMATIVA: SAILING

June 15, 2008: COMPASSES

Jeremiah 20: 7-13

There is within me something like a burning fire...

Matthew 10: 24-33

What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light.

GPS gizmos are pretty cool in helping you figure out how lost you are in the woods. MapQuest, Yahoo and Google can all get you from point A to point B, except maybe in Madison County.

But not one of these techno-direction-devices is worth a diddle in navigating your own little life's sailing adventure. No GPS - even in the hands of Bill Gates - can help you find your way when you're lost in the deep and scary woods of a relationship. Or lack of a relationship. Mapquest, Yahoo and Google are utterly worthless when it comes to getting you directions from glum to glad. From ennui to energized. From abandoned to adored. Techno-goodies have a lot going for them; but as a guide to plotting a course in the more important parts of your life, forget it.

Not to despair, however. Despite the inadequacy of digital doodahs in sailing your sloop through the waters of life, the earth has provided countless guides and signposts – direction-finders and pilots that might not provide all the answers; but can offer just enough information to get you headed in the right direction.

Stars, for example. Stars can not only help a lost sailor find his way back to port; but help a lost soul find the way back to his heart.

Changing seasons offer clear assurance to anyone seeking a different way of being, that transformation happens. Always happens. Is inevitably part of the process.

Thunder storms, bird song, waterfalls... the smell of wet grass, the taste of blueberries, the passion of a deep kiss... hugs, smiles, shared belly laughs and boohoo's... all gurus of guidance. All clever signposts to help you find your way.

Because we get lost in the woods, we have GPS. Because we're always getting lost in life, we have the woods.

9:45

11:15