

DRAWING NEARER:

Creative Contemplation & Contemplative Creativity



Suzanne Halstead & Wanda Schwandt

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All artwork created by Suzanne Halstead

Front cover image: "Universe-all-love"; Insert image: "Radiance shines through"

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Drawing Nearer is a blending of art and prayer which invites you to deepen your inward journey with God and others. Increase awareness of Spirit's movement in your life using fresh and inspirational prayer practices and creative prompts.

Prepare an area in your home that will provide a distraction-free space. You may want to light a candle as a tangible reminder of God's presence and/or play music that will help you focus. Make it your intention to spend time in this space with God.

Collect basic supplies to have handy in your devotional area: journal, sketch pad, Bible, pencils and erasers, pens, crayons, colored pencils, colored markers, and cray-pas or oil pastels.

Begin with an open mind, a willing heart and hand -- and an adventurous spirit! Let this be a special time apart—a time for detaching from the world's influences and explore praying and creating with a loving God who desires to be with you.

Breathe deeply and slowly, sitting comfortably in a chair or on the floor, hands on your lap. Allow yourself to arrive fully – body, mind and spirit.

Seek God's loving presence as Creator. While using this process, God may place ideas or images in your heart or mind. Go with those urgings! Use this process in ways that best fit your unique person and relationship with the Holy.



This page is an example taken from the complete **Drawing Nearer** book, which leads you on an 8-week journey to Search, Plunge, Walk, Dig, Hold, Mine, Tumble & Shine through daily devotion, prayer practices and creative prompts. The six steps below are the suggested framework for each day's devotional experience:

- Read** the scriptures and reflective writings
- Reflect** on what you have read and the artwork
- Pray** using the prayer practices
- Create** using the prompt and your our reflections
- Witness** what you have created
- Journal** about your time with God; praying and creating

May **Drawing Nearer** be a journey full of blessings!



Mine Wednesday Week 6

They set in [the breastplate] four rows of stones. A row of carnelian, chrysolite, and emerald was the first row; and the second row, a turquoise, a sapphire, and a moonstone; and the third row, a jacinth, an agate, and an amethyst; and the fourth row, a beryl, an onyx, and a jasper; they were enclosed in settings of gold filigree.
Exodus 39:10-13

Children delight in every treasure, dance in discovery, whirl with potential. Your childhood can be a goldmine of self-realization. If your childhood holds difficult memories, be gentle with yourself and skip these questions if you wish.

Dig through some pictures of yourself as a child and teenager and choose the question you would most like to explore. What did you love to do? What gave you the most energy, laughter, and joy? When or with whom were you most at peace, contented, satisfied? Where was your secret hiding place? What was your security blanket?

Prayer practice:

Sit quietly and breathe deeply. Take an imaginative trip through your body. Marvel at the ways you are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Notice places where you carry tension. Scrunch your toes, hold briefly, then release. Begin to travel up your body, squeezing and holding muscle groups, finishing with your facial features.

Rest and offer any resistance to God. Allow a good memory, person, or place to surface. How is God present with you in that memory? Rest with gratitude.

Creative prompt:

Treat yourself to a brand new box of 32 or more crayons or 24 or more oil pastels or color pencils.

Think like a child and remember the desire to ‘try out’ every color! The white page is open and ready. Use each color you have (new or not) and cover *every inch* of the paper.

Be completely open to whatever designs, shapes, or images that result from your play with the colors and the page.

Journal about your experience.





Suzanne Halstead

Suzanne Halstead, a person of faith brought up in the Reformed Church of America, is now a member of the United Church of Christ. Singing, drawing, dancing and playing out in nature either in the woods up a tree or at the shore in the sand and surf were, and are, her favorite pastimes. Her interest and training in art began at an early age. She grew up holding crayons and colored pencils more than dolls.

Suzanne received her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Studio Arts and Art Education from Syracuse University, New York. She met her husband in the chapel choir on campus. They have a daughter and son who are also very creative.

Suzanne has taught art in schools, camps, studios, galleries and museums for more than 35 years. Her classes, lectures, and workshops focus on the arts, creativity, play and spirituality for children, youth and adults. Leading and participating in retreats and workshops on these topics while communing with God, others and nature are her inspiration.

Having earned a Master of Arts degree in Education from Concordia University, Illinois, with special emphasis on the development of creativity, play, and informal learning environments, Suzanne has worked extensively in many cultural, academic and religious institutions as an educator, arts director, and program and exhibit developer.

Suzanne contributes to the New Earth, an ecumenical publication, as a curriculum writer in the 2005, 2007 and 2011 Camp Resource manuals. She has been a keynote speaker and workshop presenter on the theme of spirituality and the arts at churches, camps and conference centers across the country.

In her home studio, Suzanne creates her artwork for her own enjoyment as a response to her Loving Creator. Many of her pieces are in the private collections of family, friends and people of faith.



Wanda Schwandt

From her earliest memories, the Reverend Wanda Schwandt has always sensed the companionship of a Loving God traveling with her. She was blessed to be born into a family who loved and worshiped God and made God a part of every family celebration. She grew up with the members of Trinity United Church of Christ, Telford, PA as her extended family. When Wanda felt led to create Lenten Quiet Prayer booklets, the members of Trinity encouraged and supported her efforts.

Wanda earned a Bachelor of Science in Home Economics: Clothing Design and Textile Science. She then married her high school sweetheart, and together they parent a son and daughter. All four enjoy creative endeavors.

From an early age, Wanda has enjoyed writing. She started journaling in second grade and still has every one. In elementary school, she experimented with writing plays, poems and mystery stories for her friends. When her children were young, she wrote small freelance articles and devotions published in The Secret Place, Pray!, Today's Christian Woman, DevoZine, RevWriter, and several online publications. While freelancing,

A graduate of Lancaster Theological Seminary and Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, Wanda is a trained Spiritual Companion (Director). She was ordained by the United Church of Christ, and is currently Stated Supply Pastor of Zion's Red Church (UCC/ELCA), Orwigsburg, PA. She is a member of Spiritual Directors International and the Spiritual Life Mission Team of the PA Southeast Conference, UCC.

Wanda has been a teacher and leader for more than 30 years. By leading contemplative prayer groups and retreats, Wanda invites participants into quiet practices, sacred surprises and meaningful worship that encourage intimacy with the Lover of our souls. In ministry, she loves to find creative ways to engage worshipers within liturgical tradition.

