



**Between Trauma and Redemption  
Then Redemption Peeked Out...  
Dr. Jennifer Elam**



## **2020-21: The Year When Even the Stones Lit up with Possibilities**

### **Dedication**

**(warning: this work is not about comfort)**

**This is dedicated to my parents; I was very close with them my whole life. In 2012, I heard a calling to care for my parents and was so very blessed that I could answer that calling with a “YES.” My purpose in this book is to put words/voice and color to my stories of survival of traumatic events during their care. I was born in KY. Many times in my life, I moved away and came back; so spending time in KY doing parent care came naturally. Things had changed. I encountered the family I had loved as much as life itself, CHANGED. I walked into a culture war that I had no clue about, then endured trauma related to family polarization – targeted as evil by right wing political rhetoric.**

**In 2020, I was in Ky working on estates settlements. I could no longer live my double life I had always lived. At age 12, my family followed the “hillbilly highway” as it was called then to pursue economic survival. We survived. In 2020, I was in Ky working on estates settlement and stayed in Ky. When an apartment came for rent in my beloved faith community, I thought it a perfect place for me to grow older. Not knowing, my faith community had changed so drastically, I moved in. Then, I again became the target of escalated threats; targeted with polarization and traumatizing events. This time I encountered the most severe discrimination I had ever personally experienced or seen in the name of anti-racism. I recognized the energy as the same as the Right Wing attack. Distortions again...justifying harming, even planting the seeds of war and killing in the name of distortions when people know they are right/correct...becoming so right as to be wrong. Friends, do**

**we not recognize these seeds of war, even when more subtle and dangerous than right wing dogma?  
Right becomes left and left becomes right.**

**My faith has saved me so far. I stand with my feet on the river rocks in the flow of the Holy Spirit.  
One core of my faith is that I can look back on my life and see many major traumas. In every case,  
I have gone through the trauma, not sure I would survive it. Then, as I do the work to survive and  
learn, something amazing happens that could not have happened if the traumatic event had not  
happened. Wisdom appears and the braver angel in me can again function to move on in more of  
this amazing life I lead...Redemption.**

**I know there may be others out there experiencing this kind of Trauma. I want you to know you are  
not alone in this. We can accompany each other.**

**What does LOVE require when holding cultures at war inside oneself?**

**I am healing. I am listening. I am breathing.  
Thank you for sharing my prayers of lamentation, gratitude, courage/nerve, hope and  
New Life Possibilities!**

**Note: Between Trauma and Redemption came from an art show that hung at Pendle Hill, a Quaker Study Center in  
Wallingford, PA from September of 2018 until February of 2019**



**Trauma  
The Personal Becomes the Universal,  
The Universal Becomes the Personal:**

## Microcosm of the Macrocosm

### **HATE: Betrayal of them and me**

I never felt hated, until now.

At my daddy's memorial, his granddaughter quoted him as saying,  
"I never understood hate."

Now it is the norm across my country.

Now it is norm in my family, as microcosm.

They hate me because I am different.

They hate me because I left. Coming back doesn't count anymore.

They hate me for my religion. Quakerism is just a mysterious evil.

They hate me for my politics. Snowflake liberal.

Supporting choice and gay rights brought the "wrath of God on our country."

They hate me for getting educated. There's never been a Ph.D. in THIS family.

They hate me for betraying them; "Throw those books in the river", she said.

When I was following my callings.

God, I listened as best as I knew how.

Now I realize that I listened well and I did betray them.

I did betray myself too.

I changed to "get along" in a world that does not accept Appalachian people.

As the good professor said, "Now you get it from both sides."

And that is how it is NOW, in my new family,

And that is how it is NOW, in my new America.

And that is how it is NOW, in my new world.

How might it be different?



**Overwhelmed and Alone  
Full Heart, Broken Heart; Heart Broken Open**

**Out There-ness**

I was targeted by HATE...HATE CRIME...TERRORISTIC THREAT...how can that be? I never hated anyone. I am traumatized.

I try to tell others...I repeat myself over and over...trauma does that.

Faces

Look back at me blankly;

Faces

Say, "But, you are not Muslim, Black, Latino, LGBT..."

Faces

Say, "But, you are privileged..."

Faces

Look back at me blankly;

Faces

Say, "I am here to help others – you are too much like me."

Faces

Say, "You are telling me that it could be me."

Faces

Say, "I have not faced that possibility."

Voices

Change the subject, and move on with the REAL agenda.

Out there-ness...denial...win again. They CAN'T be with me. Now, I am too scary,



### **So, What's Real Here?**

#### **Respect Me Instead**

When you call the police and lie so they will charge me with a felony, I am shocked; that is cruelty; you are better than that!

When you lie and tell my dad that I am swindling his money, I feel very sad that you are paranoid; that is cruelty; you are better than that!

When you lie and say I am evil and am aggressive toward me, I feel abused; that is cruelty; you are better than that!

When I watch a cancer on my mother's beautiful face go untreated, I can't bear it; a person is more than a diagnosis; that is cruelty; you are better than that!

When you obstruct the work I do, I feel frustrated; that is cruelty; you are better than that!

When you tell me I must leave and never come back and that you will abuse me until I do; I feel helpless; that is cruelty; you are better than that.

You make sure the house is so clean so that no one suspects the psychological cruelty that goes on; you do so many things well, you are better than that!

They lied to you when they told you that HATE represents strength and power, Jesus; it does not; HATE engenders cruelty; you are better than that!

I wonder: What does LOVE look like in the face of this HATE?

The things that happen to me always happen to prepare me for service to God. I have wondered how being hated could serve. Then I realized how privileged a life I have led to be 62-years-old before I experienced unbridled HATE. There are so many others that experience this kind of HATE not for anything they have done but for who they are. I will follow the calling to serve.

You must really love me to hate me this much.

I think you hate me because I left. You are afraid I will leave again. Abuse binds me to you forever, so even though my body may leave, you make sure my spirit is with you always. This is cruelty; you are better than that!

Really, all you have to do is respect me instead.

**Feelings and Thoughts in  
Between Trauma and Redemption**

The ground I walked on shakes,  
Where can I find firm ground again?

God seems to have gone on vacation,  
God, where are you in this dark night?

I can't tell if I am hot or cold,  
Why is my body trembling when it is not cold?

Way more questions come than answers,  
Where do I find the answers now?

I hardly know my own body,  
Why is it so hard to breathe?

I face dysfunctional medical system protocols over and over,  
Why, over and over are their protocols followed over meeting our needs?

How can they not respect one's wishes about their own death?  
How do I deal with those powerful disrespectful protocols?  
It is so hard to breathe...

Healing from Trauma requires that I breathe...  
Thank you, my Breath, for coming once again.



**More Questions Than Answers**

## **Lies and Lye**

Between Trauma and Redemption

Lie hospitals, home health, and hospice

Lie funerals, families, friends and feelings with layers of unbearable disbelief and grief

Lie estate settlements and inheriting legacies well-lived

Lie the sins of the generations, falling on me like the home of culture caving in

– and I can't run from it anymore

Lie lies along with the sugar of niceness, the sugar-coated denial becoming toxic to  
a body so sensitive

How can the sins of the generations contain this much lie?

Lye is for soap-making, lye is for cleansing

Lye is the alkaline that neutralizes the acid

Lye is the base.

Where does my lye lie?

The lye of Spirit holding me when people can't, and saying thank you,

The lye of knowing my own heart when others doubt it, and saying thank you,

The lye of living so I can look in the mirror and like that person I see, and saying thank you,

The lye of standing on the ground that I know is ground, even when it shakes,  
and saying thank you

The lye of opening my heart wide, even when it hurts this much, and saying thank you

The lye of seeing the blue sky and hearing the birds and crickets sing, and saying thank you

The lye of gratitude for Spirit holding me when people can't, and gratitude for all of it.



**Healing Requires Air...Breathe**





### **Face to Face with the Black Hole**

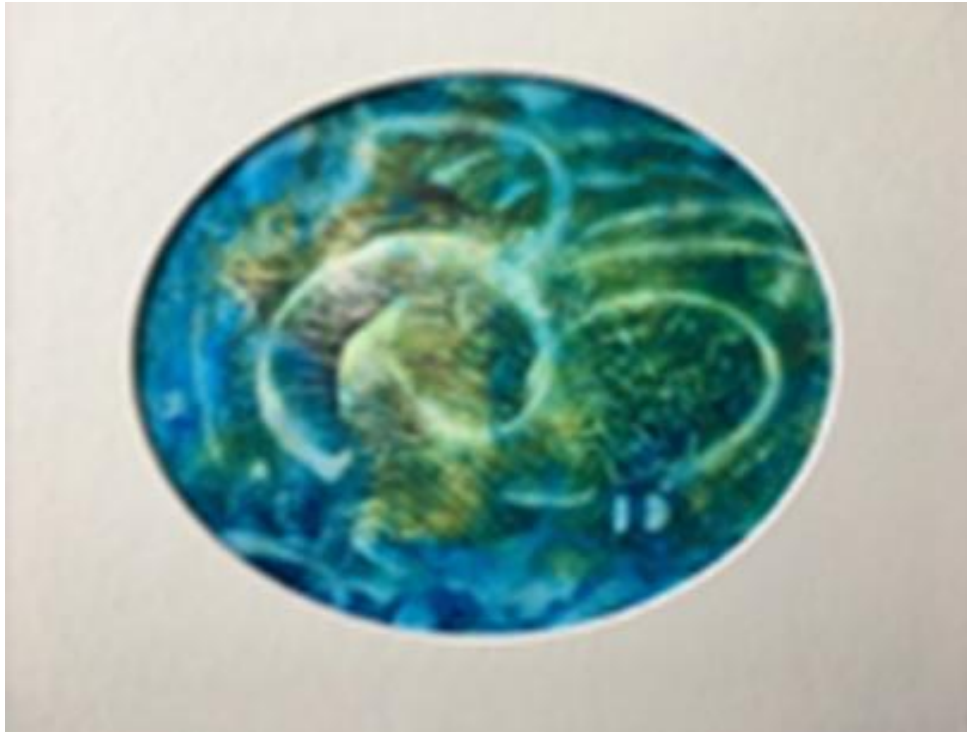
Life comes  
Too much  
I am overwhelmed.  
And for a moment, fear takes over.

The Black Hole is there,  
Here, in front of me.  
The sweat pours off my brow,  
More sweat;  
The fear takes over, for a moment.

I scream  
I grip the handle bars  
And hold on.

I look into the Black Hole  
Not knowing what I'd see  
But knowing I have to look.

I finally see what is there.  
It is ME. And I am OK.  
That moment is over, and fear did not take over- today.



### **Connecting and Re-Connecting**

#### **Love and Kindness**

I can barely tolerate listening to you  
Talk about love and kindness in your clichés.  
You talk about love and kindness  
But barely tolerate others when love and kindness means more than polite acquiescence.  
You talk so boldly about love and kindness  
But when I am an angry woman, you treat me with disrespect.

Do not talk to me of love and kindness. Show me.  
And show me your love and kindness are there, when life is not so nice,  
And when love and kindness mean going deeper,  
And love and kindness are there, even when my back is turned.

Love and kindness mean something new now.  
Life Lessons beyond the clichés.

### **Hillbilly Alone with God**

I loved my Mama's mama and spent lots of time at her house when I was young.  
She rented upstairs rooms to "the boys."  
My favorite was Bill. Bill had no family.  
Often, I went to the bus to meet him when he came home from work.  
We were so glad to see each other.  
Bill had no family. Maybe I was a little bit of family for him.

Bill had no family. I could not fathom.  
I had so much family we had to celebrate Christmas for four days.  
My daddy had 48 first cousins on his father's side. But then I found out there were a few more.  
And they had kids. And they had kids. And they had kids.  
And family was close. And family was all.

The grandparents of those 48 plus cousins lived in the mountains of KY, Morgan County.  
And they had nine kids, one was McKinley, my grandfather.  
And my grandfather brought a lot of those mountains with him to the Bluegrass,  
The good, the bad and the ugly. Proud people.  
I really hated the violence. I hated the mean jokes. I hated the tobacco fields. I hated the poverty.  
"Just too sensitive," I heard.  
Actually, I never felt it as hate; I just could not breathe, literally or otherwise.

My daddy told the story, so many times,  
At age 8, how I stood in the tobacco fields, raised my arms to the Heavens,  
"God, I don't know what it is but I want to go to college. I can't breathe."  
My prayers were answered.

And then I left, and came back, and left, and came back, soooo many times.  
Now, I have been rejected by my family, family is all to hillbillies.  
I think about Bill. Bill had no family.  
I still cannot fathom no family. And here I am, hillbilly alone with God,  
Between two worlds.

### **Invisible Hillbilliness**

I come from a different culture from you.  
My skin is not purple as sometimes I wish it was.  
The difference in our bones and DNA is invisible. But always there. Invisible, different.  
I use words differently from you and neither of us know it until there is  
conflict for a reason, invisible.  
Then you project onto me motivations different from my own;  
You don't even know you are projecting;  
I don't even know why you are thinking what you are thinking;  
And since our words don't mean the same things, there seems no way out.  
I guess we just have to go through.

I am willing but since you don't know what the problem is,  
And you think you know, there seems no way through.  
There is just the projection and the pain it causes.  
There is your KNOWING, your seeing so clearly, so inaccurately,  
I cringe, once again being expected to retreat into my learned social skills,  
Skills learned to "get along" in a world not my own.

Learning to "get along" has been life-long learning,  
"Getting along" has always meant learning YOUR way and adapting,  
Assimilating, betraying my own bones and DNA, seen as inferior by you.  
All of this invisible, the unacknowledged, the unacknowledgable; INVISIBLE.



**Dance It All Wildly**



## Assimilation

### Assimilation I

Not a hillbilly til you move north. At 11, we did that; moved to Illinois.

Papa said, “be proud of being a hillbilly, then they don’t have anything on ya’!  
I wasn’t proud of bein’ a hillbilly. I tried to be like them. I watched life a lot.  
Always a little different.

At 43, I moved to PA. I tried to be like them, wasn’t even conscious.

I never was like them. Always a little different.

Maybe a word, I used “wrong.” Maybe a phrase, I used “wrong.”

Always wondering why I wasn’t quite accepted, though I tried so hard.

Always a little different. I lived life a lot, on the outside looking in.

Then there are those who claim to love “diversity.” Well, not THAT kind of “diversity.”

Political correctness does not apply to hillbillies or fat people.

Hard to imagine that in the in crowds, there are even ins for political correctness.

Always a little different. I lived a full life, even tho not fully accepted as equal.

Mostly, I have ignored those who would see me as less than I am; THEIR problem.

Was it good to ignore bias? I don’t know.

Maybe if I had practiced standing up to it when I was younger,

I would be better at it when I am older, better at being always a little different.

## **Assimilation II**

Wikipedia says: Cultural assimilation is the process in which a minority group or culture comes to resemble those of a dominant group, ethnic minorities, immigrants, indigenous peoples, and other marginalized groups who adapt to being culturally dominated.

I don't wanna be culturally dominated anymore.

I wanna be able to be all of me and accepted for who I am.

More than one culture, more than one world.

Cultural assimilation may involve either a quick or a gradual change.

I changed quickly. and gradually, whatever it took to get by.

Full assimilation occurs when members of a society

Become indistinguishable from those of the dominant group.

I guess I never fully assimilated, even when I wanted to.

Now I don't even want to. Boy, am I in trouble!!

Why do some people want to dominate other people anyways?

Why do some people pretend to accept those who are different then reject them for the most minor differences?

Is this need to dominate a genetic inheritance that some have?

Listen to Bernie Madoff; he does not even know why he ripped people off for \$60b.

Not even conscious. Programmed.

Assimilation: assimilate or die, that is history's demand on many.

Is that the demand now on me?

To pretend assimilation in either culture is not even possible for me anymore.

Being in the culture wars and wanting it different.



**Tsunamis of Feeling Being Transformed**



## **The Inheritance Is More Than a Deed**

We just inherited some land, we passed it on.

But what came with that land?

An awareness of the Appalachian culture in my bones, in my DNA

That I cannot hide from anymore.

The culture in my bones is hated and not understood by the other one

Not understood means distrusted and even hated

How can I hold two cultures that hate each other?

How can I hold a culture that leaves me standing in a place

Where my words are not understood, my actions suspect even when innocent, but different?

How can I hold a culture that leaves me on ground that is shaking and threatening my very being

How can I hold cultures in the middle of a war of the worlds;

By the way, which culture am I holding – today?

How can I hold me in the midst of this swirling change going through my body?

How can I hold on, Spirit hold me amidst this massive swirling of cultural warfare.

Chaos that feels so deeply purposeful, if I can just but hold it,

Depending on nothing I have known.

What is the calling?

The calling to know the depth of the divisiveness of my family, my country, my world

To hold the Hell of that dividedness in me and help transform it.

Where is the creativity here? Where is the Creator here?

Far beyond what I have known. I must move into the new knowing.

God, why such a big leap; couldn't you have provided me smaller steps?

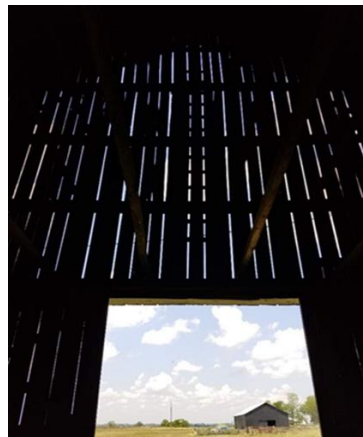
God replies.

No, there is urgency for faithfulness and faithful you are. I am there with you,

Chuckle, AND DON'T YOU FORGET.

Cultures hating each other. Healing is needed. You know them intimately.

They are inside you, needing healing.



**Looking through the Barn Door**

## Humor Starts to Return, OOPS, Not There Yet, No One Laughed

(Imitating Tom Papa  
Have you ever \_\_\_\_\_? Pause. I have.)

Heartbeat of God

Have you ever heard God call you to something and say, “this is your calling AND you may not live through it”? and you said YES? I have.

Have you ever taken your mama to the hospital to visit your papa and come home to find the police wanting to arrest you for kidnapping your mother? I have.

Have you ever gone up to the farm to talk to your Papa’s helper about what is needed to fix the boards on the barn and come back to find the police wanting to arrest you for trespassing and burglarizing, on your own farm? I have.

Have you ever devoted 16,000+ hours to caring for your parents and doing your damndest to do your best, to have social services called on you? I have. (by the way, she became one of my greatest fans and supporters)

Have you ever had to watch as your parents’ household is taken over by people who hate in the name of Jesus – making your parents’ household a microcosm of the hate and division that is happening in the country – (and target you as the infidel)? I have.

Have you ever had cousins come into your space and betray your father with niceness and “good intentions”, on his deathbed? I have.

Have you ever had your father in Hospice – he lucid and able to make decisions (even passed the Hospice mental status exam – never mind the mystery of why they put him thru that Hell) – Hospice pressuring you to let them give him scheduled drugs so that he would not wake up again – and him saying NO? I have.

Heartbeat of God loves the traumatized Hillbilly Snowflake

Hillbilly Snowflakes:

Those of us who advocate for non-violence and for

Kindness are called Snowflakes these days.

Snowflakes are weak; they do not fight, not even to fight back when attacked.

They learned along the way that cooperation was the way, not fighting and competition.

I have lived in the company of educated snowflakes for so long,

I think I am one. But, my DNA says differently.

But, how do I hold two cultures at war?

I smile.

I got it.

Hillbilly Snowflake, I am. (But, you can’t call me that!)

Where is my community of Hillbilly Snowflakes?

Oh, I love snow. I will make a community of Snow Angels.

Imperfect creativity, humor and faith get me through another day.





### **Chrysalis: Trauma Moves toward Redemption**

They declared me evil –  
Traumatizing my heart and soul;  
They hated me for my politics,  
Said my religion is from the devil,  
They have no place for PhDs,  
And once you leave, you're gone;  
THEN, any aggression toward me, they justify.  
They declared me evil.  
What does love mean then?

They declared me evil --  
Traumatizing my heart and soul;  
When love meant acknowledging that my foundation had been shaken,  
When love meant accepting my core was off balance – temporarily, I hope,  
When love meant empathizing when my up seemed down and my down seemed up,  
When love meant knowing me when I couldn't find myself,  
They declared me evil.  
What does love mean then?

They declared me evil --  
Traumatized my heart and soul;  
Then love means holding me.  
Then love means letting me put my head in your lap.  
Then love means meaning what you say.  
Then love means more than thoughts and prayers.  
They declared me evil.  
What does love mean then?

They declared me evil --  
Traumatized my heart and soul;  
Then love means letting me be me.  
Then love means standing in integrity.  
Then love means knowing when I have to scream:  
It is not about you -- at least not you personally --  
They declared me evil.  
What does love mean then?

They declared me evil --  
Traumatized my heart and soul;  
Then love means painting and singing.  
Then love means dancing my soul.  
Then love means writing the story.  
Then love means drama and theater.  
They declared me evil.  
What does love mean then?

They declared me evil --  
Traumatized my heart and soul;  
Then love means letting go of privilege.  
Then love means taking risks with me.  
Then love means comfort isn't just a protocol.  
Then love means it might hurt.  
They declared me evil.  
What does love mean now?

They declared me evil --  
Traumatized my heart and soul;  
Now love means together with God.  
Now love means together with each other.  
Now love means knowing I am lonely  
-- so don't leave me alone.  
Now love means together finding the new way.  
They declared me evil.  
What does love mean now?

They declared me evil --  
Traumatized my heart and soul;  
Now love means knowing I may act different.  
Now love means knowing I may not be as nice.  
Now love means knowing I am hurting.

Now love means knowing I still care.  
They declared me evil.  
What does love mean now?

They declared me evil --  
Traumatized my heart and soul;  
Now love means knowing my vulnerability.  
Now love means knowing vulnerability need not be shunned.  
Now love means knowing vulnerability can be strength.  
Now love means please take that chance.  
They declared me evil.  
What does love mean now?

They declared me evil --  
Traumatized my heart and soul;  
Now love means heads in the sand betray me,  
Now love means heads in the sand won't do,  
Now love means heads in the sand? No.  
Now love knows heads in the sand are not about love.  
They declared my evil.  
What does love mean now?

They declared me evil --  
Transformed my heart and soul;  
Now, love means knowing I'll be back to serve,  
Now, love means knowing love will overcome,  
Now, love means knowing love is the medicine,  
    that will get me back to Love.  
They declared me evil.  
What might love mean next?

They declared me evil --  
Transformed my heart and soul;  
Next, Love becomes knowing I know things I never knew.  
Next, Love becomes knowing I can now go deeper.  
Next, Love becomes knowing I can love even more.  
Next, Love becomes knowing God loves me even more;  
And my Faith grows Deeper and more Meaningful.



## **People Before Protocols: Strengths and Needs Above Labels**

### **Hospice for Help? Please, Embrace People Before Protocols**

No rest for weeks, and then again, ignored, don't fit the script;  
Hospice says, "We can help, give you respite."  
Little did I know.....

My dad, a strong farmer,  
lived with discomfort all his life.  
Farmers do that!

At the end, he wanted LIFE til no more possible moments.  
Hospice wanted "comfort," their way.  
Hospice had protocols to promote their comfort.  
In the conflict, who do we listen to? I chose my dad.

They pressured me to give him scheduled meds, Dilaudid  
so he would not wake up. Make him "comfortable" (dead).  
He said no. So, I said no. They asked if he trusted me.  
He said, "I trust her completely."

After six days, he screamed, "Get me outta here." I did.  
We went home. He died within a couple of weeks, ON HIS TERMS.

I was Traumatized. Pressured to put him down,  
As one might an injured animal...

Please God help us. Please bureaucrats all around me,  
Never use that word "comfort" with me and  
Please, PEOPLE BEFORE PROTOCOLS.

Those who KNOW and are CERTAIN of the rightness of their protocols,  
Can be the most dangerous people in the world.

**New Life Returning: Taking Lessons from the Oyster in the Sand  
Life in a deep faith place where new life is conceived and born**



**Going Deeper When Life's Waves Get Rougher**

I am called to that place -  
Most humans will avoid at all costs.  
That place of the Deeps, I call it.  
The Deeps is the place of creation.

I have asked God what is needed in this world  
What is needed beyond the phone banks, rallies and door knocking?  
What is needed is known in the deeps  
I must go there; one has to go there alone.  
The place is well documented by the artists, the writers, the poets;  
It is the place of the wisdom of the ages,  
The wisdom that brings us through.

It is the place of the mystics of the ages  
It is the place where the All hangs out, the One  
Some know this place, some more intimately than others

That place, that sacred place where trauma meets redemption,  
Where illness meets the mystic, that sacred place where chaos meets the Creative,  
That place of peace beyond comfort, where the universe makes love and creates new life,  
That place where Eve, the Tree, and the snake hang out, where the personal meets the universal,  
Where I meet the One-ness, the call to the deeps AGAIN.

Meet me there, God, I need some company.

### **Seeds Break Open and Bring New Life**

NPR to the young Chickadee farmer – what does it take to be a farmer?

A farmer creates new life and pays the price.

She says comfort becomes not primary. Life moves beyond comfort.

The young farmer grows crops, feeds chickens and cows;

Whether it is raining, snowing, hot or cold.

Comfort is not God, when we create with God.

The farmers feed our world the food they need,

Those who create, feed our world the Spirit they need.

Will I answer the calling to Create with the Creator?

“YES!” I say, knowing that is the way forward.



**God's Love Bolts Through the Mountains...  
Transforming Hate to Hope**



**Hope Emerges  
Life Cycles Circles Round**



### **Life Cycles AGAIN**

Creativity, Humor and Faith have held me.  
Embrace Life out of the Bubble...

Embrace the dualities as they become ONE;  
Light becomes dark; dark becomes Light;  
Imperfection becomes perfect; perfection becomes imperfection;  
Rough becomes smooth; smooth becomes rough;  
Pain becomes healing. Healing embraces pain.  
Grief becomes joy in their embrace.

Embrace the child-like openness  
Embrace the child-like unknowing  
Embrace the child-like uncertainty  
Embrace the child-like imperfection  
Embrace the child-like, then we can grow.

Embrace the Gifts of Trauma.

Then the elements of the universe can make love  
...and new life is conceived  
...then born  
...into the earth.

I am invited to participate. You are invited to participate.  
WE are invited to participate. Full Circle. Dancing with God, wildly.

## Part II. And Then Redemption Came Again...



### Redemption Peeking Out?

Thanksgiving, 2020: Thank you, God for a lifetime of major challenges that prepared me.

I had challenges and CHANGE; somehow I was prepared...

On 1/6/21, as a nation, we saw the energies attacking our capitol, the same energies that came at me, the energies of hate, of accusations...lacking Love or Compassion or even Common Humanity...but it was finally visible to some who could see...and for that I felt relief.

Redemption may be peeking out, pondering the possibility of showing its' beautiful face, from behind the dark shadows where it has been hiding.

Redemption requires much of me: my faith must deepen to survive.

My family's faith must deepen to survive,

My country's faith must deepen to survive.

Are we up for doing our part? Are we up to saying YES,

knowing none of us are going to survive

until each does our part? Hiding is not an option, for the survival of US!

And, may we move from Identity Politics to Building Coalitions beyond the choir!

Please warm our backs and shoulders to carry such a heavy load.

Redemption occurs when I can say Thank YOU God,

for the Trauma, for the Betrayals, for the Losses,

And now for the NEW LIFE emerging, clear vision beyond the blurry vision of 2020;

and what that might bring.....even when it is death of the Loved.



Life and death, death and Life become One. And fear is overcome.

Pretty and Nice are Not My Realities. Gorgeous and Real ARE My Realities!  
Between Trauma and Redemption is an unfinished story;  
beyond the broken souls, the souls of stone, there lies Light. This is a story of faith.  
Now we consider joining the elements of the universe in making Love and creating New Life.  
Pause. And take it in!

### **And Then Trauma Came Again...the cycle repeats**

Just as I was recovering from being targeted as evil by my beloved family, I was targeted with falsehoods and escalating threats by my beloved faith community of 30 years, that led to harm and my life again going into free fall. As I tried to save the pieces of my life that had been totally disrupted by the fire and brimstone of hell yet again entering my life, I remembered...I remembered that even though this one seemed bigger than the rest, every time, redemption had occurred. That became the core of my survival. I hope my survival story will be helpful to you in yours. I must travel in the depths to survive these traumas, I find poetry, art and movement to be the deep and messy language I use most.

### **Redemption Serves My Faith**

When asked to sell my soul  
in exchange for belonging and comfort,  
I had to say, "No, Thank You."

And then the scapegoating began.

The fire and brimstones have not ended  
but deep inside I KNOW the hell is bringing wisdom  
that will have a place to serve me.

2020 was my best year yet.  
The traumas prepared me.  
This one will too. Usually,  
I have to wait until it is over  
to see clearly in hindsight.

But for this one, I know hard times are coming  
To our country; worse than we have seen before.  
And I know I may die, but even for that,  
I am better prepared for having done the work  
Required to collect the Wisdom of the Traumas.



Circles of Life in the Red and Blue; the Black and White; Light and Dark;  
Destruction and Creation; Life and Death...  
the Paradoxes Seeking a Third Way with All Voices Part of the Wholeness, Seeking Unity

## **Circle of Life**

In the Circle of Life, opposites meet and mean the same...  
in that place where opposites meet, tension is,  
tension brings Destruction, Creation or both,  
destructing old places and in the Light or Darkness bringing the new.

As Opposites meet, Light flows, Spirit comes  
which Spirit do we embrace here?

the Far Left meets the Far Right...  
Black meets White...  
Red meets Blue...  
too Good meets Evil;  
too Correct meets Wrong.

And us hillbillies meet the rest of the world...

In knowing theirs is the ONLY Correct way,  
the story forgets how to dance;  
Souls shatter, Countries destruct or become new.

How does the story get unstuck?  
How does the story remember how to dance,  
Destruction or Creation to go forward?

Destruction calls for Only Correctness  
to meet the "Othered" Only Correctness and both are harmed,  
Players selling their souls.

Creation calls for core values of each side to Meet and Dance,  
Meet and Dance in Love, knowing both are Correct,  
both have a place in God's Choir.

As Opposites dance, Light, Sweat, Messy  
and Spirit may enter and the colors change.  
They see each other more clearly,  
changing the Invisibility of each, to Transparency,  
seeing the Soul, as God intended each soul to be seen,  
appreciated and valued in the Wholeness,  
that includes a place for Left and Right, Black and White, Red and Blue...

Wholeness plus Love moves to Harmony and Harmony can bring true Unity.

All God's Children, Chillun, Brats, and Critters Got a Place in the Choir.



**Bio:** Dr. Jennifer Elam studied, researched, taught, and practiced psychology from 1969 until 2014; her last 13 years with preschools. She came to Pendle Hill in 1995 and served in many capacities including: Staff, Resident Student, Cadbury Scholar, Social Witness Scholar, Teacher, Pamphlets Committee, and more. Following retirement, she followed a deep calling to care for her parents who both died in January, 2018, six days apart. Now she is settling estates, dancing, writing, and pursuing health. Jennifer recently moved back to KY; when Covid hit, it became clear she could no longer lead her double life of going back and forth from elsewhere to KY. She continues her passionate writing and created three art shows in 2020 related to covid. She continues her work in creative expression and doing her own healing work related to trauma. Accompanying you and being accompanied in that work is her calling now.

**Jennifer is now available for teaching a class called “Mediating Trauma Through Creative Expression” in which the Wisdom of our Traumas are sought. Trauma is a story that has forgotten how to dance. Using creative movement, art, and writing, we invite the story to move with us and share its’ wisdom.**

**Artist Statement:** In August, 2018, Pendle Hill published my pamphlet, titled “Art as Soul’s Sanctuary.” This chapbook will show how writing with art has served as sanctuary for my soul.

Following retirement from working as a psychologist for over 30 years, I heard a deep calling to care for my aging parents. I also heard that it would be a very difficult calling and heard the still small voice ask if I was still willing. I said, “YES,” having no idea what was waiting. I was quite close to my parents and interacted with them almost daily for my whole life. So, when I heard this call, it felt right. I ended up traumatized by the violence of being targeted for my politics and religion. My parents died in January, 2018, six days apart, three months before their 70th anniversary. I now spend my time settling two complicated estates, writing, and dancing. In the chapbook, I write about how creativity and faith helped me survive when human support got thin. In a recent meditative dance, I saw the trauma lifting. I have written extensively on the topic of “Between Trauma and Redemption”.. This is a time that is raw, extremely challenging, and a time when relating in the old ways becomes impossible. The rawness is not comfortable. Gratitude for it comes slowly, but has to come. Redemption is a word I did not like when I was young but now find it a foundational part of my faith. I look back at the challenges I have faced before in my life and see clearly how they have served to prepare me for what was next. I believe that this trauma and healing from trauma will help me better serve others dealing with violence in a way I could never have related to before.

As my last set of paintings illustrate, new life is being born. Creativity and connecting with the Creator through the arts and poetry in their many forms bring new life; they are life-giving and life-saving. LIFE becomes the creative medium, the dance with God!



**The Universe Cracks Open to Bring New Life;  
Chaos Precedes Creation**

Note: The Universe Cracks Open was published by Pensive Journal in 2021.