



Bench Markings | The Alcyon Center Annual Report 2018-2019

At the center of our being is a point of nothingness, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God. It is in everybody and if we could see it we would see those billions of points of light coming together in the face and blaze of a sun.

– from *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* by Thomas Merton

SILENCE OF GRAY

As Alcyon stretches into its second decade, our relationship with the Silence evolves into new forms of investigating, cultivating and befriending this ever-present Being. Listen to the Silence. How does it speak? Look into the Silence. What do you perceive? Is the Silence scented? Touch the Silence. Does it have texture? Taste the Silence. What flavors come forth?

What sense-ability emerges from intimately knowing Silence? Lately there is all around the feeling sense of gray – not the bleak gray of despair alone, rather an all-enveloping warming gray capacious enough to hold grief, longing, loss, hope, heart, and love. This is the Silence of Darkness and Light, the Silence of Gray.

My own initiation into the Silence of Gray formed during the 2018 Contemplative Spiritual Direction cohort, a year-long exploration into sacred listening and being – with the Silence and each other. Our explorations on Seal Cove pulled us out of the divisiveness of devices and distractions and into Heart, where we resided within Silence, the inviting dwelling place of gray.

The Silence of Gray touched me in ways unimaginably insistent, inevitable and new, revealing a sense-ability that compelled me, required me, to create. Invited by the senses to enter into the Silence, I made colors (literally, with food!) and listened deeply (loudly, to Led Zeppelin!), embarking on an immersive, sensory expedition. Out of the experience of absorption into, of becoming, the Silence of Gray, there emerged a series of feeling-paintings – or Silence-scapes – that are living, vibrating, giving,

and calling still. – LL, Alcyon Board President



CIRCULAR LIGHT

Over these half score years as The Alcyon Center, breathing the rhythmic motion of light in Cove life, we are gradually awakening to how this light changes us. We seem to be moving by incremental changes toward a stillness that lies in darkness but is made of light.

Rarely do bursts of dramatic change visit the Cove. Grandfather Spruce falls after a century of sentinel duty overseeing the daily comings and goings of Cove life. Yes, his prostration marks a milestone, a record of a certain linear change in our Cove horizon to be sure. Yet sitting still in his absence, following the ripples of his falling, catching snippets of his story coming back round bumps us up against the heart of something more circular than linear. What lives in Grandfather Spruce continues to ripple, drawing us to notice that circles are the motion of change here.

If we follow the ripples in one direction, back into the standing tree, we meet a powerful force breaking out of darkness into light, absorbing energy, slaking thirst, resisting disease, standing in the storm, circling round a still center. If we follow the ripples in another direction, out into an open ocean, we meet a powerful force surging out of the depths of darkness, relentless, awash with life, pulsating with energy, conqueror of hardness, yet also circling round some still center. Light forces circulating around stillness, or maybe out of stillness, generate change in the Cove – and in us. – JJG, Alcyon Director

In the seed, the genes whisper: stretch out for the light and seek the dark. And the tree seeks the light, it stretches out for the dark and the more darkness it finds, the more light it uncovers.

– from "Horologium" by Reide Eknar

2019 THEME
LIGHT

Building centers

Thank you, Donors May 2018 – April 2019

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‡ Alcyon Companions Initiative

Our board members* help with office work, finances, marketing, maintenance, program & retreat leadership, fundraising and new initiatives. We are grateful!

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Every effort has been made to provide a complete and accurate listing of all donors. If we have made an error, please accept our sincere apology and let us know by emailing us at office@alcyoncenter.org.

that can hold

Thank you, Special Grantors

The Arthur Ashley Williams Foundation for \$2,500 to the general fund.

Maine UCC **Resourcing the Local Church Fund** for the second half of our \$5,000 Alcyon video grant.

Ben and Charlotte Dooling for \$1,000 to underwrite printing costs for the first Alcyon Folio.



Thank you, Volunteers & In-Kind Donors

The help of these friends, including our tireless Work Weekers, keeps us healthy and happy—thank you all!

Peter Bacon	Judy Mullins
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2019 Scholar-in-Residence

A warm welcome to Eric Erickson!

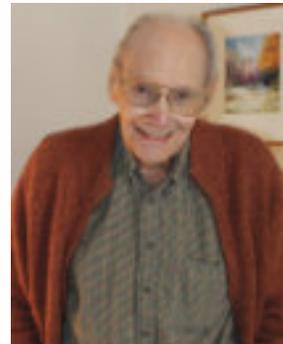
"As scholar-in-residence at The Alcyon Center this year, I will help identify signature qualities that emanate through Alcyon's core training programs. [Responses from interviews Alcyon students] will help hone the present growing edge and guide the center's priorities into its second decade."

Eric's work will appear as an Alcyon Folio in December 2019.

Ed Kaelber Bequest

We were introduced by our former board member Ann Sewall to her husband Ed Kaelber just after we opened the center in 2008. For the next ten years, Ed served as an informal advisor as we entered the world of fundraising. His first question was "Have you got your strategic plan distilled down to one-page—and can you make a short compelling case for the Alcyon mission?" We kept going back to him with drafts and he kept saying, make it simple, clear and reasonable—and people will respond! His levity and insightful guidance kept us on our toes—and kept us sensible.

Ed bequeathed \$13,000 to Alcyon and we're grateful to carry on with our work in his memory.



Ed Kaelber, Founding President of College of the Atlantic, Bar Harbor, Maine

In Memoriam Mary Oliver (1935-2019)

Attention is the beginning of devotion

I was eager to address the world of words – to address the world with words. Then M. instilled in me this deeper level of looking and working, of seeing through the heavenly visibles to the heavenly invisibles.
(Our World by MO)

Mary Oliver's intricate courtship of poetry and the soul, mind and heart, gave us courage as we started out at Alcyon in 2008. We read her poem "Swimming One Day in August" so many times that the opening lines now come into our hearts unbidden:

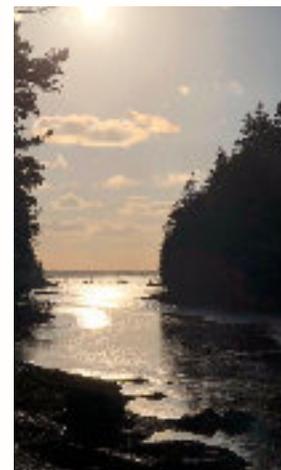
*It is time now, I said,
for the deepening and quieting of the spirit
among the flux of happenings.*

The heart, for her, "exists in a mysterious, unmapped zone: not unconscious, not subconscious, but cautious" (Our Story)—and her poems guided us into this glorious unmapped zone, which soon became our home too.

During the three weeks we spent in Provincetown MA this April—we were delighted to find nearly no trace of Mary Oliver's long presence there. Instead we were left to follow her lead and turn our attention to those deeper mysterious zones—and one day, her Cardinal reminded us:

And no less, to make this work, the soul has need of a body, and I am both of the earth and I am of the inexplicable beauty of heaven where I fly so easily, so welcome, yes, and this is why I have been sent, to teach this to your heart."

(excerpt from *Red Bird Explains Himself*)



The Alcyon Center

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Kathryn E. Booth, Director Joan Jordan Grant, Director Grey Burkart, Office Manager

READING THE SIGNS OF OUR TIMES IN IMAGE & WORD

Do all images and words carry depth and healing capacities?

To which of them do we give our precious and limited attention?



On April 15, 2019 we watched images of flames stretching to the heavens as the 900 year old roof timbers of Notre Dame de Paris burned and the iconic spire tumbled earthward. Rather than moving on to the next meme or trending image—we're working with *lectio divina/pardes*, watercolor and poetic collage to let the fire slowly reveal its power and meaning.

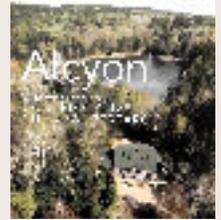
We think long and hard before sending out words and images in Alcyon's name. Wary of merely adding to your inbox or mailbox, we look for words and images that awaken, nourish, trouble, and console. They poured forth from Alcyon in 2018 in the surprising creation of a publishing arm of The Alcyon Center.

We celebrate these four publications in film and print, and those who researched, wrote and filmed, designed and underwrote the publishing costs so that we can offer them to our guests and friends.

Film: Alcyon: A Center That Can Hold
In 6 minutes, Rosie Avila, our high school videography intern in 2017-18 takes you in to the house, up in the air and out the cove—as you listen to interviews with staff and guests.

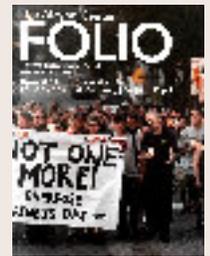


Book: Alcyon: Celebrating Ten Years
In a miracle of alchemical distillation three brave souls created a retrospective of the first ten years—and birthed for us a touchstone of where we've been with hints of where we might be going in the next ten years.



Working Paper and Folio: Toward New Understandings

With these two works we engage colleagues and students working in contemplative cultural research and repair—and listen as they encourage a deeper understanding of our times and what's being asked of us all. The first works take up the modern sorrow of addiction. We welcome your proposals for the next editions. Write us!



Download, read and share all these at alcyoncenter.org/publications

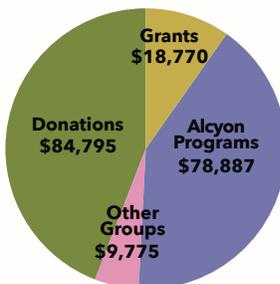
Glimpses of Alcyon in 2018



- 331 guests visited and 659 guest overnights
- 202 nights with guests & 163 without
- 100 people at the 10th year Open House & Evening Talk with colleague Piers Kaniuka
- First peaches on the new peach tree
- 4 loads of chips spread on the paths
- Over 195 financial and in-kind donors



2018 Income
(\$192,227)



Programming at The Alcyon Center includes:

- Spiritual leadership training programs
- Workshops and retreats
- Personal retreats and spiritual direction
- Use of center by independent groups
- Spring and fall volunteer work weeks
- Alcyon Community Life: Silent Sitting, Bible Study, Quiet Days and Soul Friends

2018 Expenses
(\$183,105)



If we allow silence to open up within, we shall see the gate and be free to open it. The gate that silence opens up within us leads to light. Light exposes us with an almost merciless radiance and, in the exposure, reveals the beauty of the real.

– Sister Wendy Beckett