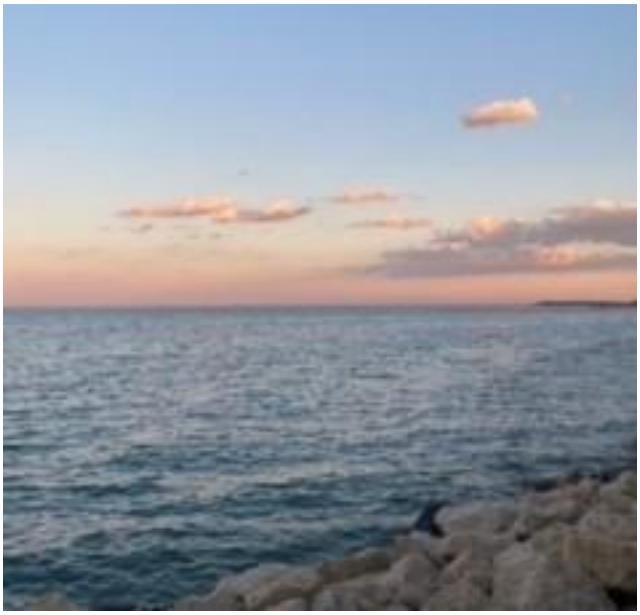
Wing & A Prayer Wellness

August 31, 2023



On this last day of August, I am feeling grateful for the opportunity to bi-locate this autumn between the Tri-Cities and the city of Chicago. I'll give it a try for 2 months and see how it goes. My 20 years in St. Charles and at the United Methodist Church of Geneva have been life changing. Although I am relocating to Chicago, I will be back every Sunday to be with the nursery kids and on Mondays for my Wing & A Prayer Wellness



Earlier this month, I drove on Lake Shore Drive just to feel that breeze and get a glimpse of this beautiful blue body of love—Lake Michigan. I couldn't have gotten closer with my car as the police were turning away people who were trying to get into the Foster beach. When I first arrived in Chicago in 1985, I was amazed at the public access to the beauty of the Lakeshore for miles and miles and miles. It took the Chicago fire to inspire such a creation of public space out of the rubble. I recently led my monthly Online Dance Chapel with the theme of water. We were inspired by this song based on words by Bruce Lee. "Be like water, my friend. You shall find a way around, or through it. When nothing within us stays rigid, we decide the shape we're in. Empty your mind. Be shapeless, formless; like water. It can flow or it can crash. And we design the waves we give" From the album Rhythmic Meditation The Waves We Give - Official Video

Later that day, I found myself back in a dance studio *at Yoga with a Splash of InterPlay* offered by Diane Rawlinson. I turned my back to the mirrors for the class but visited them occasionally to check my alignment or to get a glimpse of the years spent honing my craft of ballet and modern dance. Looking at myself dressed in all black, I got an image of Martha Graham. My aging body does not resemble her angular sleek frame, rather it is more rounded and takes on a more matronly form compared to the younger bodies in the room.

I am embracing my elder years and delight in mentoring younger movers and shakers. Currently I am mentoring 2 women in the Self-Paced InterPlay Life Practice Program. They inspire me with their courage to connect with their Inner Authority and Body Wisdom at such a young age. I am also inspired by the resiliency of my elder peers who continue to move, sing, and speak their truth.

Joining you in creativity and connection,
Jane

Wing & A Prayer Wellness



United Methodist Church of Geneva

211 Hamilton St. Geneva, IL www.genevaumc.org

Connect with Folks, Fitness & Fun in these weekly sessions that nourish body and soul through movement, balance, breath, laughter, music and inspirational readings. Create ease in your body, mind, heart, and spirit while gaining flexibility, strength, balance & stability. Practice at your own comfort level—on a mat, on or off a chair. It's good for the body and the soul.

Early Fall Session: September 11- October 29, 2023

Mondays 11:00 am – 12:15 pm



Facilitator **Jane Siarny,** MFA-Dance and Certified Yoga Teacher is dedicated to uplifting the human spirit through creativity, community building and body wise practices. She continues to be an advocate for embodied spirituality and helping individuals and groups find health and well-being. Her other ongoing contributions are leading InterPlay®, Yoga and Expressive Movement/Drama in worship and educational settings. She is also an experienced program consultant for arts based and wellness organizations, mentor in the InterPlay Life Practice Program, and a facilitator in the Online Dance Chapel.

For Information contact Jane at:

630/715-8590 ~ jsiarny@att.net

Wing & A Prayer Wellness News

TREEmendous! July 5, 2023

I've just returned from my 2.5-week trek to Raleigh, North Carolina for the InterPlay Leaders Gathering and Body Wisdom Staff meeting. It was pure joy to drive along the vast expanses of forest while climbing up and down and around the hills of West Virginia, Virginia, Southern Ohio, and North Carolina. Fueled and focused to the beat of the Footloose Soundtrack, Elton John Duets, Adiemus, and Shaun O'Gallaway on my CD player, I covered about 250-350 miles a day (a record for me!) As I was looking through the photos from the trip, I discovered this amazing tree I had recently photographed. It is one of my favorites at St. Mary's Park in St. Charles, Illinois.



When I am feeling energetic and up for a challenge, I hike the .5-mile path down to the river, walk around these amazing trees, not to mention the prairie restoration along the river, and then chant "I think I can" like the Little Engine that Could and trudge back up the hill. As I make my climb back home, I imagine that the trees are cheering me on like this passage from Isaiah 55:12. "And all the trees on the fields will clap their hands…and you will go out with JOY!" Especially in summer, I resonate with the Old Testament's use of nature imagery.

I loved the Cottonwood tree in the front yard of my childhood home outside of Cleveland Ohio. The Oaks, Maples and other Cottonwood in our backyard were a Wonderland to grow up in. I thought everybody grew up with trees, plenty of grass and freedom. It would be many years later that I learned that was not true. My husband Vaughn used to take inner-city Chicago kids up to the Wisconsin woods for leadership weekends. Some of these kids had never been out of the city. My prayer is that all shall have access to the beauty of nature.

St. Mary's Park has 100+ year old Burr Oak Trees, as well as Maples, Oaks, Evergreens and Tulip Trees. This tree (type unknown) reminds me of my aging body—bendy but not broken, subtle and strong, prone to be a bit rigid on the outside—but alive and growing inside. The trees shed their leaves and grow new ones year after year. They shed branches and grow new ones. To grow strong, the tree needs to push against the ground to spread its roots. May my walking routine among these trees (that clap their hands for me!), the dance, yoga, my supportive communities, and light weight training continue to make me keep feeling TREEmendous! I wish the same for you.

This past week, I was holed up at the Holiday Inn Express outside of Dayton making my way back to Chicago. I was one of many who came down with Covid after the InterPlay Leaders Gathering. I was lucky enough to have a Cottonwood tree blowing in the morning breeze outside my second-floor hotel room. With flute music playing in the background, I felt my breath slowing, and easing into the healing process. I was grateful for a good night's sleep. I rarely suffer from insomnia, so I was at a loss the previous night when I was up

from 12 to 5 AM. I remembered that yoga can easily be done in bed. I got myself moving into some cat/cows, thread the needle, child's pose, and stretches for my hamstrings. I didn't fall back asleep, but I was awake enough to get back in the car and make some progress towards Chicago.

This wasn't the plan for the journey, but I am grateful that the wisdom of the body that often forces me to slow down. It's given me time to reflect on the amazing InterPlay Staff meeting and InterPlay Leaders gathering. I have seen these gatherings evolve from the 1990s (where we sat around tables talking about how we can market InterPlay) into the last 2 decades of full-blown play and performance events where we inspire and strengthen each other's resolve to play, heal and keep on keeping on.

Our site for the Gathering was Haw River State Park, just north of Greensboro North Carolina. Gorgeous big trees swayed overhead as we waltzed into our gatherings each day and blanketed us as we meandered slowly and gratefully back to our beds for sleep. After four years of not meeting in person, I was amazed at how easy it was to pick up where we left off. Rekindling the dance, song and story with lifelong playmates of 32+ years and meeting in person my new friends who I had only played with online during the pandemic was a deep-felt joy.

Those gathered were from Australia, Seattle, Arizona, Minneapolis, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Atlanta, California, and North Carolina and places in between. I am grateful for the Gathering planning team included Carolyn Renee, Angela Arata, Ginny Going and Christine Gautreaux. Not only did they share their best facilitation, but they brought out the best in the other leaders who lead main group sessions: Kelsey Blackwell, Agnotti Cowie, Tere Zorich, Karen Rodríguez, Marla Durden, Masankho Banda, LaVerne Hotep-Baker, Toni McClendon, and Sheila Collins. We honored our founders, Phil Porter and Cynthia Winton-Henry. I think they would be proud of the legacy that they have passed on—how the gifts of the individual can be shared, affirmed and expanded in community. Even when we tackled painful subjects like racism, we kept the playful practices of InterPlay at the heart of it so that ALL could be seen and heard for their unique stories.

That's what I love about the InterPlay process. It really honors the time that it takes to share stories, to listen, to affirm what has been spoken, or danced, or sung. We are not trying to fix anything, rather we are practicing being more fully alive, and who we are supposed to be on this earth. I recall Cynthia or Phil saying "the community is there to support the individual." At a Secrets of InterPlay weekend, she invited someone who needed more time and space, to leave the session. I can still hear him laughing and cheering and waving his arms as he ran down to the lake. We eventually saw him later that day, affirming him for following his inner authority.

Now that I am back in the Chicago area, I am grateful for this time away and the tools and practices of InterPlay that keep me singing, dancing, and telling of my experience through all of life's transitions. Although I am taking a short break from my teaching, I would love to hear how you are and what you are experiencing this summer!

To your JOY, Health & Wellness,
Jane



Facilitator **Jane Siarny,** MFA-Dance and Certified Yoga Teacher is dedicated to uplifting the human spirit through creativity, community building and body wise practices. Contact Jane at: 630/715-8590 ~ jsiarny@att.net

Wing & A Prayer Wellness News



Celebrating PLAY! May 30, 2023

Jesus says, “Let the little children come to me.” Matthew 19:14



I have been having a blast playing with the 2-3-year-olds in the Nursery at The United Methodist Church of Geneva . I call it *Growing and Glowing with God*. In this photo to the left, I am part of the InterPlay Chicago group improvising for an InterPlay FUNdraiser last October 2022. Folks at church wonder why I am so playful and creative. It is because I practice it. InterPlay was created for adults to learn how to be creative again like they were as little children.

Celebrating InterPlay Day this month has given me pause to reflect on why I am so drawn to play. As a student in college dance programs 1973-81, (with a break to dance professionally) we were not encouraged to practice improvisation. That was viewed as experimental modern dance, not a “fine art.”



Fortified with my MFA in Dance and prior professional experience, I did well in the modern dance world. Yet when I discovered the spirit-filled dancers of the Sacred Dance Guild and the Improvisational system of InterPlay, whole new possibilities opened to me. I could use my technical dance skill and still enjoy the freedom of exploring movement creation in the moment. Jazz musicians improvise, why not dancers? InterPlay also invited me to explore my voice, my stories and to play with the relation of sound, movement and texts/poems.

I have also discovered the Parliament of World Religions , happening in Chicago this summer (the first one was in 1893!) I am grateful for these dedicated organizations who educate and inspire. They remind us that our bodies and spirits are more connected than we seem to believe.

May we invite the little child in us & each other to play. We just celebrated Pentecost, so let us boldly set our spirits free, and PLAY! Jane



Connect with Folks, Fitness & Fun in these weekly sessions that nourish body and soul through movement, balance, breath, laughter, music and inspirational readings. Create ease in your body, mind, heart, and spirit while gaining flexibility, strength, balance & stability. Practice at your own comfort level—on a mat, on or off a chair. It’s good for the body and the soul.

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Wing & A Prayer Wellness *News*

April 1, 2023



My friend Cara gave me permission to use this photo of her and her friends leaping for joy on a recent wintry day. I don't leap like that anymore, but I do in my imagination. That's what I love about wellness practices, dance, creating stories or vocalizing. I can use my imagination and go "anywhere" I would like to be—whether it is enjoying warm water and a beach or climbing a mountain & walking mindfully in the forest.

I don't know about you but to me this has seemed like a really LONNNNNNGGGGG winter! It's not that it's been terribly cold or that we have had a lot of snow, but I think it has been cloudier—more like the winters in Cleveland where I grew up.

March 20 when I first started to write this, began bright and sunny, a perfect day for the Spring Equinox. I am grateful for the two new students who joined Wing & A Prayer Wellness that day. I am grateful that I have started a new Thursday weekly class and I have interest for Wednesdays or Saturdays at 4:00 pm. Join us for a sample class on M or Th or let me know if you are interested in the WE/SA time.

You may just find fellowship, fitness & fun in these weekly sessions that nourish body and soul through movement, balance, breath, laughter, music and inspirational readings. You'll have the opportunity to create ease in your body, mind, heart, and spirit while gaining flexibility, strength, balance & stability. And you are encouraged to practice at your own comfort level—on a mat, on & off a chair.

Check out the flyer for the Spring Session of **Wing & A Prayer Wellness** at the United Methodist Church of Geneva. Feel free to try a class at any time. Swing into Spring—this opportunity may just be what you need. If you are reading this on email, scroll down for my previous blogs.

To your JOY, Health & Wellness,

Jane Siarny

Wing & A Prayer Wellness ~ jsiarny@att.net ~ 630/715-8590



Wing & A Prayer Wellness *News*

A New Beginning

January 2023

On this New Year's Day 2023, I woke up singing "This is a day of new beginnings…" I headed to page 383 in my Methodist hymnal to retrieve the rest of the poetry in that song. When I discovered that Brian Wren had written it in 1978, I was suddenly transported back to the University of Illinois U-C in the Fall of 1978 where I was beginning as a transfer student dance major. I was surrounded by so many new and wonderful things especially the diverse dance forms including modern dance techniques. After a break from college to dance with the National Ballet of Illinois, I was ready for this new beginning.

The autumn always fills me with the energy for starting something new. Perhaps it is because I was programmed from an early age to walk into that new classroom and begin another school year of discovery. The Jewish New Year celebrates around the time of the harvest. It invites us to take stock, make amends, let go of what is not needed for the long winter and begin again. The origins of the January 1 New Year come from the creation of the Julian calendar in 42 BC, with updates in scientific predictions of leap year forming the Gregorian calendar in 1582.

Calendars, anniversaries, and holiday rituals all serve to mark our faith journey. These time markers help us connect to the bigger world, to the natural world and to our communities. What if you consider this day or even the next breath you take as a new beginning? In Joan Borysenko's Pocketful of Miracles she reminds us that our connection to God can be felt through the breath. To inspire, literally means to breathe in spirit. She says, "The breath is the lifeforce itself, the Holy Spirit that binds us to the mind of God. Know as Ruach in Hebrew…The breath controls our energy body and the activity of our minds. Control of breath is the cornerstone for health and letting go of our small mind and entering the Big Mind of God. Every breath is a form of prayer."

To your JOY, Health & Wellness,
Jane Siarny

"This is a day of new beginnings, time to remember and move on, time to believe what love is bringing, laying to rest the pain that's gone… Then let us with the Spirit's daring, step from the past and leave behind our disappointment, guilt and grieving, seeking new paths, and sure to find."
This Is A Day of New Beginnings ~ (Verses 1 & 3) by Brian Wren

Wing & A Prayer Wellness ~ jsiarny@att.net ~ 630/715-8590

Wing & A Prayer Wellness News Sept. 9, 2022

"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. Words of Jesus in John 15:11



Joy, come alongside me today.
When I ignore you, sing me a song.
When I don't dance,
stir up the wind to sweep me off my feet.

Joy, come alongside me today.
Shake me loose from my past
hurts, guilt and fear, and future
imaginings that seek to kill my faith.

Joy, come alongside us today
Move us to tears, move us to freedom.
Move us to accept your power and grace.
Move us with your abiding love.

Our Summer Session II of **Wing & A Prayer Wellness** at the United Methodist Church of Geneva centered around the theme of JOY. I've been thinking a lot about Joy and how it comes up in unexpected places and how it often comes along side despair and struggle. Just last night I was standing in line to check out a few items I had found at the Goodwill. I caught the eye of a little boy who was pointing a plastic gun at me with the most joyful smile on his face. Rather than be alarmed that he was pointing a "gun" at me, the joy on his face drew me in. Because there were those inevitable kiosks of stuff beckoning us to add to our cart on the way to check out, it was a perfect place to play peekaboo. The gun was put down. Its usefulness not needed anymore.

Another child who was waiting patiently in a shopping cart, beamed up with a big smile and started to move her hands in joy. As in my spiritual practice of InterPlay, which encourages us to move our hands creatively and let them go into a dance for its own sake or perhaps a dance of prayer, I followed her motions and we danced!. I hope that I continue to look for these small miracles of joyful connection in my day-to-day life. I know my connections with these children was fleeting, but they were JOY-Filled. These momentary glimpses of joy are gifts from God. "Let the little children come to me" Jesus said. I think that He was inviting the childlike spirit in all of us to drink the living water and be filled with joy. This hymn based on Isaiah 55:12 says it all.

To your JOY, Health & Wellness, Jane

"We shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace. The mountains in the hills will break forth before us. There will be shouts of joy and all the trees on the fields will clap, will clap their hands."

Wing & A Prayer Wellness ~ jsiarny@att.net ~ 630/715-8590

Wing & A Prayer Wellness



News

June 26, 2022

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. John 15:12

During the first three weeks of our Wing & A Prayer Wellness classes we practiced awareness of how our bodies can be a source of healing and health. Through simple stretching, breathing, balance and ample time for laughter and fun, we discovered a greater appreciation for what we can do, rather than what we can't do.

Thankfully most of us can breathe, think, feel and walk (even though it may take more awareness to walk through challenges with imbalance or discomfort.) Even if we need someone to wheel us around, or use a cane or a walker, we can accept our limitations and celebrate what we can do. Just as we affirm children when they create their first smile or take their first steps, we can be thankful for each action as a gift from our creator.

I am not advocating a Pollyanna approach because life is tough, challenging, confusing (and you may have a few more adjectives!) We can take a deep breath and can give these pains, fears and worry to God.

This week concludes our 1st Summer Session. We are on break July 4-7, and start the 2nd Summer Session July 11. You can join at any time. Fall begins September 12. I will leave you with the first verse of one of my favorite hymns "Help Us Accept Each Other," #560 in the UMH. Please say a prayer of self-acceptance before you read this. Just as Jesus said "Let the little children come to me," I believe the little child in all of us could use reminders that we are accepted and loved for just the way we are. To your Health & Wellness, Jane

"Help us accept each other as Christ accepted us. Teach us as sister, brother, each person to embrace. Be present, Lord, among us, and bring us to believe we are ourselves accepted and meant to love and live."



Facilitator **Jane Siarny,** MFA Dance and Certified Yoga Teacher is dedicated to uplifting the human spirit through creativity, community building and body wise practices. She continues to be an advocate for embodied spirituality and helping individuals and groups find health and wellness through the expressive arts. Her other ongoing contributions are leading Yoga, InterPlay®, Expressive Movement and Drama in educational and worship settings.

Information/registration/financial assistance: 630/715-8590 ~ jsiarny@att.net



Wing & A Prayer Wellness *NEWS*

June 12, 2022

If I take the wings of the morning
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me,
and your right hand shall hold me fast.
—Psalm 139.9-10

"Sometimes it's actually good
to settle at the farthest limits of the sea,
where there is nothing but God's presence.

Free of all requirements or expectations,
removed from "what we're worth"—
there is the sacred worth of our being, apart from our doing."

Excerpt from ON VACATION by Steve Garnaas-Holmes www.unfoldinglight.net *June 4, 2021*

This is easier said than done, this listening in silence for God's presence! What if God or the Spirit doesn't 'say' anything? What is the purpose of just sitting and just being? Spiritual teachers and even the neuroscientists are helping us understand the benefits of being in the present. Check out Richard Rohr

This is not something we "get" on a first try, rather, it's an ongoing practice. Just as I encourage you to practice the physical postures, I invite you to practice noticing your mind and breathing. Be open to the peace that is available to you in every moment. It's a gift of grace. Steve continues in his reflection on Psalm 139.

"Sabbath is not a prohibition— can't do this, can't do that—
but freedom—freedom from what's asked of us,
freedom from being identified by what we do,
or even how we're doing—freedom to simply be—
and finding there God's gracious accompaniment.
The farthest limits of the sea."

When Steve wrote this June 2021, he encouraged us to 'take the wings of morning' along with him as he took a break from writing Unfolding Light for a couple weeks. And in his absence, he hoped we would find God's presence and to look for it.

As I write this I am enjoying one of the last breezy 70 degree days before we get a heat wave that sends me inside to the fans and air conditioning. Meditation and using my imagination will be even more important as a practice to endure this HOT weather. I invite you to practice the cooling breath by sipping in the air through your teeth, an imaginary straw or a curled tongue, then exhale through your nose or mouth. Also drink plenty of fluids. To your Health & Wellness, Jane

Wing & A Prayer Wellness Information: 630/715-8590 ~ jsiarny@att.net