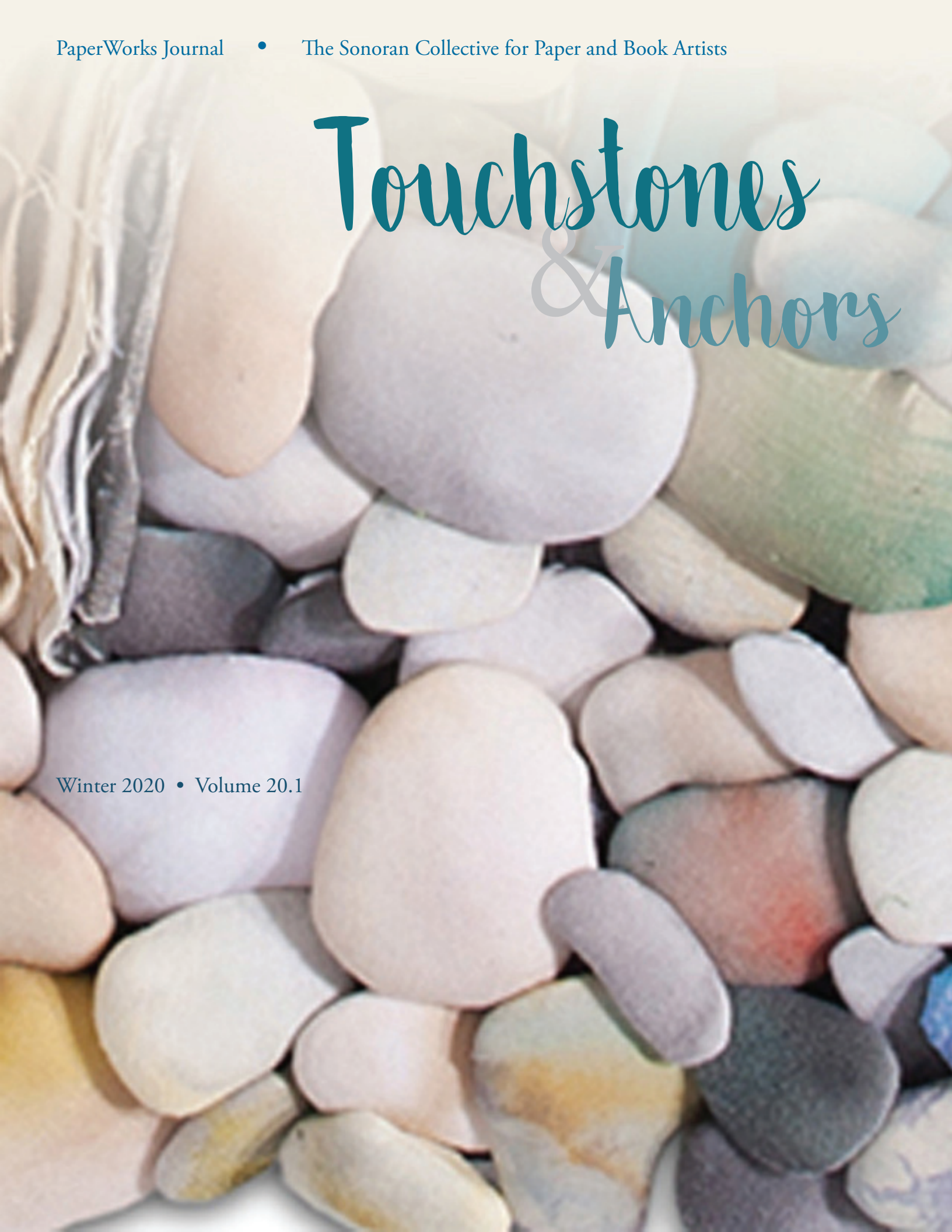




Touchstones & Anchors

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Touchstones and Anchors

Elections, wars, storms, natural disasters –this is the framework within which we live our daily lives. These are the things we have no control over, which spin out of control around us. How do we go on, how do we maintain? What objects, images, places anchor us, give us space? Where do we go, physically, or in our minds, when it all becomes too much? What sustains us, urges us forward and provides a touchstone to live up to, by which to judge ourselves? We are proud to present six essays which give us a glimpse into the lives of six individuals and which strive to define, illuminate or answer some of these questions.





Rootless and Lost



Uncertainty

According to the Oxford Dictionary, an **anchor** is a heavy object attached to a rope or chain and used to moor a vessel to the sea bottom.

What moors me?

What secures me to the ground?

Nature.

Wind whispering through tall trees.

Ocean waves crashing into a cliff.

The lush Sonoran Desert at the end of the monsoon season.

We sit,

we see,

we become attuned to wisdom while observing the beauty and power of nature.

We realize our problems are small in the scheme of things; that we are small fleeting moments in a larger picture.

Nature holds greatness, a beauty and a force far beyond us.

I focus on that force of nature by including visual elements in my work, like storms and fog.

I juxtapose that earthly force to the fragileness of human nature and emotion, through photo, paint and mixed media.

—Ann Tracey

Celebration Christmas

That spiritual prompt to create which recurs each year:

Many friends treasured over a lifetime—along with family, they are at the heart of my life as time tumbles us along. I don't keep up with all of them except once a year at Christmas.

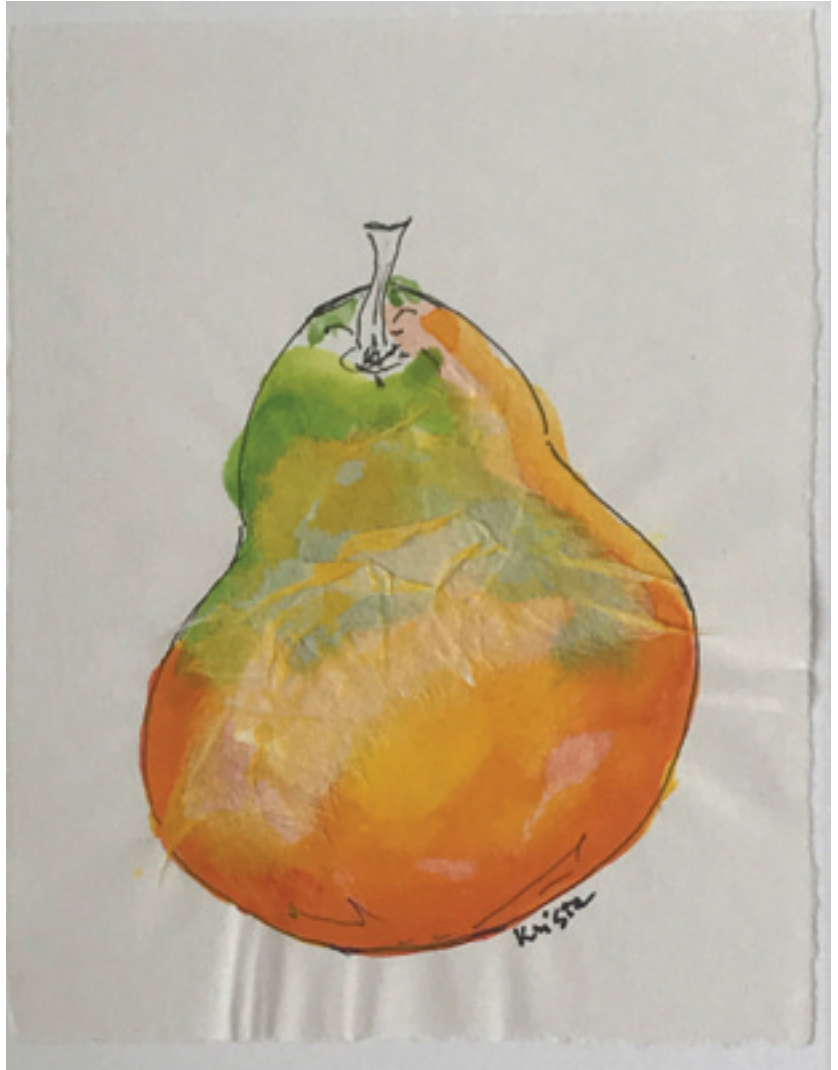
For more than 50 years, I have made my own cards, small tokens that for decades shared the natural beauty of Tucson via original photos, interspersed some years with pictures of our three children: on Mt. Lemmon, at the Grand Canyon, with extended family. After I joined PaperWorks, the cards evolved: Collage, watercolor, ink sketches or some combination thereof replaced the photos.

As a writer of a certain age, I include an annual letter. I know, these days that brings grimaces in some quarters, but it's a habit and I'm not about to break it now: these letters bear witness to my lucidity, reflect life changes and spark interest in family news.

The annual card-making ritual starts for me in August. But well before then, I turn inward to seek the message that will be carried for the year by my words and image. This is a listening, observing, bookish, meditative, all-encompassing conglomeration. Tactile, too. Friends and family move me by their actions and in their words. Poets, sermons, art experiences. The vibe of the world and its diverse happenings and spokespersons.

I draw from all of these. Eventually a concept, quote or phrase surfaces. A form emerges. Ultimately the spirit of Christmas is evidenced in a cutline for the art, as a theme for the newsletter, possibly a metaphor for the past year and for the new one.

Merry Christmas! signifies the innocence of childhood. Most years an additional thoughtful message will come your way from our house to yours. The annual celebration of Christianity's most revered human manifestation reminds us to nurture one another and to hope, always.



—Krista Neis

Imagination

*is the beginning of creation.
You imagine what you desire.
You will what you imagine.
And at last
You create what you will
—George Bernard Shaw*



*We each view the world through a different
set of eyes
Many visions, one fragile beautiful world
May we come together in 2019
To make strides in peace and understanding*



Nature is my Cathedral

Mass shootings, children in cages, global warming, and on and on. There is rare relief from the constant onslaught of apathy, negativity and plain old meanness. Sometimes, what seems to be needed most is a news moratorium, creating a moment where we listen to the silence rather than the TV, radio, or social media. Sometimes, a combination of prayer and meditation, including artful meditation such as stitching, knitting, or creating Zentangle cards to abandon, as if random acts of art and kindness can help assuage these continual crises.

When all else fails, or just for the joy of it, Nature is my touchstone—seeking out holy and sacred places in the Sonoran Desert, by Rose Canyon lake, beside a grand saguaro at Catalina Park, or within a grove of ferns on Mt. Lemmon. The beauty, serenity, and majesty of the natural world never fail to sooth my soul and I've often felt more spiritual in a stand of ponderosas than I've ever felt in a building.

An **Aha!** moment came during a recent camping trip to southern Utah. I was hiking along a seasonal creek at Capitol Reef National Park, barely able to keep eyes on the trail, because the towering cliffs of the canyon were so gorgeous. As I hiked further into the canyon I sensed a shift, my psyche sparked and I realized that I was within my cathedral. Without the distractions of other people or the trappings of a building, that bare beautiful rock brought me to prayer, gratitude and thanksgiving for what I have in this world. A golden poppy, a cumulus cloud, a simple green blade of grass becomes magnificent and sacred when I become present and mindful in nature's surroundings. Colors, scents, and textures come alive and have the power to not only surprise but dazzle as well in the lovely kaleidoscope of nature.



—Deb Hilbert

Connections



Connections

Fiber rush, linen thread, bamboo pulp.

Cosmos we live in. The assorted knick-knacks in my life also bring great joy—the blue Danish plates from my grandmother, the pottery shards I found with my dad, my son’s ceramic turtle he fashioned in first grade—these objects I can touch, and which connect me to sweet memories of that person and days gone by. I need to connect to art, beauty, and my creativity on a daily basis. The need to create something, to connect my hands and my thoughts to the process of “making” brings me great joy and satisfaction, whether it is cooking a good meal, sketching a flower, making a book, knitting a scarf, or sewing a dress—I must connect hand to heart. Finally, I need daily time connecting to the inner “me”—time alone spent thinking, reading, solving problems, meditating, enjoying stillness.

I struggled with the concept of a touchstone that is my single go to anchor in life. There exist a myriad of anchors that I use throughout the day. In the end, it boils down to my connections. My connection to people, to nature, to objects, to my creativity, to my inner life—all support and sustain me. The relationships I have with my family and friends are a huge part of my being. Each is a unique connection that can bring me joy and laughter, empathy and comfort, challenge and support—a shared realization that we are all connected in so many ways.

Time spent in nature is also an important aspect of my life. The challenge of a good hike, a leisurely stroll, or just watching the clouds and mountains from my patio connects me to something much larger than myself, and instills in me appreciation and reverence and gratefulness for the beautiful

—Bobbie Wilson



I wasn't just looking for a cat, I was looking for my familiar. Tucson eleven years ago offered several ways to become a Cat Mom, including Hope Rescue. I could hear the volunteer who answered, rifling through some papers before returning to the phone to proclaim, they had a match. I was looking for a polydactyl with long hair. With some sense of urgency, I scheduled myself for the next day to come and meet him. The sounds in the shelter were hard for me, crying everybody. Dogs and cats who were without homes, more than likely because of their previous owners, now mournfully lost. Weaving through the receiving room, we came to a cage. The volunteer opened the door and a little orange kitten curiously looked back at me. She brought him out and his charms worked instantly. He was fluffy and with the most definitive fat six-toed paws

Hug hug hug. Purr.

I felt myself start to dance with him in my arms.

Then the volunteer said, “and he has a brother’. With one nestled in my arms, I peered back in the cage. There pressed to oblivion was a very scared second. With effort she was able to get him from the back. Now I was in confusion. I had come for one. I needed one. And here was a choice? But they were brothers.

“Oh, what’s another?”, she triumphantly proclaimed, and home I went with my boys.

The exquisite watercolor by Heidi Giselle Archdeacon, which accompanies this article, is of Kingsley. His brother is still the more reclusive. But what an honor to have kept them together and risen to the love and responsibility of their care. The fullness of my life has been anchored and completed by their presence. All considerations are with them in mind, for they are my family.

My personal innocence was ripped away before I was five. This was one reason I never had human children... I could not see how I could keep them safe. To be able to, on a daily basis, be a Cat Mom to these boys is to have found and reintegrated a personal strength and purpose for which I had not set out to find. I just knew that I could not continue to be alone and they have seen to that.

As an artist and musician, having their beauty and gentleness in my house, has also meant I respond to the world differently. I have come to find that there are no bad cats, only ones needing re-directing. I have found that fabric, my main visual medium, makes a perfect cozy spot and a lint brush is essential. And delightfully this year...I found out that Pantone must have gotten word of their color: coral. Therefore, here is to be accepting of a more focused life, a life grounded in the present... in life: the fleeting moments of deep good from which to belong and create. May you know yours.

—*Zeal Morganfield*
(akaMegha)



“Yep” Missy my cat says as soon as I stir in the morning reminding me that I need to get up to feed her. Then Mamacita nuzzles my hand as if to say “Don’t forget that I’m the number one cat.” Indeed she is. She raised Missy with the rest of her litter in the storeroom at my work. The cats follow me outside as I go about watering the plants. They look for prey. Missy tries to bring a lizard into the house. I stop her. Mamacita doesn’t do that anymore. She hasn’t forgotten that I yelled at her once but she still leaves gifts for me outside the front door. Pleasing humans is just as much a survival skill as hunting.

I’ve often thought God loves me the way I love my cats. This love goes beyond animal natures and human judgements about good and evil. Just as I believe I am a reflection of God so I think my cats mirror me, and vice versa. Missy doesn’t cuddle but has learned to be more affectionate by responding to my cues. She taught me to be more expressive. When I’m on the computer, Mamacita jumps up, wends her way through the labyrinth on my desk and waits to be lifted into my lap where she settles in (preferably next to my breast) and purrs and I learn to accept the soothing sound of love. My cats ground me in many ways.



—*Ellen Kuiper-Galbreath*

My Touchstone And My Anchor



My touchstone, my Mother, Ruth, who crossed to the other side at 88 on February 26th, is intimately tied to my anchor, Christ-Jesus, the God-being I see as Universal Christ. Her mother, Augusta, was quite religious and her small-Wisconsin-town children attended Bible School regularly, for eight years each. Ultimately, my mother rejected all constraints not her own—her principles were high, but she forged her own path. (I do know she begrudgingly granted Father-God some space in her mind and heart.) The seven children of her birth family were raised on a small dairy farm and the daughters took over even the heavy chores when the boys went off to WWII. She came west to California at 16, after graduating high school early, to see her brother and never went back except to visit. She met my father and ended up raising her four children alone for many years.

She was tough—never took any crap dished her way—yet she made real friends everywhere she went. She knew the day-to-day business of all our lives until she fell and broke both of her arms on December 28, 2018, which ultimately led to her death. She had gone out to mail me my annual calendar and fell backward going up her steps to her home. I will keep the 2019 calendar forever.

My Mom once chased down a man who stole a liquor bottle from her work, tackled him onto the sidewalk and got the bottle back. She was a security guard for the last 15 years of her life and worked all the way up to her 87th year because she was bored at home. Her vision was far better than mine and she still drove herself everywhere. She once stopped a large group of carousers from exiting doors that weren't to be used—with a glare. She was a beautiful, complicated, interesting person, who chose to make the best of the life she was granted.

I thought she was asleep on my last visit to Reno. I was smoothing her hair and telling her how much we all loved her, when she opened her eyes and said, “Well, I sure gave the three of you one hell of a run, didn't I?”

I laughed and said, “You sure did, Mom!”

I miss her so much.

At my Mom's funeral, my long-lost niece got up and said that her life had been on the skids for many years, but when she found us, and my Mother handed Tabitha her birth announcement and picture, a light went on inside her and she turned her life around. She was redeemed by the love that was holding her, waiting for her. My second cousin said that, after trying to get pregnant for seven years, she and her husband visited Mom, who put her hand on Typh's stomach and said, “You will have a baby.” Typhanie calculates they got pregnant that very night and my

mother and little Hunter, though she is only a toddler and they were separated by hundreds of miles most of the time, were bonded like twins from the moment they met. My sister-in-law said she was taken from her mother by her father as a toddler to a stepmother who could not love her. The only female role model and woman who loved her as a mother was my Mom. Jeanie says my Mom was her anchor and when I lost my Mom, she lost hers, too. Same story with my youngest brother's girlfriend, Debbie. My Mom became her mom.

Mom's physical death has left a huge hole in many lives. My brothers, who took such good care of her in her last years, are struggling with the loss as much as I am. David still feels like an orphan. Mom and I talked on the phone every day. I have finally stopped picking up the phone to call her, and I'm not feeling like a balloon somebody let go of anymore, but I'm not myself, either.

My Mom's training in and rejection of the Christian faith seems to have channeled her children into the faith, but my brother and I could not practice it more differently. He reads the Bible every day and it guides his life. He believes most of us humans are going to Hell because we don't listen for God. He's right—we don't generally listen, at least not in the way he means. I study the writings of Rudolf Steiner (who says the universe shifted when Christ died on the cross). His teachings take some unusual turns, but they draw me in. And, I believe in a god of Love. I have a recurring picture in my mind that after we fell from Heaven, there was a long silence. Then Christ stood and said, "I'll go." Somehow, we are each as important to Him as life itself. I know that we are all God's children, that we are one family, and I choose to believe that God wants us all to come Home. There is a book by Helen Greaves called *Testimony of Light*. I pray every word is true, because my heart needs a God of Love.



Universal Christ, a painted paper collage
The collage really, it just came. I used my hands to glue the pieces of paper, and I signed it, but I did not make it on my own. Maybe my angel helped; I just don't know. I love it because it is a gift to me, an image of my Anchor, a comfort in my troubled times.

—Pam Bickell