

Nancy Flinchbaugh
1402 St. Paris Road
Springfield, OH 45504
937.390.8833
Nancy.flinchbaugh@gmail.com
Spiritualseedlings.com

LETTERS FROM THE EARTH

Memoir by Nancy Flinchbaugh

Synopsis

In May of 2015, the Earth wrote me a letter and told me to start a blog! Since then, I received more letters from the Earth which are encouraging, uplifting and challenge ME to live my best life.

In this book, you will meet me, Nancy Flinchbaugh, a 60-year old municipal worker, a contemplative who cares deeply about the Earth and the problem of climate change. Over the past five years, as my meditation practice deepened and I studied contemplative spirituality, I learned more about the plight of the Earth, becoming involved in working for the political will to address climate change, while also awakening to the miraculous nature of the Earth, making me ripe to receive communication from the Earth.

In this book, you will also meet the letter writer, who calls herself “Gaia, God, Mother, Creator and even Father.” I believe that the person writing the letters is the creative spirit at the heart of creation, who not only set the universe into development eons ago, but continues to relate with and animate each of us, yearning for us to fully enjoy the created world.

In addition, you will meet my friend, Chris, a retired social worker who struggles with ovarian cancer, and my friend Heidi, a retired kindergarten teacher, who loves to laugh.

As the book begins, my husband and I are on vacation in the Pacific Northwest, visiting my son and his girlfriend. We spend a couple nights on the islands north of Seattle, go on a whale-watching cruise in which we encounter a humpback whale, Big Mama, and then stay in Seattle for the rest of the week. During this time, we participate in an exercise of writing a letter to ourselves from the Earth. The letter I receive makes us all laugh and smile. She encourages me to start a blog, to dance and to enjoy life.

But I am somewhat skeptical. Could the Earth really be writing me letters, I wonder. I really do not want to start a blog. But, after encouragement from friends, family and my spiritual director, at my 60th birthday party I announce that I will open myself to receive more letters from the Earth.

Beginning then with summer vacations, the Earth writes me other letters. First, about a hike in Hocking Hills, Ohio, where I lay down on the cool earth and napped. She reminds me how refreshing she was that day and she says, “You humans rush about like little ants. You don’t have to, you know? I gave you two legs, not wheels or wings, just legs. Slow down and rest and you will discover much more of my story.”

Later, at Lakeside, a Chautauqua at Lake Erie, I find the beach is closed due to algal blooms. I stay away from the waterfront until the last day, where I meditate by the lake and she

writes, telling me the best I can do is to affirm those who speak up for the Earth and that Lake Erie will live again because of people like them. These early letters delight me and I begin to look forward to the letters as the teachings take root in my life.

The book includes my growing awareness of the importance of contemplative practice in life. When I attend a retreat, the Earth writes during a time of praying with a holy icon, deepening my experience as she tells me, “You see me with one eye closed and one eye open and you know the key to wakefulness is inner silence... You hear a call to listen to the polarities... My creatures find conflict. Help them listen. Help them find hope. Be light. Let your heart shine.” In just a few words, this letter cuts to the heart of my life, encouraging me to apply the contemplative approach to my life work of peacemaking and our political reality.

As the year continues, the letters come after significant events, in the morning, after meditation. When I plan a Labor Day Garden Party for Chris and our social group, the Earth writes the next day, telling me I should savor and delight in the food and flowers every day. When I spend the day helping coordinate our annual CultureFest on City Hall Plaza, the Earth writes me a letter, affirming and noticing all the wonderful dancing that happens during that event and encourages me to continue to do this work. When my husband and I take a 30th anniversary trip to Ireland, the Earth writes about the mystical, magical nature of the Isle and acknowledges the threat of climate change to this island nation.

When I attend a retreat on the Pope’s Encyclical on the Earth, *Laudato si’*, I receive a letter from the Earth reminding me of the many people who are speaking up, writing and working on her behalf in this time. She tells me, “Celebrate. Name this great coming together and let your voice join theirs. Sing! Don’t be silent now.”

And then my daffodils come up in my front yard on Christmas Day and the Earth writes again. She tells me, “Let go and live in the moment, Nancy. You are trying to raise awareness about climate change and what you humans are doing with your fossil fuels. That’s good. Keep it up, but don’t give in to despair... I keep telling you to dance, and I’m not making it up. I really do want you to celebrate this life you have. In a moment, it comes, and in a moment, it goes and now is the time to live. So dance, celebrate, laugh, be happy and share the Christmas daffodils.”

During a visit to Myrtle Beach with Heidi in January, the Earth writes me three letters, about becoming one with the beach, about sorrow at the beach and also about the value and dangers in technological progress. She speaks about both the beauty and the environment degradation. She acknowledges our wonderful inventions, while also cautioning us about the dangers they can cause.

When my brother dies unexpectedly in February, the Earth shows up to love me and my family in our grief, telling me concerning death that “it was the only way I could figure out how to create it.” And then she explains that we live on in the spiritual realm, confirming my own experiences of visits from those who have crossed over.

The Earth teaches me new things about the natural world, encouraging me to appreciate the long nights and cold days of winter, reminding me these times are important times of dormancy, keeping insects at bay. She writes, “The cold is so important to your ecosystem. In the mountains, snow creates a water supply for the warmer months. In the temperate zone, cold puts many bugs and pests to sleep and prevents other diseases from taking hold on the population. At the poles, the cold keeps your oceans stable and land masses exposed, not to mention providing home to those cute penguins and lumbering polar bears. It’s all good, Nancy.”

She also encourages me to spend more time with Earth teachers, such as my friend Mary Anna. So I take her advice and go for a walk with my wise friend and discover so many miracles just a block from my home. After receiving the letter, I respond, “(Mary Anna) taught me to read the signs in nature, to look more closely and pay attention, to see love in nature, to realize that beauty comes in unexpected ways... Wow! My heart leaps, my love blossoms, my soul rejoices.”

The Letters help me grapple with, on the one hand, the miraculous adventure of life on this remarkable and amazing planet, and on the other hand, the reality that we humans are quickly destroying the environment on which we depend for life. Left to myself, I might become depressed and despondent, but the Earth constantly calls me to dance and to enjoy life. She tells me, “I didn't evolve you into being over 4.7 billion years to have you sit around like lumps on a log. This is a huge experiment and a wonderful dance. Take joy!”

At the end of the book, I take up the pen to write a letter about the learnings I have gained from the Earth, to share with others. She calls us to be aware, to slow down, to appreciate people, to savor food, to get outdoors and observe nature, to wake up, to speak, to dance, to live in the moment and to love.

Who doesn't want to hear from God about the nature and mysteries of life? This delightful book will engage readers with a positive and uplifting message from our Earth/God in this time of growing environmental change. This quick read will help people awaken to the joy of life while teaching them to speak up for the preservation of our species. This glowing manuscript, *Letters from the Earth*, offers new sacred scripture for our time.