

“Spiritual Cartography”

by Rev. “Twinkle” Marie Manning

Unitarian forefather, Ralph Waldo Emerson, once said that,
“Life is a journey, not a destination.”

Each of us have had a unique, and often winding, path.

Somewhere along the way,
each of our journeys brought us to this congregation.

As Nikki Giovanni said in her poem (“A Journey”)
We are
fellow passengers.

Learning and growing both individually and together.

One thing I have discovered
is that while my path has had many
alternating directions,
turns, stops, starts
and layers to it,
it contains perpetual intersections.

Intersections where lessons held,
principles passed through,
and momentum that seemed to have faltered
was only resting,
waiting for better timing to emerge.

Waiting for clarity to accompany it at the threshold.

Enter:
The Rule of Saint Benedict.
A timeless document,
utilized almost in equal proportion by non-Catholics
as it offers people
an accessible plan for living a
balanced, simple, and prayerful life.

Although written for monks,
the Rule can be applied to life
in the world outside the monastic community.

The qualities
which make up a valued life
- humility,
patience, simplicity,
solitude,
caring for others,
and living in community -

- these are worthwhile for everyone.

The Rule revolves around five practices:
Prayer, Work, Study,
Hospitality and Renewal.

In August I spent a week in a contemplative setting
with fellow seekers
exploring *The Rule*: its individual practices,
and though *not named so*,
we explored our Spiritual Cartographies...

Both how our journeys
led to participating in the cohort,
And
the places we discovered
we were already practicing aspects (all or in part) of The Rule.

I should back up to say that
by the time I was in the summer ministerial cohort,
I had already sketched out
many of the topics and themes
for our upcoming services here in Waterville.

I knew I would be preaching about *Spiritual Cartography*.

A topic where we were to
explore ways humans predict, measure and reflect upon and make
meaning of their spiritual journeys.

When I drafted the original outline,
I anticipated touching upon several things:
the various forms of astrology, for instance,
rising signs and north nodes in particular -
offer indications regarding our **interests and aptitudes**.
Sometimes uncannily so.

How personality tests such as
Myers Briggs and **Clifton Strengths**
can reveal our areas of **power and weakness**
lending to our successes and struggles
and help foster self-awareness for personal growth.

Though with certain established biases.

FYR (for your reference): I am **I N F J**
Introverted, Intuitive, Feeling, and Judging are my prime
traits.

Also known as the **Advocate**.

This profile suggests I am
a *tireless idealist*, sensitive, I care deeply about integrity,
with a *strong desire* for authenticity and meaningful connections and I
want to make the world a better place.

OK - All that might be pretty accurate...

There is also a relatively newer system created in 1987 (by [Alan Robert Krakower](#)) called, **“Human Design”** which combines elements from various ancient and modern disciplines to help individuals understand their unique personality, and decision-making processes, along with their life purpose.

Knowing which of the distinct **“Types”** you are can be fundamental to understanding your Human Design as they influence your role, strategy, and purpose in life.

The Four Primary Types are:
Manifestor, Generator, Projector, Reflector.

And there is a *hybrid Type*:
The Manifesting Generator.

Your Type is calculated by using your birth date, time and location.

I, for instance, using that calculation:
am a “Manifesting Generator.”

Manifesting Generators are described as
“Multi-passionate people who are here to do and accomplish many diverse things.”

That seems to fit,
if you glance at my seeming career diversity for sure!

In fact, I can make meaning out of most of the information provided through various forms of astrology and psychology:

In **Numerology** - at its most basic level of adding together birth date and year - I am a **3**.

The number 3 symbolizes creativity, communication, optimism, and spiritual awareness.

Individuals with strong number 3 energy are said to often be charismatic, artistic, and excel at inspiring others through their words and creative expression.

Here's hoping! :)

Diving a bit deeper into **my personal astrology**:

My **Ascendant or Rising Sign** is Gemini.

A mutable air sign.

Gemini Rising. Ruled in the Zodiac Chart by **Mercury**.

Mercury the closest planet to the sun and rules communication, writing, speech, and intellect.

Geminis have an *“innate ability to communicate effectively and connect with almost anyone.”*

(Please remember that if we ever disagree about anything ;))

Moreover, Mercury endows Gemini-risings with a warm demeanor, natural inquisitiveness, versatility, and a sharp intellect.

Well, if I do say so myself! :)

Also, Geminis tend to see **multiple facets** of any situation and **use logic** to navigate their reality.

And, that, my friends, is necessary because we spend a lot of time in the dream land, and a lot of time in the logic land and it gets tricky to balance sometimes.

NOTE:

Most people who have an affinity towards astrology also find that their sign is the **absolute Best!**

Another aspect of astrology I find interesting are the Nodes of the Moon.

Known as

The North Nodes

in astrology are determined based on groups of years.

Your North Node points to spiritual life lessons –the keys to your happiness and fulfillment.

I was born in 1971.

I am part of the group born between

November 2, 1970, and April 27, 1972

with North Node in Aquarius.

And if any of you in here are in that group - we have work to do!

(We'll talk at coffee hour :))

Aquarius North Node

Indicates my spiritual mission or destiny

in this lifetime centers on humanitarianism and social justice

with innovation and includes a visionary purpose

to bring about positive societal change

and as Aquarius North Node

I will work for the collective advancement

through self-expression.

Hmmm...

Given humans' propensity to make meaning where we can,
I can draw pretty straight lines
from my astrological and Myers Briggs and Human Design charts
to how I experience the world
- — - and, I suppose
how the world experiences me :)

My actual religious and spiritual background
- *which I also had intended on* speaking about
during this Spiritual Cartography service -

is **not** at all a straight line.

It includes Hills, Valleys, Oceans.
Some literal, *all metaphorical*.

Some have said the journey crosses
quantum barriers
in a couple of instances.

It certainly may not seem like
the most direct route
to being here with you today,

but with a birds-eye view,
the trajectory is ever clear.

I was
Raised Catholic
until I asked too many questions
and we left the church
when I was 12 years old.

Our Family then switched to studying with
Jehovah's Witnesses.

Yes - Jehovah's Witness.
I know.
I know.

Do you know, I've read bible cover to cover 3 times
- Cover to Cover.
- 3 Times.
I know.
I know.

After our family stint in the JW world,
I left ALL Religion for a while.

Turned my energies to creating inspirational content as a
○ Radio and Television Talk Show Host and Producer
○ Luxury Lifestyle Magazine Editor
○ Newspaper Columnist
○ Book Publisher
○ Artist....

These intermingled as
I Enrolled in Ministry School,

Switched Spiritual Direction.
Incorporated **really** interesting mediums, including:
Druid Studies,
Earth-based and Esoteric Studies,
Sacred Feminine Studies,

The Mystics,
Cultural History Curriculum,

Culminating in my Interfaith Ministry.

Even as I continued with my other work.

And, it was my other work that opened the door to me being invited here as a pulpit guest for the first time.

One of your members
saw me speak at the PechaKucha event that opened the
Maine International Film Festival here in Waterville years ago (circa
2017).



I was speaking about television production,
yet the topics for success in that arena
are interwoven with the kinds of themes
we explore together here.

- The Journey of Life.
- The importance of following your heart.
- Using Visualization and creating Collaborations.
- Having a support system.
- Lifting each other up
and
- Finding a way forward after sorrows and setbacks.

- Creating a Life You Love.
- Being with people you Love.

She thought I would be a good fit as a speaker for you.
And, I am so grateful for that!
Little did she know I happened to also be a Minister :)

As I was writing this,
(All if this - This week)
a song by Rascal Flatts kept humming its way through my heart and
mind:

The lyrics, in part:

“I set out on a narrow way
many years ago

Hoping I would find
true love along the *broken road*

But I got lost a time or two
Wiped my brow and kept pushing through

I couldn't see how
every sign pointed straight to you...

....God blessed the broken road
that led me straight to you”. :)

That's how I feel about being here. With all of you.

And that's how I felt during my
Summer Ministry Cohort
when we were mapping out
our spiritual paths,
charting the inspirational routes and roots....

and sharing them with each other.

What surprised me most was that while I had
all this in mind to share with you,
(*So I thought I had the jump ahead of the rest of the Cohort!*)

An awareness unveiled itself that

even though yes I can **identify and claim**
various insights of my path's course
Religiously, Astrologically, even Personality wise in addition to my
studies.

My spiritual routes ("r o u t e s").

The actual influences were far more subtle and important.
My spiritual roots ("r o o t s").

When asked to write during that Cohort what "influenced" my
spiritual journey, what flowed out was pretty much this:

My Spiritual Cartography:

Brigadoon

A thousand times - Brigadoon

Brigadoon

and

The Wizard of Oz

The Sound of Music

and

Mary Poppins

Gargoyles

Fairies and fairy godmothers

Touched by an Angel

The Golden Girls

Happy Days

Star Trek

The Matrix

and even:

GH (And, if anyone here knows what GH is, definitely find me at coffee hour!)

“Imagine” - the John Lennon song

Then all the songs **and their singers!**

“Country Roads” - John Denver

“Coat of Many Colors” - Dolly Parton

“Blowin’ in the Wind” - Bob Dylan, yes - - but Really the way Peter, Paul and Mary sang it.

“Bringing Mary Home” - The Country Gentleman - - but Really - the way my Mom sang it.

“Hold On for One More Day” - by Wilson Phillips - an anthem since High School!

“A Case of You” - by Joni Mitchel - for every breakup! Seriously!

“Swimming to the Other Side” - Emma’s Revolution - that’s our anthem - when there are sorrows we see in the world, when there are joys too, we are all Swimming to the Other Side, and that’s what we need to remember when we think we are different than anyone else!

“Sandstorm” - by Darude

“If it all Falls Down” - - by Jimmy Buffet

*- citing the **Calypso Poet** (which is why it’s my favorite Buffet song!)*

Cochrane's "Life is a Highway"

*Penguin Cafe Orchestra's "**Perpetuum Mobile**"* - which seems to curate all the parts of a Life's Map:

The Title, Legend, Scale, Compass, Rose while it gathers up and points to the **hemispheres, axis and poles.**

Perpetuum Mobile -

Shaking and Centering one's

Latitude, Longitude, and pointing to the

Prime Meridian of Your Soul.

Perfection!

Bossa Nova to Reggaeton to the Beat Generation (*which I missed, but my parents sure brought forward to me*)

Jack Johnson,

Van Morrison,

Steely Dan,

AC/DC,

Duran Duran - D2 - just because the memories it holds with life long girlfriends...and the trajectories that took each our lives all across North America. We live thousands of miles apart and we still come back together every few years with each other. Life Long Friendships!

Madonna - Pat Benatar - Whitney Houston

- same. same. same.

John Mayer - can't help it!

The English Beat - you know what I mean - if you Know what I mean!

Freddie Mercury - *Seriously* - he came to EARTH!

Peter Gundry - Hauntingly

Nat King Cole - Soulfully

& Aretha Franklin

& Dionne Warwick

And *that* list is endless!

Rhyme but no reason,

some eerie,

some elating,

some eye-opening, ***alternately*** eye watering,

some just ***present to***

what ever was present with me at any given moment of my life!

And likely yours too!

Abba,

Pink,

Ani DiFranco,

Natasha Beddingfield,

Lee Ann Womack,

Celine Dion,

Dar Williams,

Sara Bareilles,

T. Swift - Hey I have nieces ;)

Nina Simone

Nora Jones

Elis Regina

Elis Regina

Elis Regina!

Jobim
Dylan
Marley

“The Carmen Suites”
“Clair de Lune”

Every Michael Bublé Song!!

(Hey - full discloser = I started playing his Christmas music on Friday and I intend to play it straight through the Holidays!)
We were deprived of Holiday music during that ***aforementioned*** ***“Jehovah’s Witness Era.”***

Plus - September is very hard on our family.
Garnering holiday spirit early is a proven coping mechanism!

“Breathe” - Faith Hill
“Live Like You are Dying” - Tim McGraw
“Who Let the Dogs Out” - Baha Men

Stay with me... Those last two - when they come randomly on the airwaves - and they come on the most bizarre stations at the most random times - they are always - messages from Heaven direct to Me!

“Live Like You are Dying” - from my lost lover
and
“Who Let the Dogs Out” from my lost son - who in church (and I know I’ve shared this before but I need to share it again) when the minister said, “rise and sing” ... That’s all *my* three year old need to hear ...
He stood up on the pew and started singing, “Who let the dogs out!”

I believe them to be Holy Messages when I hear them.

“Everything is Holy Now” - Peter Mayer
“Holy Ground” - Women With Wings
“Let there be Peace on Earth” - Jill Jackson-Miller and Sy Miller
“Turn the World Around” - Harry Belafonte

I can't list them all - even as I speak, more keep flowing.
This is not an exercise for the faint of heart, nor for anyone who does not have abundant leisure time! Because the queue automatically keeps filling and loading!

Music

The Soundtrack of My Life

The North Node of My Spiritual Cartography.

*Echoing its trajectory.
Mapping its course adjustments,
Honoring its celebrations and its sorrows.*

As if they were predicted.

*Informing.
Emoting.
Shepherding.*

*Likewise -
Its Rising Sun:*
Poetry - much I share here each week with you.
Most written by others.
Some written *through* me.

Also:
Nature in all its glory **and horror**.
Sunsets and Hurricanes.
Forest Floor, Floral Scents and Fresh Mowed Grass.
Sand and Sea.

Grounding.
Nurturing.
Assuring.

Affirming

Affirming:

We are alive.

So too **Esoteric experiences.**

Ghosts not ghouls

And *the Knowings - the Knowings* - that come through our Bones.

Reminding - there is *More than* we can imagine!

Art.

and Books ...too many to count.

All Life's Tragedies.

Every Miracle.

Human Kindness.

Human Kindness.

Human Kindness.

And the Rule?

Saint Benedict's Rule.

Revolving around the five practices of

Prayer, Work, Study,

Hospitality and Renewal.

It's all present.

It is present in the **routes** and the **roots**.

The religious studies, the spiritual learnings,
And the music, poetry, art, theater, film,
esoteric and nature-based *human* experiences
that my life has been comprised of.

It is all there.

It is *all* there.

These and more have etched the path to my
Spiritual Cartography.

During Coffee Hour I hope **you share**
glimpses of yours
with me and with each other.

May that be so! Amen & Blessed Be!

Hymn: #211 Climbing Jacob's Ladder

Closing Words

I'd like to close by reiterating the words of Mary Oliver:

*"the stars began to burn
through the sheets of clouds,*

*and there was a new voice
which you slowly
recognized as your own"*

Listen to that beautiful voice.
It is your North Star.

Chart your Spiritual Journey accordingly.