

A photograph of an Antarctic landscape. In the foreground, a dark, calm body of water is filled with numerous small, white icebergs. A larger, prominent iceberg with a blue-tinged top floats in the middle ground. In the background, a steep, rocky mountain peak is partially covered in snow and ice. The sky is overcast and grey.

Off to Antarctica

My Pilgrimage to Peace

by
Ann Keeler Evans

Dedication

To Charles, who loved and was loved by Faye, and who provided a launching pad for exploratory flights of fancy and delight.



To Art, whom I've not yet met, but who shared your Beloved so generously. I've heard so much about you, and through your Beloved's words — Love to you.



To G. Faye Wilson, without you, Antarctica would have been a dream, or a documentary, never a reality. It would have never been gut-busting laughter, shared meals, rolled eyes, sleep-filled plane rides, daring escapades, deep learning, Wonder and Gratitude, Poetry and Music, Divine Grace, and Divine Peace.



We promised to hold each other's hands and help each other over the rocky shores. We did that. And we had so much fun. We shared those we met and all we learned. We realized how well we had learned the lessons that Wilson College and our families taught us about friendship and sisterhood.

We now know that Friendships and Faith deepen and flourish even in the cold, vast Unknown...and, perhaps, especially in the cold, vast Unknown.

Together we'll keep listening for the Truth of Songs.
Thank you, my Friend Faye.

Forever and always, your Friend,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Anna'.

In Deep Gratitude for your Photos:
Dr. G. Faye Wilson, Emily Houck, Helen Herd

Foreword

Antarctica, you forever changed me and left me breathless and delirious...

First: you reminded me of the breadth and depth of friendship. 50-year friends... from a small women's college, where, I swear, I majored in friendship... the French was only so I could talk to new friends wherever I met them... Faye and I talked like women and giggled like girls.

Second: we practiced reciprocal generosity... hers was extraordinary, but on the trip, where one needed and the other could provide, we did. When we could share with others, we did. We wrote a song... in one guide's words: "I've been on 109 Trips... which is about 10,000 folks, no-one has ever offered us such a gift."

Third: While our faith journeys are very different, we are both applied theo/theologians... we put our shared understanding to work. We are both Peacemakers, in different communities and in different ways, but together, we're stronger — and we exalt!

Fourth: Antarctica, in your balance and purity, and to some very great degree the team, in its dedication to you and therefore deep interest in, passion for, and reliance on one another, showed us absolutely different Possibilities for existence.

Fifth: Antarctica, you reminded me:

1. I am a water baby. A beloved friend and teacher of mine, Laura Rose Gatley, is a psychic who reads Akashic records. She reports that I am from a water world: Mintaka. The people from there have a huge affinity for water and a great deal of difficulty understanding why people would not take advantage of their gifts and opportunities. Hunh. I resemble that! It has as many lovely explorations to offer as any other structure, so why

not? Back to the story, I not only loved the Beauty of Antarctica, I loved watching a boat full of people become seduced by its Strength and Beauty.

2. Before I went to seminary, my question was “How do we get ourselves back to the garden again? How do we reimagine Eden?” I have become a Peacemaker in my attempt to answer that question, and in fact, I now believe a better question is how do we see what is here on Earth, how do we not make Antarctica an anomaly, but rather explore the truth of a place that is far larger, far more magnificent, and inclusive, than any garden with a wall. We must know that deeply, because otherwise how can we see the beauty that is this Mystery? In Antarctica there are places where Peace is so overwhelmingly palpable, it is fearsome.
3. I am a theologian. In my last year of seminary, I relinquished my ties to Christianity and dove deep into what I loosely describe as Feminist, Earth-based, Peace-centered, Awe-inspired, Joy-responding, and Community-building. Before I left seminary, I had done a vision quest that introduced me to a vast circle of elder women. Recently I have seen stories emerging about how orcas, elephants, and humans produce menopausal Grandmothers; it now seems there may be more whale species who do that as well. Our purpose as Grandmothers is to hold the Wisdom and transfer Knowledge. Paleolithic villages still reflect this ancient way of being. Rather than the grandmothers, the younger women and children do childcare. Food, safety, rituals, and, perhaps enjoyment and pleasure, are the bailiwick of these Elders.
4. It slowly dawned on me that in Antarctica, my original seminary theological questions both arose and were partially answered — and the quest renewed.

Sixth: Antarctica, you reminded me of my fragility. I am no spring chicken. Walking on wet boulders while in muck boots is terrifying. And my knees were not up to some of the more strenuous climbing. Standing and being awed is pretty

wonderful — especially when you can look at penguins. Riding in a zodiac, watching whales, birds, and seals is phenomenal. At some point, however, I encountered my limits in taking in wonders and being awed. I had to stop, and admire, and then, write. There was no more room. My spirit was in shock. I slept and wrote, and admired from afar, and then slept and wrote again.

Seventh: Antarctica is so very far away. Literally the end of the earth. We visited only a very small portion, so I can't tell you if, when you're at the South Pole, you have to hang on so you don't fall off the world! But it is so foreign. It's a huge landmass (holding 90% of the world's fresh water) surrounded by a current that goes all the way around it, and it is pure water. Very salty water, because when the ice forms, the salt remains! It is also perilous to get there — we had to traverse the Drake Passage also known as the Drake Strait to get to Antarctica. On the way over, the waves were from 3-8 meters. On the way back, the winds were so high we almost couldn't dock, and then our captain found a 20-minute interval in about 18 hours where the wind died down enough that we could. I have never lived where safety was the foremost decider of what we did. I've lived in NY... it's been dangerous... but here every moment you were one bad decision away from needing to be rescued... or being unable to be rescued. It is going to the Moon. It is an interstellar journey. It is, I believe, for the ET aficionados among us, where, when visiting the Earth, they must go to be renewed.

Eighth: What I have seen! I saw three kinds of whales: Fin, Blue, and humpbacks, and others saw a fourth — Minke (which still sounds like Peter Sellers in *Pink Panther*, talking about a different kind of mammal). I had hoped to see orcas, but not this trip. I felt their grandmother energy, however. Four kinds of seals: fur, Weddell, leopard; and I believe we saw crab-eater seals. We saw three kinds of penguins: chinstrap, gentoo, and Adelie; and no, we did not see the emperor penguins who live much farther south than where we visited. (And oh! — even though you can't see

them, penguins have knees. They have a long “apron” to keep their young warm.) We saw at least a bazillion different kinds of birds. Our bird lovers had a field day. I, however, couldn’t take my eyes off the sea... This was one more way that Faye’s and my journey was shared... the sea was her passion as well.

Ninth: I am transforming, not fully transformed. While, of course, that is always the case in Life, this trip’s impact will last forever and, I believe, continue to transform me. A month later as I write this, I am still so discombobulated. I have 40 pages of poetry, soon to be this book. When going through it all with me, my coach selected this stanza from an early poem:

*As much as the notion of Ann against the elements
Makes me Nervous. As. Hell.
It’s the Heartshakes and Aftershocks I most fear.
Am I ready to be destabilized so that I can
Finally find my feet?*

It didn’t much matter... Because I have sat in Beauty and Peace and been, as the French say, *bouleversée*. Now the question is what I make of it; how I make Peace of it; and how I share it with you. I found myself stunned that for some folk, this was simply one more trip that they checked off their list. They were headed out afterwards to take in something else. While I can’t wait to hear from them, I couldn’t conceive of more — this is the beginning of my Life’s Sacred Pilgrimage, shared with a Soul-Friend. This further reveals my Work.

Tenth: I am so lucky to have gone adventuring. I am so pleased to have shared this adventure, first with Faye, and now with you. I can only hope that I can convey some measure of Antarctica’s Beauty, Power, and Mystery, and that I can inspire you to undertake your own Sacred Pilgrimage and return to let us know what you have seen.

Bon voyage! Bon retour!

January 29, 2025 — Home

As work is mostly finished
For the Nonce (which lasts
Most of the way through
February!!!). I release my
Heart to the joy of Anticipation.
I will build on that daily by
Accomplishing needed tasks, small
And large for — as Pooh would
Say — an “Expotition to the
South Pole.” I expect, like Pooh,
That I’ll like the snacks as much as
The journey — and the Friendship:
My Friend and me, adventuring;
Looking for and making Peace!

Pilgrimage to the Edges

I didn't know how to take in this Possibility.
What to think of it, how to shape it —
In my mind or heart.
It is too large, too far, too unknown
And yet I'm hungry for it.

I have questions. About the ends of the Earth...
About what it might teach me.
About what I might explore in my past,
particularly in those broken bits —
In my sojourn to this vast unknown

I thought about other pilgrimages.
Seminary was three years. This feels as important.
How often is one privileged to travel to the edges of
Your Imagination and sail beyond
To the edges of your theology and
Arrive somewhere perhaps very new
Or perhaps somewhere you've always held dear
But never dared to reach toward?

They're reminding us that this is an expedition
That we will not be sitting around, looking out
The window, polishing our nails, polishing off a pot of tea —
Although we will do some of those...
Writing goes better with tea and windows
As much as the notion of Ann against the elements
Makes me Nervous. As. Hell.
It's the Heart-shakes and Aftershocks I most fear.
Am I ready to be destabilized so that I can
Finally find my feet?

As I journey the Peace path,
Two questions are my companions —

Questions I've been turning over in my heart
Since before I walked through the massive doors
On one of Upper Broadway's Educational Edifices:
How do we adequately respond to the Question that
The Great Theologian Joni Mitchell seared in our souls —
And manage to get ourselves back to the Garden?

The next, which is the work that emerged from my studies,
Where is that Circle of Elders with whom I am called
And to which I could not seem to make my way.
The Truth was that what I needed to get there
Was simply more years.
This was always the destination —
I needed older eyes to perceive it.

Today, I have those years.
Today, my soul has a traveling companion
And we have tickets.
On the overmorrow, we take flight.

Oh, well, there's that...

Well, it was certainly unpleasant to realize that
Everything I miscalculated in packing is actually
A fairly clear reflection of the ways I make
My Life...er...um...shall we say, less than convenient?

First, I borrowed a suitcase, that almost, but not
Exactly met my needs. It was old and not as fluid
As today's models, but hey, it was money saved.
Well, right up until, the night before I was leaving
At noon, I zipped it up, plopped it on the floor and
The wheels crumbled away because they were
Well past sell-by date.
As in, it was old and money saved, until it wasn't.

I was already freaking, because, thanks to weather,
I was leaving a full nineteen hours earlier than planned
In preparation, nineteen is a lot of hours to subtract...
Now I had no suitcase, and I live where I live, don't I?
So, at 10:00 I was at Boscov's; at 10:19 I left, suitcase
Rolling merrily along beside...
10:35: I left Best Buy, because of course none
Of my three flashlights worked. Now I have a tiny
Rechargeable bit of light to shed on any given situation.

Home again, suitcases side by side on the bed, transferring
From one suitcase to the next, and look how much more I
can take
Because why miss stuffing any inch full of unnecessary stuff
When there was an inch?

But I was on the curb when the hour sounded, and we
were off.

Antarctica... I hear you calling.

Later, at the hotel, I gratefully went to bed.

February 6, 2025 — Philadelphia

I am trembling with
Excitement as I go to
Meet my friend Faye,
My traveling companion
On this trip of a lifetime.
How is this even possible?
Tonight, we'll fall asleep on
The plane from Miami and
Wake up in Buenos Aires.
It makes no sense; it fills
Me with Grateful Amazement.
There are so many things in
This world that stun with Awe.
Making Peace shares the Awe.



There you are

There! Across a fairly empty check-in lobby
My beautiful friend in her red hat, towing her luggage.
My belly is filled with butterflies (or should I say
Hopping Penguins — did you know they're quite
Good at hopping, those guys, and they have knees, but
You just can't see them?)

But there she is, Faye. Such a Wonder. Such a Joy.
Such a Friend.
We're going, we've decided, hand in hand, like two
kindergartners,
Who've known one another for over 50 years,
Whose college years taught us not only to be good friends
To one another, but more importantly, good friends.
Off to Antarctica, to see what we can see,
To learn what we can learn,
And to discern if just possibly, this is a place
Where certain big-brained mammals have committed Her
frigid waters
And their denizens to Peace.
As has Faye. As have I. Aren't we the luckiest?

Wonderful friend, grab my hand, and we're off to
Discover Antarctica and see whether we can write a song
together.
Then, we settled in to sleep through a long night's flight...

Faye and Ann on an Expedition to Antarctica.
Wow.

February 7, 2025 — Miami

I am about to learn
How very, very large
This world is. I've only
Ever traveled East or
West, with just a tiny
Bit South. But now, I'm
Flying 20 hours South,
And then will travel two
Days South by boat. I
Still will not be at the
Bottom of the world. (I
Will stop to see tango in
Argentina, of course. Me!
Off exploring Peacemaking

Anticipating Wonder

Wonder. Apprehension.

Wonder. Apprehension.

As far as we have come, we still are
Unable to comprehend what we will
Experience. It may all really be far too
Majestic for comprehension.

It will test us, we are told, and we
Believe them. We've seen enough, heard
Enough, and met the capable people who
Are responsible for our wellbeing and
For the continent and its shores.
We're simply tourists, yet also adventurers.
So very few, relatively, have had or will have,
This privilege.

We are pilgrims. Silenced by the majesty.
We are pilgrims. United in this opportunity.
Joyously accepting. Laughter braiding new
Relationships. We will need one another.
We will need to support each other. We
Must be willing to give and to receive —
This trip will challenge our abilities with both.

We are pilgrims, visiting Nature's Vast Wilderness
Confronting our limits, our mortality, and our willingness
To carry this Peace into a world
Desperately in need of its Message.
Salaam, Shalom, Peace.
May we make it so.

February 8, 2025 — Buenos Aires

Arrived! And our baggage too!
We came to Buenos Aires just
In time for rush hour! Haven't
Missed that! But so far, it's a
Beautiful City, we saw the
Congress, a couple churches.
We're now exploring charging
Our phones and considering
A short nap. Sensible decisions
Should wait for sensible brains!
Faye and I both carefully packed
In Black and Red, because we do.
It'll get more exciting. It was a
Long Flight. B.A. Peace awaits us!

Buenos Aires

We embarked upon a journey
To discover — perhaps in ourselves — the empty, unknown
white of the
Seventh continent, and woke up on our very modern plane
To discover that we'd landed in
A hot, speedy, confusing, sprawling metropolis of
Poverty, workers and artists,
Dragging at the skirts of outrageous neighborhoods
with luxurious 18th and 19th century edifices
Documenting the invasion and immigration of a country
rich in resources.
It is a recounting of those who have flourished here
And those who have clung, limpet-like, to the edges,
Demanding to be included.
This is Buenos Aires.
That Rhythm? It's Tango.

All New York ever learned was the Hustle.

The Bandoneon

Bandoneon. To say its name is to hear it
Sobbing deep in your belly.

Bandoneon is the instrument of Tango,
which came to life in the streets and patios
of Buenos Aires, in areas where workers from
Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean arrived.

The bandoneon transformed life when it
Arrived from Germany in 1910 and began
Slowly, rhythmically, longingly
To teach those dancers what Tango music could be.
In the process, it itself was transformed.

That bandoneon is a rather large concertino,
Whose voice is plaintive and seductive.
Before it made its way around the barrio,
It had served the church...
I've spent a lot of time in churches
It seemed an odd addition to sacred music...
It took a lot of listening before I realized the squeeze
Of the box, left the listeners with the chord's resolving Ah-
Into the major -men...

Tension and release, where are you going to leave us?
It will be a surprise, won't it?
But the intensity is never a surprise
Nor is the passion.
Oh, bandoneon... what you know about
The human psyche
And what you teach us, body and soul.
Amen.

February 9, 2025 — Buenos Aires

Our brains are stuffed with the Beauty
And the Stories of Buenos Aires.
All was not as the movie suggested.
Certainly, the beauty of this city
Is unparalleled and intriguing.
The grandeur of the “Continent” —
Europe, I mean, is represented in
The churches, libraries, and
Halls of government. In
Buenos Aires these resplendent
Imported designs proclaim their presence
In this subtropical paradise adorned
By all the flowering trees of the world.
All this was once grassland.

What we learned on the Bus Tour

Over the years, Argentinian government has been changeable

— even volatile.

The Peronistas elevated the rights of the laborers
and the suffrage of women.

But, an Opposition Coup brought about by the Military
and bourgeoisie,

Brutally silenced — for a while — the voice of the people
who suffered

And who suffer still from that harsh rule.

We give thanks for the Mothers, whose mute witness

For the return of their Disappeared children

Finally brought prison walls tumbling down,

Allowing the graves to reveal their brutal secrets.

Is it any wonder the people Tango?

This was a tour worth taking —

We experienced far more than beautiful sights
and fascinating understory.

For four hours they stuffed our heads full of the Culture
and History

Of a beautiful city in a huge land

Where the population per square kilometer is half that of
the US.

I am woefully ignorant of the richness and complexity of
this Culture

I suspect I am not alone.

They stuffed our brains with tour preparations, introducing us

To the concepts of Safety and
Responsibility to one another.

Later they took the silly, early-dinner-eating Americans out
to a Barbacoa...

Oh, the *restaurantes* were very happy to have an early
dinner seating
And to introduce us to the glories of Argentinian grass-fed
beef.

(I was very happy for that as well.)

We spent the dinner hour

Deliberately making Friends and Peace.

Barbacoa and Other Fabulous Foods

This trip would remind me again and again:

That while I like a wide variety of food —

I am really a red-meat-lovin' gurl.

I know that's hard for some people to hear: after all,

It's not as if we're all not aware

We need to eat less of it —

For our well-being and for the world's.

The more you hear about fishing, though, you realize —

Humans have been no less greedy exploiting the Sea

Than they have the land.

Food and Humans are a difficult combo;

We never know when enough is enough.

Nonetheless, whether it was the Argentinian grassland beef

And oh, oh, oh, that was something...

Or spit-barbecued lamb of Ushuaia, another lovely delicacy,

Both were heaven on a grill.

I also swooned over grilled fish, which was a frequent delicacy on board.

Then Breakfast always had good salami on delicious bread,

However, I soon discovered and daily indulged

One perfect Egg Benedict built with avocado

And the ship's smoked salmon,

All in all, there were many days of food happiness

On land and on water.

Buen Provecho!

February 10, 2025 — Ushuaia

Pack. Pack. Pack.

Stuff. Stuff. Stuff.

Hurry. Hurry. Hurry.

At last, here we are, Groups Red and Green,
Maneuvering through Baggage Check. Passport Check.

Gathering ourselves, practicing the interminable
Airport Lounge waiting — interrupted only by
The consumption of quite lovely breakfast pastries,
Enjoyed as we prepared fly to Ushuaia.

We know more names today.

We're becoming completely prepared to

Be completely unprepared! Together.

Our trip leaders are making community from strangers.

We're making Peace. Together.



The Peace Albatross

When you talk about a Peace bird
The laurel-carrying dove is what usually comes to our minds

—

Although on this trip, the snowy petrol soaring through
Antarctic skies

 Would come to be a familiar sight darting by
 Reminding me of my responsibility to Peace.

In Ushuaia's town Park, a sculptor chose to interpret Peace
In the enfolding wings of a gigantic white stone albatross.

 Nestled within are white stone flames around which
 White Stone depictions of Indigenous People find shelter.

Albatross are known for their ability to soar for miles
Without flapping their wings,

 Trusting the winds to move them.

They are good parents, feeding and nurturing life
In harsh and challenging conditions.

Ushuaians, too, need that care and comfort. They need that
Peace.

We, as we enter the mystical world of Antarctica,

 We need that Peace as well,

In order to prepare for all that we shall see.

February 11, 2025 — The Drake

I will not lie. Trepidation was
Was part of the boarding process,
Especially when augmented by
The initial Presentation. They'd
Checked the weather. We would
Be part of the Drake Shake.
And it is challenging, up and down
And side to side. Luckily the
Herbal patches are working.
However, the group is spectacular
So are our Trip Leaders. And the Boat Folk.
I watch the horizon as I write.
Keeping Peace with seven-meter waves.
Oops! Watch out!



Recalculating on the Beagle Channel

It is Day One aboard the World Explorer
And the Seas are wild.
Still, somehow, not wilder than my Heart.

I have made two very big decisions so far:

First, I don't need to do anything where my lack of skill
Will interfere with my enjoyment.

What, you ask?

I don't have to take photos —
There will be plenty. Plenty very good photographers,
Plenty very good photos.

Second, I need to expand toward what fascinates me.
Last night, my conversation about whales with
Ema, ship microbiologist and guide, thrilled me.
She rather quizzically entertained my questions
About the possibilities of Whales' having a spirituality —
She wasn't clear it was possible — or —
That we would be able to understand it;

Later, she allowed me to read her cards.
Fascinating. I will offer readings to more folk who want
them.

Today, as I was behind, I wrote two musings, and
I read — always with one eye on the window of our suite.
I indulged in exploring my Wonder; my Writing; my Awe:
This is the luxury I owe myself.

In these ways I can say thank you —
which I've learned, grâce à Chiheb's careful tutoring,
Is *shogrun* in Arabic.

Wild, respectful gratitude is what is owed
To all that is transforming me, and
To the Friendship that generously shared a dream.

February 12, 2025 — The Drake

Today we learned about
Whales. Whales! And we're
About to learn about Birds.
Mal de mer has claimed a
Goodly few, but Faye and I
Flourish, excitedly rejoicing in
The privilege of what we're about
To see. Already the blue water
And the silver of the Sun bouncing
Off the waves is gift enough for
The day. Dayenu. And Hallelu!
The Sea moves, sings, changes.
We must be without expectation
Other than Gifts of Peace and Awe.



Whales

We were at tea on Deck Seven, all of us obediently
Carrying our jackets and our cameras,
Because – you never know.

Sure enough, “Whales!” someone shouted, and out we ran,
Stuffing our arms into our new, yellow, World Explorer coats.
We crowded by the rail, as guides explained that this
Was a fin whale, the second largest whale in the world.
“It’s not every day, or every trip,” we were told, “that
These appear.”

We all milled excitedly, looking for the best view,
Exclaiming to everyone about the joy and privilege of this.

Then it there was. A short silence and a gasp – or at least,
That’s what it must have been.

It was as if our guides had been raptured up to stand on
The engine cover behind us, three-foot telephoto lenses
Appearing out of nowhere.

No sound but that of cameras furiously clicking.
Hushed voices whispered “Now, that’s a blue whale.”
Not just one, it was three. Three of the largest animals
To ever roam the earth.

Each about 110 feet and up to 330,000 pounds of whale
Right in front of us.
Perhaps a mom, a companion, and a baby.
Not completely unusual, but rare, as they are loners.

We had never seen them. Obviously.
More surprisingly: our trip leader had never seen them.
My friend who worked many years here; never seen them.
And our captain had never seen them.
Our captain – who sails these seas on the regular...

This was the first gift that encouraged us
To bond with shipmates.
Anyone allowing their wonder-filled eyes to meet ours,
Became a person with whom we could share
This voyage to the farthestmost reaches of the Earth.

Just a little later, while we were eating dinner,
The humpbacks — not to be outdone by giants —
Showed up on both sides of the boat,
Breathing, breaching, and slapping those tails.
Then, suddenly there were penguins
“Porpoising” through the waves.

At this point my wish list was finished.
What wonders could be next?

February 13, 2025 — The Drake

We awoke to high clouds and
Much calmer seas. Another
Eight hours in the Drake, but
Walking will be more easily
Accomplished. Today the drills
Begin, bringing realizations:
First, this land is pristine, sacred;
We must live honoring that responsibility.
Second, this land is dangerous;
We must be vigilant and care for
Our neighbors. Our joking trip leaders' miens
Sobered: Be attentive, we are warned —
Notice the majesty.
The treaty on this continent is for Science and Peace.



Safety

The zero card

In my *Peacemaker's Tarot for the 21st Century*

Is Innocence.

It is the beginning of the journey to Wisdom.

It is almost as long a journey from Innocence to Wisdom

As it is from Lewisburg to the South Shetland Islands and Antarctic waters.

In an effort to stay focused on Possibility,

I foreswore both reversals and ominous warnings.

I built each of my cards with two powerful and complementary strengths

Dancing on a Möbius.

Innocence balances curiosity, which makes us grow and stretch,

Within safety's confines.

Whenever we explore beyond the bounds of good sense

We startle and scurry back to safety.

Safety builds stability and weight —

Offering a firm counterbalance when it's time,

Once again,

To Innocently venture forth on a quest for

What will eventually

Become half of the Wisdom that Innocence seeks.

It wasn't until Green Group gathered in the quite posh basement

Of a Buenos Airean hotel that we were introduced to

Safety as the foundation of our journey.

I think we all took it with a grain of salt —

Until we didn't.

As we sailed out of Ushuaia under a bright and shining rainbow...

We deemed this a good omen: We will share a great trip.
And so we did.

Safety would be what created any and all opportunities
To explore curiously.

If it wasn't safe, we didn't do it —

Because there is nothing remotely safe about
That land, those waters, those birds or those beasties,
That Beauty balanced by its Exquisite Danger.

Risks were judiciously determined by experts
Who wanted more than anything to open this Miracle to
our gaze.

It's stunning to realize —

Miracles and safety coexist curiously well.

February 14, 2025

On a day when everyone
But one person whom I
Have ever loved for a lifetime
Is Continents away, I am falling
In Love, day after day, with
Majesty and Beauty. Here
There is a Peace beyond all
Understanding — for the first
Time, I understand it to be Great
And Fearsome. There is no
Looking away from the grandeur.
Icebergs and Krill. The blue of
A deep crevasse. Oh, the penguins.
The unfathomable Peace of whales.



Hush Little Whale Child

(sung to *Hush Little Baby, Don't You Cry*)

Hush little whale child
Sleeping on your wave
Mama is watching,
You've no need to be brave.
Shut half your brain off,
Drift right off to sleep
Mama is watching
Rocking on the mighty deep.

Hush little Penguins
Your birth is quite a feat
You spend your beginning
Cuddled on parental feet.
While your Papa warms you,
If your Mama's hunt is good,
When you squawk in hunger
She'll regurgitate your food.

Life is uncertain
For every parent's child
Born with modern medicine
Or brought forth in the wild
Birth is so uncertain,
Dangerous and raw
Yet, what an honored process —
We await your birth in awe.

To the Whales and to Faye...

Most of my birth family has died. Amazingly
I have gone to look at whales with every member
Of my birth family. I'm lucky Tom is left with whom to
reminisce
I have also Joyously watched for whales in the company of
dear friends.

Before this last whale-filled adventure, my sister and I
traveled to Alaska

Only two months before she would die of cancer.
Looking back, I wonder that she managed to make it
through that trip,
Saying yes to every adventure.
Sitting in the crow's nest,
Drinking wine,
Watching... watching... watching

The thrill of the bubble feed was incredible enough
To draw her to her feet.

Hey Deb —In Antarctica the bubble feed is a lunge.
Going sideways; gulping up all the brine. Slurp!
That was a one of the most astonishing times in my life
All those Jaws thrusting up through the surface
Knowing that somewhere deep below
An elderly matriarch had called the circle, giving the
signal
To the all the whales blessed to mate this year
Knowing what I know about my sister, she may now be
swimming in Beauty...

This winter, Faye, Dear SisterGrandmother with the whales,
and I

Sat in zodiacs, watching these huge and fascinating
creatures

The waters were lousy with whales (Four kinds, Four!!!)

Faye captured the picture that stuns the world...
I keep thinking of that old song and wanting to rework it:
Howzabout?

“But would you rather swim with a whale —
Ride a zodiac right on his tail
Letting go of all that might ail
As we grow old, let’s both be whales.”

Grandmother Faye, dear sister of my heart and song,
We honor the grandmothers who lead this part of the world
To Perfect Balance, Perfect Peace. Here’s to Grandmothers
making Peace.

February 15, 2025

Good morning! Rise and shine,
He bellowed. Come watch our
Progression through the ice. In
That instant, I realized how happy
I was to be single. No one, cheery
Or no, speaks to me in the morning
Cheer arrives inexorably, but slowly
Every day. Silently, I begin to make
Sense of the Beauty of each day. That's
It, it's official. I'm an Elder, tending
My energy and Joy, so there is enough
For the day. But I forgive him, because
We wove in and among Icebergs of Peace.



Lemaire Passage

This early morning was all about the captain
Who danced this gigantic ship through a series of
Narrow canyons of rock, glaciers, icebergs, and sea ice.
Up 'till now, we had mostly taken his work for granted.
We had no clue how many storms he avoided
On the Drake, we only knew the seas we sailed were
The calmest Water he could find, allowing us
To go to bed, with wild seas to rock us to sleep.
 We staggered down halls,
 Kept our hands out of doorjambs, and
 Refrained from carrying hot drinks around.

Today, this sea was like glass.
Icebergs were lacy in the early morning light;
The sea birds, raucous, while
Seals on their floes were too lazy to do anything
 But wave absent-mindedly, turn their backs,
 And go back to sleep.

There were whales — of course, there were.
For those of us lucky enough to be on this trip,
There were always whales.

The dance our Captain did with his ship and
This ice was no wild do-si-do, but
Rather a polite minuet, never coming
Too close to a partner for fear of
Offending or breaking protocol.

By late afternoon his persnickety dance partner
Had closed her doors for visits.
We would take the long way round to be in place
For our next day's sightseeing.

But on that early morning,
In Lemaire's Company and the Captain's,
We saw Magical sights and transient beauty,
And were transfixed.

Afterwards, breakfast was as full of delicious
Conversation as it was delicacies — and calories.
Just another day of wonder for those who knew
They weren't really Explorers
But, nonetheless loved the experience!

Later that Day I caught the captain on the steps
Normally, I would just nod,
But I had to say to him,
“Today was amazing! Thank you!”
His head whipped around and a grin blossomed:
“Wasn't it ah-mazing?”

February 16, 2025

The soft stillness was
Broken only by our
Gasps of awe. And then,
Whales galore. Normally,
Humpbacks are solo
Hunters, but today, the
Mamas had their babies
With them. They were
Lunging, they were loafing
Mamas watched over as
Babies slept. The stillness
Was extraordinary and we
Were encased in silent mist.
This Peace is vast and profound.



In the Holiness of Paradise Bay (!)

“It is through the wounds the light gets in.” — Rumi

*“There is a hole in everything, that’s how
The light gets in.”* — Leonard Cohen

Antarctica welcomed me to Paradise Bay which will, for me,
Forever after be the cathedral of my renewal;
Until I entered, I didn’t know how deep my longing lay.
Yet, then, all at once, there I was...
Paradise Point was Vast, Mysterious, and Silent.
Who were we all to be offered this gift?
Who were we to visit this Place of Peace?
The water was still. Damian shut the engine down.
There we rested, breathing slowed, waiting to receive.

The pause extended, aching, pregnant.
This is one Place where Peace dwells.
The Silence was enough:
I was Present. I was Present in/to Peace.
Peace acknowledged my heart.
Whatever happened here, earlier, in marauder’s hands,
 Has been forgotten, forgiven;
Nature continues untroubled by our incursions;
Absorbing, cleansing, existing in this moment. And the next.
In the silence, overcome,
I pulled my shirt over my head and wept.

Then, the whales appeared, ending the Great Silence.
Establishing a Joyful Hallelujah Chorus for Peace.
Bubbling, breathing, lunging — breaking the silence.
We, witnesses to all this wonder — exalted; how could we not?
The whales trumpeted, celebrating
The Sweet, Great Peace of Paradise.

In the water, a leopard seal frolicked; another followed.
On a floe, a Weddell's seal yawned and stretched —
Weighing in on the whole (and when I say weighing...)
Some gentoo penguins porpoised by, of course, they did.

Completing the call and response:

We, the humble observers, exploded in delight.

I continued to weep, on and off, all day.
Another whale fluked and dove.



February 17, 2025

I have been wondrous places in my life.
I luxuriate in deep and loving friendships.
I give thanks for all of this.
But I have never been in a place
So Still So Holy
That I could do nothing other than
To pull my shirt over my face and weep,
While my heart broke open within me.
I knew then I would never be the same.
There are those in the world
Who know how things work or
What things are
I know only
There is Mystery. There is Peace.



Polar Plunging With Faye

The polar plunge was understood between us.
We had bonded over polar plunging
(or so we called it) in Lewisburg, PA.
She came to visit the Ice Festival
“There’s a Polar Plunge? It’s on my
Bucket List!” Well, Betty Evans’s daughter
Was no one to tell a guest they weren’t
Bonding over cold water. Mom would
Swim anywhere!!! And off we went,
Two Wild Wilson Women, and dunked
Our fannies in the Susquehanny.
It was Divine.

And I have dunked since, keeping faith with the friendship.
Last year, Mme. Poet Laureate led the Parade
And the dunk.
It was 45°. Practically balmy.

I would have dunked in Lewisburg this year, howeverrrrrr
They changed the date.
Alas, still, only one Polar plunge.
In Antarctica, to be sure. As one does.
In accordance with my limerick lines from my village
First, we lunged and then, we plunged!
And we now have a patch to prove it!
(Thankfully the staff reminded us to breathe so
We could find the damned stair steps.)
Been there, done that, have the patch, skipped the T-shirt.

Polar Plunging Because...

The wannabe plungers are lined up
One by one along the left side of the hallway
Only a few of us are looking fit and fabulous in swim togs
The rest of us are pretty much just looking
Completely underclad in something skimpy —
Particularly now that we're so well padded
After all the meals on ship.
We're all wearing a totally not-big-enough,
not-warm-enough,
White cotton-terry robe and some insufficient footwear.

On the right side those who recently plunged
Are struggling to pull on their robes over a towel
Still not able to catch their breath
Still euphoric because — as weird as it sounds —
You are as alive right then as you ever have been or will
ever be
Perhaps because you are so aware
How very close to death you were
And that if that very kind man wouldn't have told each of us
“Breathe” in a most commanding voice —
Dr. Mike, was that you? —
All of us might have forgotten to ever breathe again.

But then, I was still dry and waiting, and she was wet,
this stranger,
With a smile too large for her face
“How was it,” I asked. “Wonderful!” she replied. I confided:
“Faye and I made a deal when we decided to come —
If we're going to Antarctica, we're going to plunge.”

“I did it because my son's no longer here, but if he were,
If he were, he would have plunged. I plunged for him,”
She said, folding her cold, very wet body into my dry
warmish one.

Wrapping my arms around her, I held her as she sobbed and sobbed.

I don't know how I knew to ask her.
I don't know how this stranger knew she could trust me.
"What was his name?" I asked. "I will carry his heart on
my plunge,
Along with my niece's and nephew's,
Now both gone — one of suicide, one, drunk driving."
His name was Matthew.
Their names were Chad and Jan.

Remember them. Plunge feet first into life
In your names, in theirs, remembering.

And when it's all just too shocking —
Listen when the guy on the platform tells you
To "Breathe!"

February 18, 2025

I'm not taking pictures, as
I take horrible pictures. So,
Why bother? And plenty of
People will send them to me,
But I write and I write. I have
Found if I don't write, I become
Heartsick and overloaded. When
I stop, things cascade out of me.
Oh, my friends, what I have seen;
What I have heard; what I have
Been taught; what I have Imagined.
I cannot comprehend how long it
Will take for this to organize and find place within me.
This Peace is Awesome and Fearsome.

Emergent Poet and Tarotist Responds to the Power of the Pole

Among the many lessons Antarctica had waiting for me
Was that I needed to make some decisions.
I have contributed in many places,
Now my call is to commit, to become fully, let me say this
out loud
Ann Keeler Evans, Peacemaker, Poet, and Tarotist.

Even my work as a chaplain falls in the poetic realm.
Surprisingly, Poetry, verse, is not necessarily
A popular or even clearly understood thought
By many professional religionists —
despite their holy books being full of it.

People ask me what I believe about Life and the Afterlife.
What matters more than my beliefs
Is what supports people as they're healing
And as they're dying.

Any place I encountered Peace in Antarctica
There were no limits to Peace
No limits to Grace —
And Grace is the language of Peace
Grace is the language of Life
And it is indeed the language of Poetry.

My work is to reach into the Loving, Grace-filled Peace
Finding the words to become
The One who Accompanies, narrating the Nearly
Inexpressible.

February 19, 2025 — The Drake

We did it. The words claimed me,
I added a sweet, simple tune and Faye
Found the music that shaped and lifted it
All to something stronger, more inclusive.
She made a place for our fellow
Travelers to add their hearts. We
Sang and played, and we were
Joined by a cloud of witnesses
To the Grandeur of Antarctica and
Hospitality of those who introduced
Us to its Magnificence. We were there;
We were all there together, we were there.
Wisdom, Power, Beauty, cascading through me;
We were all there together in that Peace.

Antarctica, We Are Here

by Faye Wilson and Ann Keeler Evans

*We all came here for so many reasons.
For some, it was a long-held dream.
For some it was the seventh continent.
For others, it was an invitation to join.
And then, all of a sudden it was You. Antarctica called us.
We came with Family. We came with Friends.
We came alone, open to new people and new Possibilities.
Antarctica called us: So, we came;
We found each other; And we found You.*

And we are here. And we are all here together,
we are here.

It is quiet; it is holy, it is vast beyond all knowing,
We are all here together, we are here.

And we are here. And we are all here together,
we are here.

Antarctica, you beauty, you have gathered us all
to thee.

We are all here together; we are here.

| | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Whale watching | humpbacks lunging | staff chatting |
| Glacier gazing | humpbacks sleeping | staff tending |
| Zodiac zooming | humpbacks fluking | guides guiding |
| Kayak paddling | sun silvering | guides teaching |
| Paddle boarding | sun gleaming | Ice tasting |
| Seals swimming | seals lolling | polar plunging |
| Clouds shading | clouds lightening | Hope rising |
| Beauty perfecting | | |

And we are here. And we are all here together,
we are here.

It is quiet; it is holy, it is vast beyond all knowing,
We are all there together, we are here.

And we are here. And we are all here together,
we are here.

Antarctica, you beauty, you have gathered us all
to thee.

We are all here together; we are here.

February 20, 2025 — The Drake

Flurries of Goodbye:
Goodbye to the guides who
Helped us to see and experience;
Goodbye to the staff that made
This very tough trip so very cozy;
Goodbye to the kitchen and staff
Oh, my, my, such food! Such care;
Goodbye to the people we met
Casually, not part of our groups
With whom we shared wonder;
Goodbye to Antarctica, Blessing us
Beyond all knowing — Beauty, Power
Purity, Wisdom, Sacredness, and
An Iceberg-strewn Sanctuary of Peace.

We Knew It Was the End

It was a stuttering sort of goodbye,
Although I guess we'd been withdrawing a bit.
Packing every last little thing down in our bags,
Checking one more time, just to be certain,
Through all the nooks and crannies of the room,
Assuring the tips were paid,
And the bags outside our doors.
One last lovely breakfast and final hugs with staff
Who had with their work and their generosity
Fed, taught, encouraged, and led us,
Watching over us as we emerged as fairy-like entities
Who had seen and been seduced by Antarctica's Wonders.
Our captain had just barely managed to dock
In the twenty minutes the wind died down.

Prolonged farewells were avoided as we
Tucked ourselves back into Madeleine-like lines,
Group, by group, departing for the airport,
From where, after days that flowed mistily in colors of
Black, white, grey, and a million shades of blue,
We would suddenly be returning to a city.
It didn't seem possible.
But there we were.
No time to think things over, there was security to clear.

February 21, 2025 — Buenos Aires, Iguazu Falls

The most amazing waterfalls.
Iguazu Falls. Lacy, Dancing
Water that still, somehow,
Managed to thunder. Both
Higher and wider than Niagara — (Yet for
Very scientific reasons running less water).
We crossed to Brazil to see
The falls we cannot see from
Argentina, traveling through
An ecological National Park.
I understand Understory better
Now. At the end we were blessed
By the Mists and a rainbow.
I bow my head in Gratitude and Peace.

Iguazu Falls

Let me start with how much I love waterfalls.
And these waterfalls, casting their lacy shawl
Across three countries were gorgeous as they
Cascaded their way down the drops.
And then there was that Moment, toward the end,
When we stood, faces lifted, drenched in
The Fall's mists which were a sweet blessing —
The caress and purification were palpable.

These falls are tucked deep within a Brazilian National Park.
This is an ancient, old-growth tropical forest, lush and green.
We looked at bird and animal and were richly rewarded as
Every glimpse was yet another opportunity
To breathe the Beauty in.

The altitude and the temperature were shocking to
Our bodies after our sojourn in the Antarctic.
My mother's daughter was feeling her heritage
As the humidity and the soaring temperatures
Reminded her she's no longer a Summer gurl.

It's a hard lesson, but one I have to honor.
Add that lesson to the overwhelm I was still
Feeling from all I saw and learned in Antarctica,
And I stayed home the next day and slept.

Faye went, however, and she saw the Great Falling Waters
From another vantage and also a few turtles making
Their slow, deliberate way towards their end goals.
We're very like them in that... Well and also like the lizards...

February 22, 2025 — Iguazu Falls, Buenos Aires

Last night was the last night.
Today we eleven who are left
Shall fly to Buenos Aires, repack,
Enjoy a last meal together and
Then fly off to different destinations...
Hopefully, sleeping soundly in our
Very comfortable seats. We have
Been so very far from our daily lives,
It is hard to believe that this is what
The end of an expedition looks like.
I know, deep down, that I am living
Just a bit in suspended Animation.
This voyage has changed me profoundly.
Sweet Peace of the Southern Deep to you.

Testing My Limits

I have always been somewhat profligate —
In Joy as in other things.
All in all, it hasn't been a terrible way to live.
Amazing has long been my favorite word
And in my day,
(With the you, young whippersnappers!, silent but understood),
I have managed to convert a goodly few to its use,
And Heaven knows little Joys and Delights never go amiss.
They're light, grateful caresses the Divine must be pleased
to receive.
Who doesn't want to hear "Good job done?"

At the moment, The Antarctic has wrapped my heart in
Mystery
In shades of white, grey, and so many shades of blue —
Which is a color I know so very little about.
Once at home, even as I acknowledge having gulped in
A few brief glances at the forsythia — early spring delight! —
I soon return to enumerating the blessings and the lessons
Of that Vast, Overwhelming, Incomprehensible Peace.

February 23, 2025 — Dallas, Philadelphia, Lewisburg, Home

Sarajane will meet me in
Philadelphia, and we will
Make our way home through
The cold, a different cold,
From the cold that has just
Recently been my lived
Experience. At this point,
I can't even imagine my
Home, because I'm in the
Mystic. It's dangerous, we
Don't dare to imagine its
Real, but it's an invitation
To imagine and to remember
How much more Peace awaits.

It's Not That I Don't Love My Home

It's not that I don't love my home,
It's just so foreign to me right now.
I don't really know how to make sense of this place
That less than a month ago was the cauldron of my
creativity.
I could stir and stir and wonderful things would bubble up.
You have to be grateful for that, right?
And I am, indeed I am...

But it seems my soul has gone walkabout and no longer
dwells
Safely with me in this place of comfort and shelter.

I, like so much of life, seem to be inhabiting the vast
Terrain of the Places In-between.

My heart stuttered in That Place of Perfect Peace
It was shattered in ways that I suspect are irreparable...
As if anyone would ever want to shove this Wonder
Into a container that held a much smaller heart and soul.

Absolutely familiar, warm comfortable, home.

Unsettled, unwilling to perch, open
I'm not sure how much.

I'd invite you in for a cup of tea, but it would be
Incredibly disorienting if you
Were more comfortable than I
In my house.

I suspect I might live a long time in this Unsettlement House.
My Mother's paintings of these beautiful Pennsylvania hills
both comfort and confound.

I live here.
Vast Nothingness inhabits me.

February 24, 2025

We sat in the hotel, getting
Ready to go sit in the airport.
No one was really talking, as
We were tired — and we didn't
Really want to dwell on Goodbye,
Now that we're in the process.
We've been together now for
Eighteen days, experiencing
Something grand, something
Out of our world, if not out of
The world. I'm going to have
To sit for a long while with the
Deep and lasting Truth of all
The Peace that was Antarctica.

Returning

T. S. Elliot once wrote:

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

February is often the messiest month of the year,
Here in Central Pennsylvania.

It rains, it snows, it sleet, and these days,
If you're very unlucky there can be tornados.

Power can disappear for hours or days.

And so we left, Faye and I, off to explore something
We longed to — perhaps because it was too foreign to
conceive of.

Explore! As if we did that. Yet there we were, peering into
crevices

We stood on islands (and she on mainland) and tried to fathom
A world where there existed something that might someday
become

A plant, but only if the Leaders of the so-called free world
completely

Fuck up the world and warm it up. But then it won't matter
because

So much of the world will disappear under sea water
That is not-salty-enough to sustain the life that lives there now,
Because after all 90-percent of all the fresh water on this Earth
Is here on Antarctica. Shame on us.

We went there full of trepidation —
How often do you travel to the Moon?

We drank deep of its Beauty and Power and Peace.

And then we got in our little metal tubes and traveled back
To from whence we came: Dazed. Blinking.

Not knowing who we were now

And how we would live in this place.

But knowing, Faye and I, that we had been to the Wonder
and been Transformed.

We'll tell you later how.

And into what —

This is the thing I really can't comprehend.

So nice to see you again.

February 25, 2025

I'm home. I emptied suitcases.
Sorted clothes into piles. Laundry.
Bought groceries. More wash;
Wrote more Poems. Ate real food.
Twice. More poeming; more washing.
Stupid scrolled. Accomplished some
Excellent staring into space. All on a
Monday morning, afternoon, evening.
And still there is much to do. All day
I listen for familiar voices that do not
Belong to my daily life, began to wait
For Faye, who is home with Art. (Yay!)
When I part my curtains, there's grass.
Still, I rock in the bosom of Antarctica Peace.

Well, there's this:

Here's the truth — I don't separate well.

I was never good at leaving

Always hangin' around even after we'd said goodbye,

Thinking... oh, maybe they'd be willing to change this one thing

Then it'd be ok that we're leaving —

You know the sort of thing... like willingness to admit

There was cheating going on — and it wasn't really my fault.

As El always said, if he couldn't tell the truth when you were involved,

there's no chance he's gonna do that when he's not getting any.

Oh, yeah, right.

And this? This was just a rendezvous. I met 50-plus of you lovely folk,

We spent some number of wonderful days together,

Worried about each other's

Seasickness

Waterproof pants

Stories that you shared

And we laughed a lot

Rode in zodiacs

Were delighted by penguins

Curious about all the different whales

And the unbelievable amount of birds.

I know what you eat for breakfast

And how you laugh

And now, we'll probably never meet again.

Vacations are weird. Wonderful. Weird.

I certainly had a great time.

February 26, 2025

It's an odd feeling to know
That you have been transformed
And yet have no idea how or how
Much or into what? More me,
I think (I hope... I'd hate to have
To completely start over.) Still,
It feels that all of my atoms have
Been cast up into the air, coated
With profound and ice-blue Peace,
and have not yet settled into Ann.
I'm sure that will come. For the
Nonce, I write, I wash, I tidy, I
Ground myself in my daily life —
In its Peace and deep Beauty.

“You’re Going to Write, You’re Going to Write, You’re Going to Write.”

Somewhere, in the back of my head
I hear a voice echo: a Proclamation
Ann, you’re going to write.
Those were the words of a psychic —
At no point did a teacher ever utter
Those words, that encouragement, to me.
At no point really, in those days, did
Anyone think to ask me what I saw
Except that one time at seminary —
A young man, spurred on by a preacher’s directive,
Ever say, Sister, I know you have seen things
I don’t understand, will you tell me what you have seen
And I wept, not knowing how to construct the words —
Knowing at 35 I was going to be a Grandmother Elder
But not knowing where to seek counsel
Let alone how to put that pen to paper.

At no point did anyone ever guide me
In honing my then unclaimed craft
Or demand I learn use my voice.
At no point did anyone ever whisper
That I could trust the Truth within

These days, I write as I can. Because it matters.
These days, I write because there is no still, small voice
within me
But rather a Virago filled to her very teeth with words
A Wise Woman gentled with Wisdom
That is as yet unconfirmed.

Now, when I write so much like myself
And in so much of a hurry to Get. Truth. Out.

Now, when I often miss connector words,
Writing by sound as I do, not knowing what's
Going to appear on the page
Now when I've visited this vast reservoir of Peace
And have begun to suspect how much truth
And how many questions lie within
One thing, I know.

I'm going to write.
I'm going to write.
I'm going to write.
This I swear before the Great Peace.

Poetry.
Or, is it Psalmetry?
Is it simply all that is Sacred and Holy?

February 27, 2025

Damned Maps,

You great Deceivers! Euro-USA-centric maps teach us USA is huge. When I picked up my phone finder the last place I "lost" My phone was in Buenos Aires, 5,350 miles. I then traveled another 1,300 miles to Ushuaia and another 1500 miles to Antarctic Waters and then a good bit to see Land. North America is 9.5 million sq miles. South America, 6.9 million sq miles. Antarctica, 5.5 million sq miles. The world is huge and Mostly unfathomable with Mysteries beyond All comprehension. Many Discoveries ahead! Antarctica taught me Peace is Possible.

Antarctica taught me Peace is Possible

Antarctica taught me Peace is Possible

Well, ducky for Antarctica —

How do I live within and yet far away from that Reality?

I know what Peace is for me, to me — It is what I believe in.
What I trust.

What am I to it? Does it believe in me? Can it?

Although it is eternal and ongoing

Does it require my wonder to share it with the world?

I'm self-conscious and uncertain.

I'm called — but to where? What?

Antarctica is everything, but maybe not the point?

Although I needed to see it, to be able to imagine and
believe

I suspect I don't need to be there

Still

To learn the lessons of Enduring and Possible Peace.

But it certainly is confusing.

My head is full of the Holiness of Silence.

It is vast and oh-so-calm. Empty but burgeoning.

Or is it instead,

That I am separated from Meaning at the moment

In the same way Antarctica is separated from the world

By the Antarctica current, running clockwise round

A continent.

I guess this is the through the glass darkly part of

The soul's journey...

March 7

I've been working a lot
On trusting the process.
It's been a month. When
I flew to Argentina, I had
To put my trust in my Body,
My Friendship, my tour group,
And a continent that feels/felt
Like the Moon. The inhabitants
Were as foreign as the waterscape,
Even/Especially the ones I never
Saw. Then and now, I am called
To trust the Unknown. And, that
Is a big challenge. The Future unfolds
Only at the rate of Peace.

In the Heart of Peace...

Even as I hold Peace in my heart — or try to —
As it is essentially unknowable...

I think that perhaps Peace holds Friendship within its heart
All Friendships.
But in the heart of this Antarctic Peace
My Friendship with Faye is seen, known, cherished
For itself
And because we were willing to see and seek to know
Peace.

Why can my friend Faye and I open our hearts and souls
To one another —
And our Music?
We can mess it up and still trust that
The whole thing is going to work out
And others are going to trust us to move them.

It's not every day that such friendship beckons.
It's not every friendship that offers these gifts.
But oh, it is this one that trusts the soul and the body
To leap into frigid seas and stand singing before crowds
To giggle, while making a place for the other
Not to act on her baser instincts
To sustain and encourage one another
To do our best in our daily lives
And to go adventuring beyond our wildest dreams
To a Place where Peace dwells, inhabited by whales.
Salaam, Shalom, Peace. Amen. Blessed be.

Dayenu*

During Passover, a Hebrew word, *Dayenu*, becomes Very important. It translates to a phrase in English: “It would have been enough.” If the Holy One had Only... line after line, followed by “It would have been enough.” This phrase has been knocking at my heart Since we arrived at the hotel in Buenos Aires. So many things: Bus trips, dinners, trip mates, trip leaders... tango watching. But then we arrived on board. And *Dayenu* has become The word through which my heart interprets this Vast Unknown, Mysterious Peace.

If it had only been the invitation to dream of a trip we could not possibly understand... *Dayenu* - it would have been enough.

If it had only been the deep conversations with people who had travelled this far and invested their love and wonder, *Dayenu* - it would have been enough.

But, if, while on the boat on the night before, we had only seen the humpbacks, the fin and the blue whales, and a couple of silly, porpoising penguins, making our hearts blow up and then added the birds, *Dayenu* - it would have been enough! But then we were introduced to the staff!

And then the next day should we only have seen the birds, and oh, a whale or two, and, can you imagine, our first littering of chinstrap penguins, their hats securely attached to their heads. *Dayenu* - it would have been enough.

If the next morning, our generous and knowledgeable Shane had not cheerily awakened us at 6:30 (IN THE MORNING!!!) - we love you, Shane - to watch our captain and crew thread our way through an iceberg- and ice-strewn passage, for this trip I promise you already, *Dayenu* - it would have been enough. Blessed be and amen.

Later that morning and afternoon, had we only seen, Adelie and Gentoo penguins, and then humpback whales lunging, bubble-feeding, and napping along with three - or was it four - different kinds of seals, well you, can guess it, *Dayenu* - it would have been enough.

If the crew had only offered, hands, hearts, vision, and expertise, good food along with kind and solicitous care, filling us with knowledge, safety, beauty, and lovely, lovely food, and who knows, perhaps even friendship into the future, making this such a joy to experience, *Dayenu* - it would have been enough. All gratitude to them.

If we had only sat in the vast stillness that misty morning, even had the penguins, whales, and birds not arrived to delight us, it was an invitation to Prayer and Magic and Peace, and *Dayenu* - it would have been enough. It would have been all that was ever needed.

For you to have shared Antarctica's Majesty and Peace with me, *Dayenu* - it would have been enough, indeed it would have been such gracious Plenty, but, Faye, you arrived with all the gifts of sisterhood and I am so thankful, and, now, rich beyond blessing. And then there were all the other friends, teachers, and wonders...

(sing)

Dah-Dayenu, Dah-Dayenu, Dah-Dayenu. Dayenu, Dayenu, Dayenu

***Pronunciation:**

“Dah” - like “da” in “dad”

“Yay” - rhymes with “say”

“Noo” - like “new”

Afterword

I had decided not to write the Afterword until afterwards. My poems have been the beginning of working through what I believe will be a lifelong adventure in discerning how this immense Peace, Power, and Beauty have changed me. It took days for me to be able to — I almost said put pen to paper, but I meant — put my fingers on the keyboard. I'm still stunned and either speechless or caught in a flow of words because it changed everything.

These particular poems began as a way for me to make sense of this place, its inhabitants, and the people I shared the journey with. I saw so much, learned so much, ate so well, laughed and gasped aloud so often, that I am forever changed. I also think it will take forever for me to understand how, exactly, I am changed and the many ways the impact of experiencing that Wild Peace will keep me forever searching.

This is not a book about how my spiritual... mystical?... experience in this Vastness should form the center of your spiritual journeys. This is a book that encourages you to dig deeply into the Wonder that calls to you, and to take responsibility for the Peace you are called to make. I am aware that the privilege of traveling to this place in the midst of this particular time of turmoil in my country offered me both the Possibility and the Imperative of opening to this experience.

There were, as there always are, bumps along the way. There were physical challenges that challenged, even cowed me a bit. However, somewhere along the way, I had decided that I didn't mind stretching my comfort zone, but I wasn't going to move so far out of it, that I had to dwell in terror. There could have been such moments on the trip, but I said no thank you — especially when I was tired.

The center of my Peacework is Presence. I recognize how strange it sounds when I say I find myself so overwhelmed by the Vast Empty Fullness of Antarctica — but there you are. My work on this trip was to be Present. And despite this, as the poem says, I was so overwhelmed that I pulled my shirt over my face and wept. It had been so still, so silent. If people spoke, their voices were hushed. And then we were interrupted by the picture you see above this section.

I have never chosen to create a book of my poems. Although there are a lot of them floating around. But I could find no other way to pay homage to Antarctica's Beauty and Impact. It was so clearly a book, from the very beginning. And not long after my return, I was booked to give the first professional poetry reading of my life, and, suddenly, I had an All-Antarctica reading. I have already been considering how else I might use these poems, whether there are opportunities to write with scientists, and also what other subjects and experiences do I wish to explore?

You, dear wonderful Peacemakers, are the ones with whom I wish to explore this journey to Presence and any other I might wish to take. This world is going to change for the better because we gather to make it so. I believe that is our Peace-Responsibility. Our gathering into community is not only Peacework, changing the world to one that we want to live in is challenging and immensely fun. C'mon along.

Peace,
Ann

Acknowledgements

There are so many people to thank at this point:

- Anthony Templer has been my web guru for nigh on 30 years. It is a deep friendship of 30 years, and in it, my words and vision take shape online. You never know what will happen when you sit down to write in a coffee shop. Alchemy is really a thing! It can build friendships across great distances and differences.
- Sara Waldron is my coach. Thanks to our similar backgrounds, fascination with thea/theologies, and very different skills, my focus on Peace stays consistent and our conversations encourage me to think more broadly and more deeply. I am happy and deeply honored to have her accompany me on this path.
- Duane Griffin, it was by the weirdest coincidence that we should live in this little village, I got to pick your brain, be inspired, and have someone to tell tales to when I got home. Just a warning: I have more I'm wondering about...
- G. Faye Wilson, what a wonder you are! That we have been able to weave our stories together, lo these many years, and continue to find ways to be amazed together and then be able to use our gifts to allow others to celebrate? Well, that's a richness not many people get to celebrate. I have no doubt we'll be sharing music sometime soon! And laughing. And eating. And making Peace!
- And then of course, sweet fabulous circles of Friends and Family — thanks for the engaging conversations, shared meals, dancing, wild-hairs, sweet support, and shared silences as we sit in the creek. How you make my heart rejoice!

- My friend Cindy Nickelsen wanted this song sung at her funeral. Sadly, I never got to tell her about Antarctica. But I can offer it to us all now.

(Lyric by Harry Connick, Jr. with edits by Ann Keeler Evans)

*Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth, the peace that was meant to be.
With Peace as our Lodestar, Community are we.
Let us walk with each other, in perfect harmony.*

*Let Peace begin with me, let this be the moment now.
With every breath I take, let this be my solemn vow.
To take each moment and live each moment with peace respectfully
Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me.*