

# VISIONARY

Spring 2012

THE JOURNAL OF GAY SPIRIT VISIONS

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## EMERGENCE

*What is GSV becoming?*





# VISIONARY

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#### Gay Spirit Visions

##### Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 339, Decatur, GA 30031-0339

E-mail: [info@gayspiritvisions.org](mailto:info@gayspiritvisions.org)

##### Website:

[www.gayspiritvisions.org](http://www.gayspiritvisions.org)

#### The Council of Nine

##### Elders Who Walk Between

Jim Jones  
Paul Plate  
Dennis VanAvery

##### Connectors

Dan Dewberry  
Tim Flood  
Kevin Biacsi

##### Conveners

Chaser Rue (*Fall 2012*)  
Terry Allen (*Winter 2013*)  
Steve Wilson (*Spring 2013*)

Consulting Elder, Andrew Ramer

##### Journal Committee

Tim Flood, *Editor*  
Michael Goettee, *Design & Production*

##### Submission Queries:

[visionary@gayspiritvisions.org](mailto:visionary@gayspiritvisions.org)  
Please put "GSV Visionary"  
in the subject line.

##### Advertising queries:

[visionary@gayspiritvisions.org](mailto:visionary@gayspiritvisions.org)

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## the many fabulous things IN THIS ISSUE

"Emergence." It's a fancy word consultants are using to describe the more magical second half of a transition process, where order starts to appear, and the emphasis of effort shifts away from the resistance to surrendering the old, away from the fear of chaos, and towards the creation of the new, the not yet definable whatever is next.



By Tim Flood

Like I said. Fancy.

To those of us working the logistics of the changes in GSV over the last 3 years (away from a 20 year old structure) the gradual appearance of an "emergent" future for GSV marks another shift... towards joy.

The evidence: at our Fall 2011 conference, 30 men sat in circle, became a part of GSV's "future search", and helped to identify interest areas where their energies could be focused. In a day's extension of the Winter Retreat 2012 at The Mountain, these men and others started to work out contributions in these areas, and ways to sustain their group energy between gatherings. At the Spring Retreat 2012, the contributions of these interest area groups made their debut, to a near-record attendance. At this Fall's conference, there will be more.

The success (and the joy!) of this distributed responsibility has instructed the transition effort. The role of "Convenor" for each GSV event now includes interfacing with the ongoing efforts of the interest area groups. These Conveners will be named in advance, become ex officio members of the Council of Nine, and will mentor their successors in the role for the following year. This in turn guides the "new structure" for GSV (emergence, joy!) We re-publish the announcement concerning this here, for those who have not seen it already.

Conveners for events in 2013 and beyond have come aboard. They share their thoughts on doing so in this issue. More joy. Read on and you will see.

In closing, lest I damage my reputation for being anti-polyanna (OMG. Do NOT call me Auntie Polyanna!) (Just call me!) I will add this tiniest note of sadness.

There are men for whom the emergent GSV might not be a good fit. Perhaps in their eyes the GSV of the past is being sullied by change. Perhaps others will find that their journey is better supported elsewhere. I want say to these guys, "Thank you so much for being here as long as it was good for you. Please remember that is was. Our hope is that there will be a GSV, of some description, should you ever feel the need to come back. From those of us who might not be here in the flesh when that happens... we send our love and that future 'welcome home' message to you now."

Y'know? There is some joy in this, too! Bright blessings on you, gentle men.  
...Tim



## Our Mission Statement

We are committed to creating **safe, sacred space** that is open to **all spiritual paths**, wherein **loving gay men** may explore and strengthen spiritual identity.

We are committed to creating a spiritual community with the intent to **heal, nurture** our gifts and potential, and **live with integrity** in the world.

We are **committed to supporting others** in their spiritual growth by sharing experiences and insights.

To fulfill these goals we facilitate annual retreats and conferences, sponsor social events, publish an online journal, and maintain Internet-based communications for men who love men.

## TransitionTask Force ends, Council of Nine begins

(The following is the announcement sent to all of GSV a few months ago.)

Gentle Men,

**T**hank you for your interest in the GSV Transition Task Force over the last year and a half. We felt that you, as one of the many with a continuing interest in the GSV mission, would appreciate the news we have to share.

With the success of the three GSV-2011 events at The Mountain, and with the renewed energy to participate expressed by so many, we felt it urgent to address a critical task facing us as the "Walks Between Elders." In early December, we assembled a group of experienced GSV brothers to help create an organizational structure to replace the Atlanta-centric planning council of the past.

The structure as outlined below will be put into practice immediately as a pilot program for the coming year of 2012, replacing the existing Transition Task Force. It is anticipated that this new structure will be finalized into the GSV bylaws at the end of this year's pilot-program, to be in effect for 2013.

We are still working on names for the positions and categories we have created. We will be experimenting with these, with your help, over the next year.

A "Council of Nine" will focus the efforts of GSV as an organization in pursuit of its existing and unchanged mission. The council membership will change annually, based on those assuming the organizational roles and responsibilities as described below.

Three "Walks Between Elders" (WBE) will continue to function as primary decision makers, operating by consensus with the full Nine where appropriate, and empowered to act for the organization in any emergency. One member will be replaced annually; each will serve for 3 years. Criteria for selection will include but not be limited to their history of service to GSV. Approval of new WBE will be by consensus of the outgoing Council of Nine.

Three "Conveners" will be members ex officio, as those individually focusing efforts for the winter, spring and fall events at The Mountain. They will collaborate directly with the WBE to expedite decisions regarding their individual events,



and periodically to the full Council of Nine for those decisions requiring either consultation or consensus. Their membership will be affirmed by consensus of the outgoing Council of Nine.

Three "Connectors" will individually fulfill an organizational function or represent a perspective. For 2012, the three are to be a representative of the communications function, another to represent the "Interest Areas" (as men form groups to be of service to all three events), and the last to be a "Connector at large." Their membership will be affirmed by consensus of the outgoing Council of Nine.

**For 2012, the Council of Nine will be:**

### Walks Between Elders

Jim Jones  
Paul Plate  
Dennis Van Avery

### Conveners

Martin Isganitis (*Winter 2012*)  
Pat Boyle (*Spring 2012*)  
Chase Robinson (*Fall 2012*)  
[Coming aboard since this writing:  
Terry Allen (*Winter 2013*), Steve Wilson (*Spring 2013*)]

### Connectors

Tim Flood (*Communications*)  
Dan Dewberry (*Interest Areas*)  
Kevin Biasci (*Connector-at-Large*)

Meeting schedules and communications requirements are being determined, as are lines of communication and decision-making guidelines.

Ongoing concerns for the Council of

Nine were identified at this December's meeting, and include:

- Mentorship programs
- Scholarship programs
- Relationships with regional groups
- Refinement of organizational priorities

It is sincerely hoped that this structure will serve to focus efforts, rather than control them, and will facilitate the involvement of those looking to get involved. The "Planner's Slumber Party" at The Mountain following the Winter Meditation was our first experiment in this direction... it was a heart-warming and hope-inspiring experience... thanks to those participating, and to those who could not attend but sent their good wishes. The "Interest Area" groups initiated at this event, to create potential contributions to the sacred space of our gatherings, will welcome those interested in participating. More on this later.

With these comments, and the assembling of the Council of Nine for 2012, the transition task force is now disbanded, and monthly phone calls will no longer take place.

Again... and from our hearts... thank you for your interest in continuing this organization that we value so much.

Bright blessings,

*Jim Jones, Paul Plate, Dennis VanAvery  
Walks Between Elders, 2012*

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*This message first published January, 2012.*

## UPDATE:

*The following "draft vision statement" is the work one "interest group," identified at last Fall's conference, shaped at the planning day following the Winter Meditation, was contributed to by many GSV men, and made its first contributions at the Spring Retreat. The "Safe and Sacred Touch Working Group" is one of several groups formed by men who have committed themselves to helping GSV events meet their full potential for safe, sacred space.*

### **Draft Vision Statement for The Safe and Sacred Touch Working Group**

From its earliest days, GSV has envisioned a safe space in which to explore the common ground between our spirituality and our sexuality. The Safe and Sacred Touch working group is a circle of brothers within the larger Gay Spirit Visions community committed to delineating and modeling the values of Safe and Sacred Touch, and giving our time and energy to serve as assistants, facilitators, and program creators for Safe and Sacred Touch experiences at our conferences. By participating in this circle, we affirm our willingness to step forward in each of these roles as needed.

**The Role of the Vision Keeper in the The Safe and Sacred Touch Working Group**  
The Vision Keeper of The Safe and Sacred Touch working group is a member appointed by the Council of Nine, and approved by the membership of the The Safe and Sacred Touch working group. The Vision Keeper's primary role will be to serve as a liaison between the working group and the Council of Nine; he will also coordinate conference calls for working group members, convene working group retreats, call upon working group members to serve as assistants, facilitators, and program creators for The Safe and Sacred Touch events, and gather and integrate input from all working group members into every activity of the Safe and Sacred Touch working group.

### **Working Procedures for The Safe and Sacred Touch Working Group**

In our commitment to safety, The Safe and Sacred Touch Working Group recognizes the importance of mentoring assistants, facilitators, and program creators in their roles. Therefore:

1. Every Safe and Sacred Touch event will have at least one Facilitator

leading the event and one assistant in the role of Guardian, providing safety.

2. If a person is going to assist at a GSV Safe and Sacred Touch event, he needs to declare himself as Guardian to assist the Vision Keeper of the The Safe and Sacred Touch working group before the conference containing the scheduled event.
3. If a person is going to lead an existing Safe and Sacred Touch event, he needs to have assisted at that event at least once at a prior conference.
4. If a person is going to lead a new Safe and Sacred Touch event it must be presented to the Vision Keeper three months before the conference, allowing time for the Vision Keeper to take it to the larger working group, and then to the Council for approval.
5. All Safe and Sacred Touch events shall be created and delivered keeping in mind the theme of each conference.
6. The Vision Keeper of The Safe and Sacred Touch circle shall contact the convener of each conference 3 months prior to the event to begin discussing the needs and themes of our community at each conference.

### **Safe and Sacred Touch Guidelines for Gay Spirit Visions Conferences**

We are committed to creating a space for Safe and Sacred Touch in our conferences and in our community. We honor each person's unique exploration of Spirituality, Intimacy, and Sexuality; we celebrate the choice to stand alone, to connect with ourselves; and, we celebrate the choice to reach out, to connect with each other. We are committed to touching in ways that heal, nurture, connect, encourage, fulfill and inspire, and that support each of us as we develop our potential, share our gifts, and live our lives with integrity, joy, and growth.

The foundation for Safe and Sacred

Touch is creating safety for our selves and for each other. Each of us has the right and responsibility to ask for the touch we want, and to maintain our own boundaries. Every event at the conference is voluntary and we participate at our own comfort level! Every Safe and Sacred Touch event will have both a Guardian and a Facilitator, and every conference will have a Guardian and a Convener to support each of us in creating safety.

If you would like to share touch with someone else, please get his attention and ask for permission, verbally or non-verbally. Honor the other person's boundaries; be willing to get a "no," or no response at all. If you are unsure or see any mixed signals, ask for clarity! Permission can be requested and communicated verbally or non-verbally, but, if you don't know the person, verbal is best! And remember, sometimes even the people we know need to stand alone, connecting with themselves.

If you have a negative experience of touch, identify the source of the negative experience, differentiate between the facts and your judgments, stories, and memories that might be contributing to the experience. If you decide to say something about what happened, please go to the person involved and ask them to listen. Own your experience using "I" statements: state the facts, the thoughts you have about the facts, the feelings that come up for you, and any requests you have of the other person, knowing you might not get what you ask for. If you are the listener, please reflect on what you heard them say before responding! And if either person is unsatisfied with the resolution, please go to the Guardian or the Facilitator for the conference event, the Guardian or the Convener for the conference, or the Vision Keeper for The Safe Sacred Touch working group. Do your best to avoid judgments, gossip, assumptions, and from taking things personally. The



## GSV News and Information

safety and sacredness of our conferences depends on the loving, respectful quality of our communication!

Whether you are asking for touch or being asked, take a moment to check in with yourself about what's right for you right now. Stay out of habit and use this opportunity to discover something new! Take a moment to connect with the other

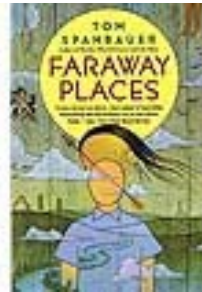
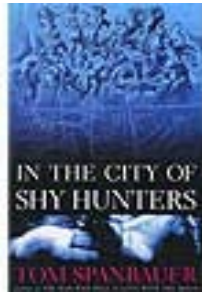
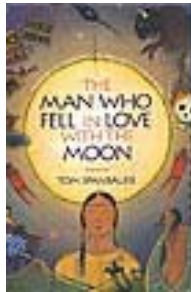
person too, meet their eyes and share a breath. Be present in your touch—present with yourself and present with them. Touch with your heart, with your spirit! See if you can relax your body, stand in your own truth, meet the other person fully. If you choose to share touch with someone, how long you touch is up to you—move on when you know you are

ready. After touching, you might take a moment to acknowledge the other person gratefully and to “check in” with yourself, noticing how the experience of touch may have changed you and become a part of you. With every touch, we share ourselves, we share in each other, and we create a Safe and Sacred space for our own becoming!

# Registrations for 2012 Fall Conference now open!

Read intro and follow link to The Mountain's new online registration [HERE](#).  
GSV Fall Conference 2012 Keynote-Facilitator,

## Tom Spanbauer



**“There is no one like Tom Spanbauer writing in America...I dare you to read this and still hold onto the old way you see the world”**

—Natalie Goldeberg, author “Writing Down the Bones”

Theme: “Storytelling as Spiritual Practice”



The 23rd Annual Fall Conference of Gay Spirit Visions, September 27-30, 2012

# EMERGENCE

*What is GSV becoming?*



**“Conveners” of upcoming events were asked to speak to the emerging GSV...**

*Central to the theme of “distributed responsibility” for the emergent GSV, our event conveners will play an essential role, in coordinating the efforts of the interest area groups that have formed. The articles below are*

*from the conveners of upcoming events. Many thanks to those have already filled these roles as this model emerges : Jim Jones, Paul Plate, Dennis VanAvery, Martin Isganitis, and Pat Boyle.*

## A Call has gone forth from The Mountain...

**Following the closing heart circle** at this year’s Spring Retreat, the convener of the Spring Conference, Pat Boyle, passed the GSV staff to me as convener for the 23rd GSV Fall Conference. I was amazed at how heavy and how light the staff felt. I had seen Presiding Elders and others carry this staff but never appreciated the energy and power in it. It reminded me much of the GSV talking stick. My heart leaped into my throat and



By Chaser Rue

**Convener of the GSV Fall Conference (2012)**  
**“Storytelling as Spiritual Practice”**

all I could taste was the bitterness of the adrenaline that was coursing through my body. The old familiar voices said: “Run away! You have nothing to say.” However, the staff was stronger than the voices in my head. I stepped into the circle and wrapped the staff on the floor of the Treehouse three times. These words poured from my heart:

“Brothers, the Call is going forth from The Mountain today for our 23rd GSV Fall conference to be held here September 26-30, 2012. Please place your right hand over your heart with me as we face the center of this circle. Feel your heart pumping your blood. Listen to these words from Tom Spanbauer our keynote for this year’s fall conference on Storytelling as Spiritual Practice:

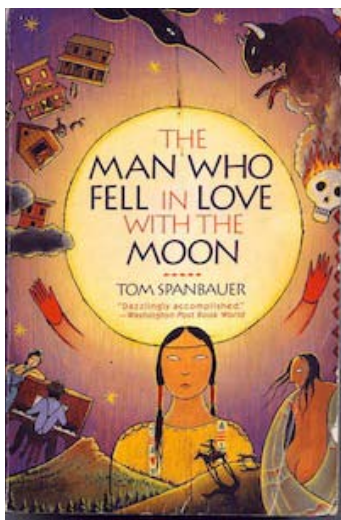
**‘Story goes** if you live your life being true to your heart, you’ll find a place like this where you can come to when you die, and you can tell the story of your life out loud to all of nature listening. Death has got to wait until you’re done with your singing and dancing and whatever else you got to do to get your story told.

‘First thing I learned by my own self, without Ida or Dellwood or Alma or anybody else telling me, my own first truth was this: Fucking was the same way as with everything else- what you thought you were doing was not what you were doing. What you thought you were doing was sucking and penetrating and kissing, holding, and ejaculating. What you were doing, though, was telling a story.



First off, thing is, you got to know you got a story. Then you got to have to tell it. Knowing how to tell your story good is important, but the secret to good fucking is how well you can listen. Fucking only gets good when the two stories start being the same story—the human-being sex story—When the two bodies stop being two bodies and start being the big excruciating, the one heart beating.’

—From *The Man Who Fell in Love With The Moon* by Tom Spanbauer



**“Brothers, the Call is going forth** from The Mountain today for our 23rd GSV Fall conference to be held here September 26-30, 2012. Please place your right hand over your heart with me as we face the center of this circle. Feel your heart pumping your blood. Listen to these words from Tom Spanbauer our keynote for this year’s fall conference on Storytelling as Spiritual Practice:

Feel your heart beat. You are invited to listen to your heart over the coming months to discern your call to be with us at our 23rd Fall gathering. Are you being called to serve in a special way as a small group leader, special performance at the Talent Show, to help with ritual, or some other way? Feel your heart beat.

Now, let us face out from this circle we have created. Still holding your right hand over your heart and feeling that sacred connection. Raise your left hand and stretch it out to the world. I ask you to help me call all the men that will be with us this fall. Look at your outstretched hand. Think of 5 men that you can personally invite to be with us this fall. Think of 5 men that you can tele-

phone, write a letter to, or have coffee with and tell them of how your life has been changed by GSV.

Now, listen and hear the wisdom of Badger medicine:

‘I would ask you remember only this one thing,’ said Badger. ‘The stories people tell have a way of taking care of them. If stories come to you, care for them. And learn to give them away where they are needed. Sometimes a person needs a story more than food to stay alive. That is why we put stories in each other’s memory. This is how people care for themselves.’

—From *Animal Speak* by Ted Andrews)

**A Call has gone forth from The Mountain!”**

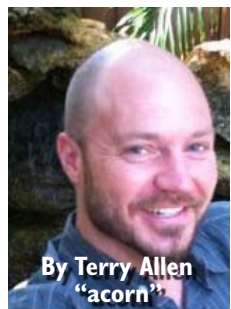
I love each of you deeply and am honored to be in circle with you !

... Chaser



## The Falcon in Winter...

**As a brother of GSV for some 14 years** now with some ebb and flow to my involvement, my spirit was honored by our elders to be asked to consider convening one of our gatherings. After much consideration and reflection, I chose the Winter Gathering for many reasons, but primarily because it suits my reflective personality.



By Terry Allen  
“acorn”

**Convener of the  
GSV Winter  
Meditation (2013)**

My spirit name, acorn, given to me by our brother, Peregrine, is symbolic of this time of waiting, harnessing the inherent power within, and preparing for its eventual growth into the oak that the acorn is intended to be.

In winter, we look forward to the time of growth in the spring, the symbolic east of new beginnings. Reflecting on the theme of emergence, it seems to me that while we are in an exuberant time of expansion and change as a tribe, our 22 years of history gives us the opportunity to examine our tribe as a growing and dynamic entity. So I’ve asked myself these questions.

Where are we in our development cycle? We are certainly still developing our roots and branches, but we have reached the time of bearing our fruits.

What are our fruits or gifts to the world? Winter represents a time of reflection, both personally and organizationally. Our winter gathering will continue to offer this opportunity. As your convener, I offer my gifts as guide, facilitator, listener, observer and reflector. My years of reflection have offered me the insight that one of my gifts is that of seeing the big picture. One of my spirit guides and animal totems is the falcon that soars high above the earth to observe the widest spectrum possible. This wide view then offers perspective, a gift we all learn with experience.

What might our time together next winter be like? I envision our time together listening to and continuing to reflect on our individual stories, recognizing the symbols and gifts of each of our lives. We can then acknowledge how each symbol and gift that we bring to our circle has a place at the table of life. Using multi-sensoral dynamic tools and body movement, I envision us recognizing our unique place in community, our individual gifts and how we

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all relate to our world. In other words, together, we will share insights and personal gifts that widen our perspective. This in turn will provide a deeper sense of community and our unique contributions to our tribe, other communities, our Mother Earth and beyond.

I envision our tribe looking deeper to an ancient symbol, the Medicine Wheel of our indigenous Relations, the Native Americans. This tool has been used by many tribes to explore and understand

our interconnectedness with our Mother Earth. At the core of the Medicine Wheel are the four directions that were explored and examined at our previous Winter Gathering with our beloved Tree-walker, my mentor and guide in convening our upcoming gathering. I envision a review of this core of our ritual time together and symbolic relationship to All our Relations. From this, I envision a spiral journey together as we continue to explore the ongoing implications of how the Medicine Wheel informs our

growth, development, and emergence as individuals, small groups, regional tribes and our ever growing (international!) Gay Spirit Visions tribe.

With much gratitude, I offer this framework and vision as your convener to continue this collaborative effort of tribal growth and development as we emerge from one step of our cycle to the next in this continuing spiral of our understanding.

Blessed Be, All My Relations.

... acorn

## The Power of “Yes”

**“What a wonderful way to experience** the power of yes.” Puck spoke those words to me on a Midsummer’s night seven years ago. He was speaking to our friendship, developing between us that summer, which would soon deepen into love.



By Steven Wilson  
Convener of the GSV Spring Retreat (2013)

To be clear... Puck was a real being. But he could cast spells and make much mischief.

I live in a magical forest and Puck’s visit fit perfectly into that magic. His stay would be too short, too soon he danced his way down a new path. I will be forever grateful though, since he left behind a wonderful and powerful gift - the power of yes.

Puck urged me to attend a spring retreat sponsored by some group named GSV. In April 2006, I attended my first GSV retreat. What an experience that was. It rocked my world.

As with most important experiences, I don’t “get it” right away. I have to steep in its juice for a while. Then one morning I wake up and realize some deep part of me has changed. I am different, a new being. That is how GSV has effected me over these past six years. It’s been a slow steep, but I now know... I am a new and different being. And not

only different, my vessel has expanded, there are more things possible. I struggle to use these words.. but I am larger. Or better, my vessel is larger. The power of yes was at work.

Last year, I was asked to be small group leader at GSV’s Fall Conference. Of course I had to say yes. I have facilitated groups before so this would not be difficult and most likely fun. There was a lot of work involved in the role. I had to remember all sorts of items to review with the group members. As the first meeting approached, I was running hard. Why did I agree to be a leader? Am I going to be focused on conference details and miss having a personal growth experience that I so much wanted?

Then we had our first group meeting. The spirit and energy of the group members was amazing. I was transformed from focusing on things, to experiencing the power of the group. I was planning to assist my brothers in having a wonderful experience but the tables were turned. They brought me into the moment; I was present. Spirit was at work and wow, what power and energy was released.

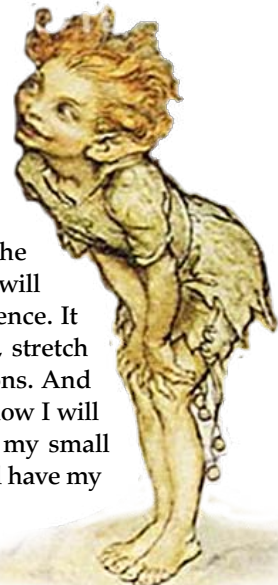
This year, during the spring retreat I was asked by the Council of Nine to be the convener for the Spring Retreat 2013. The council was enthusiastic in their request, saying some very kind words concerning my abilities. My old friend self doubt came in without knocking, creeping into my being. Convening is a big task. How am I going to do it?

The Council of Nine quickly assured me they would be there to help and back me up. The plan guaranteed that the preceding convener of a conference would mentor the upcoming convener. Pat Boyle ran the 2012 Spring Retreat and he would be helping me. I see the council is involving more group members into the process. Instead running the show, they are involving the entire community. Together, as a community, we are insuring that GSV is moving forward.

I thought over their request. I prefer to be in the background so this was going to be a big step for me. Earlier in the retreat, two people, at different times, came to me to discuss a personal issue. They had faith in me to listen, not necessary that I would have an answered but to be there for them. They trusted me. Was it time to trust myself?

The power of yes came to me, once again. Yes, I can do this! Being convener of the Spring Retreat 2013 will be a wonderful experience. It will cause me to grow, stretch and expand my horizons. And through all of this, I know I will not be alone. Just like my small group experience, I will have my GSV brothers helping me. Yes!

... Steve





# Love me, **Love you!**

**Imagine walking into a room knowing that the first three men you see love you, and you love them. Nice thought isn't it? For years I kept thinking I might experience that at a gay bar. Disappointment usually came in the form of catty judgments prefaced by "These bitches," or "Miss Thang". Different gay churches gave me a glimpse of this possibility. I felt welcomed and honored but still left wanting more.**



By **Kevin Biacsi**  
Convener of the  
GSV Fall  
Conference (2013)

On a brisk autumn day in 2010 I found myself mingling with a group of strangers at The Mountain in Highlands, North Carolina. The majestic landscape of the place was a great diversion from my nervous expectations. Would they accept me? Was I going to be greeted with the same self-loathing attitudes I often witnessed at a bar or the gym? Might I finally find a husband?! Am I gonna get-me-some this weekend?

I walked around the campus and was welcomed with warm embraces and direct eye contact. I thought I had entered an alternative Universe in which Queer men greet another with authenticity and affection. Was this a Twilight Zone episode titled Gay Utopia? Was I still dreaming, listening to the gentle purr of my kitty cuddled next to me in bed back in midtown Atlanta?

**It was none of these. I had arrived at the Gay Spirit Visions Fall Conference.**

I am no stranger to the journey of Spirit. Since my teen years, my struggle with physical and emotional adversity ensured consistent humbling experiences of my mortality. Surviving cancer, a brain hemorrhage and a stroke all before my 30th birthday, my connection to Spirit has always been essential to "keeping it together". I joined Churches, sought counsel with professionals, found both comfort and discord in the

arms of men, developed personal Spiritual practices, read books, gained wisdom and made many mistakes. Yet in my reaching out to others I sometimes felt alone. I desired to be a part of something larger than myself.

The past two years with GSV have been an adventure. Conferences, workshops, small groups, potluck gatherings, sweat lodges, road trips, breathing together, a GSV Facebook page and Queer friends that I have come to know as my Brothers. Brothers that uplift, comfort, encourage and embrace one another. Brothers that laugh, hug, cry and celebrate life. Old salutations of "What's up, bitches?" has transitioned to "Hey Beautiful Man. It is good to see you." "Can I buy you a drink?" has been replaced with "Come, breathe with me and tell me your story." A deepening sense of community fills my life.

It was a cold morning at the Spring Conference of 2012 and I was still feeling a bit out of sorts from the previous days' events when I was invited to join the Council of 9 for breakfast. My curiosity was peaked. What did this group of wise GSV men want from me?

First, I was afraid I had done something wrong. Second, I was afraid I had done something right! I amused myself listening to chaotic thoughts rushing through my mind as I scooped up some food and proceeded to the table set aside for meetings of Council of 9. Nervous and uncertain of myself, I sat and listened as two of my GSV brothers and I were invited to step up as a Convener for a 2013 event. And yes, I had a flash of Sally Fields acceptance speech at the Oscars, "...the first time I didn't feel it.. but this time I feel it. And I can't deny the fact that you like me! Right now! YOU LIKE ME!"

My heart opened and I felt my whole body smiling. What an honor! I was indeed part of this community; a sacred community. This group of wise men sees me.

But how am I supposed to manage all this when some days I feel I can barely take care of myself? I have too many health complications to maintain the

energy level of a Convener! I sat regretting a lost opportunity, that I needed to decline. I rehearsed in my head. It would be irresponsible of me to accept. I have yet to be at a GSV conference without having a seizure, who am I to think that I can manage facilitating an entire weekend? Why would this group of men even consider me?

My self-deprecating thoughts were interrupted by the gentle voice of Paul Plate. Papa Plate assured each of us that we would have the support of the Council and many members of GSV to manage the expectations and duties of Convener. They had thought this through and had chosen to invite each of us for a reason. I felt the support and wisdom of this community take me by the hand and offer me an opportunity to step into the space of a vibrant, healthy man, a perception of myself that I sometimes struggle to hold.

Today, having accepted the invitation to convene the Fall Conference of 2013, I trust in continued magical experiences with my Brothers. I expect the inclusion of new Brothers and fresh ideas combined with the Queer Wisdom already set in motion. I feel a deeper acceptance of myself and others reflected back to me from GSV. I stand in the knowledge of an altered way of interacting with men that nourishes me and others. I delight in the day to day experience of life knowing that a safe place for Queer men continues to evolve in the shape of Gay Spirit Visions. I savor the opportunity to assist in the emergence of Gay Spirit Visions in 2013.

Most of all I look forward to each time I walk into a room filled with GSV brothers knowing that the first three men I see love me, and I love them in return.



Namaste... Kevin  
(Baby Bull) Biacsi

# We Are **What We Are Becoming**

*What was it like to be asked? Why did you say yes to convening? What do you want to see change, or stay the same. What is emerging? What is your relationship to the process of emergence? OR....?*

## **Last spring at the GSV conference I**



**By Scott Dillard  
Convener of the  
GSV Fall  
Conference (2014)**

was sitting at dinner in the dining hall with a table full of my brothers having a good time laughing and sharing when another brother approached, asking me to join the men on the council at a different table for a chat. I went over,

sat down and the first thing that came out of my mouth was, "I didn't do it."

Any time I've ever been summoned to appear before a group that I at least perceive to have some sort of power I automatically assume that I have done something wrong and will need to make an accounting of myself. I was pretty sure that in this case I had done nothing wrong so I was simply delivering a preemptive strike. I was also attempting in my typical sarcastic way of making whatever they had in mind to talk with me about be a lighthearted conversation.

And it was! But it was also an important conversation. They had called me to the table to ask if I would be interested in being a convener for the Fall Conference of 2014. My response to that request was, "2014?" It seemed like such a long way out to be asking me about something that wouldn't happen for two years.

After the proper dramatic pause, I said, "Sure!"

I could have asked them why they wanted me to take on this role, and perhaps I should have. However, I believe that when you really have faith in something, you step up to the plate when you are asked to serve. You do not hesitate. To me, to hesitate would be a lack of faith in the enterprise. I have no lack of

faith in GSV and so I said yes.

I also believe that to ask why would simply be an attempt at having my ego stroked. The men who asked me had their reasons. They see something in me that leads them to believe that I would be a good choice for this job in the organization. I trust that. I believe in their belief.

You see, that is what GSV is about for me. It is, most simply, about believing in each other. And the men of GSV have been believing in me in for a long time. I have to believe in them too.

My involvement with GSV goes back over a decade now. I went first to a fall conference and it changed my life. It really did. I was welcomed into a community of men who knew how to love and nurture one another in a manner I had never experienced in my life. They believed in each other. A year later I would be one of the keynote speakers at the fall conference. Shortly after that I was invited to a planners meeting. Then I was asked to consult with the group of elders to help them with their group process. Along the way I served as a small group leader, workshop leader, and frequent performer in the talent show. I was trusted, and my abilities were believed in by the men who trusted that I would bring something to the group.

Along the way, I have always believed in every man who shows up to a GSV conference. Each man who makes the trek up to The Mountain has a potential keynote address in him. He has wisdom to share. He has talents that will enrich the larger group. No one who comes to GSV is expendable. Every man who shows up makes us a richer group of men.

I was saddened recently when I heard of the death of Keith Carter. Keith showed up a number of years ago at his first GSV conference. I was his small group leader. At that conference I gave the men in my group a necklace to wear that had a crystal on it. Keith seemed very pleased with this gift. A year later he was again in my small group. In the first small group meeting that year Keith told the group about receiving

that necklace the year before. He told us that he wore that necklace every day. Then one day as he was moving through his day he reached to touch his crystal and realized it had somehow fallen off and was lost to him. As he told this story he was near tears. I realized the necklace had become a talisman for Keith, that he had been touched deeply by his GSV experience the year before, that he had been seen and heard. As it would happen, we were meeting in my cabin. As Keith told his story I remembered packing my crystal necklace in my suitcase. When he finished talking, I went to my room, came back with the necklace, and put it around his neck. His eyes filled with tears and he hugged me. It was as if he had been restored. It was a simple gesture and yet I recognized in that moment the power of GSV. The simple gesture of touching each other's hearts, is what it's all about. Keith taught me that.

So, I value the men of GSV. I know that each of them is a source of inspiration. As we move forward we must remember that. We must find the space to allow each man to step forward to serve. Me being a convener is no more significant than Keith showing up and cherishing his necklace. That same year I gave him a second necklace, I watched him perform as The Wizard in a number from Wicked. He was truly a wizard. He had come to learn but also to share. We touched each other. I learned as much from him as he could have ever learned from me. Probably much more.

Keith is just one example of the men I have been touched by at GSV. I am particularly cognizant of him now because of his passing. It also makes me think of King Thackston, George Smith, and Cassandra. Three very different men who taught me so much... I hope I in turn brought something to their lives. As we move forward as an organization I ask that we stay open to what each man brings to the space. What will emerge are the gifts that each man brings.

No one can say what that will be. We are always what we are becoming.

.... Scott



GSV  
Winter Meditation  
January 13-15, 2012



Photos of Winter Meditation and Spring Retreat by Gregory Fields, Jim Creacy, Lem Arnold and brothers who have posted to our Facebook page









# Walking in **Big Shoes** **That Fit Just Right**

*“Clowning as Spiritual Practice” was one of five multiple session workshops offered at the Spring Retreat this year. Luis wrote these words in preparation for that event.*

**I cannot be more excited about my** participation in GSV Spring Retreat this year. I have trained many clowns in the last five years, but this workshop represents much more: represents my inner journey as a person, as a spiritual being,



By Luis R. Alvarez, Trapulín The Clown

and as a brother. Clowning is an extremely gratifying activity for me. Creating characters has always been one of my passions. However, it never occurred to me that one day one of my

characters would save me. Since I was a child I have been a performer. My mother tells me that when I was around three years old, I adored a “jibaro” singer that used to perform in the noon television show in Puerto Rico. I would run, grab a hat, and dance and sing along in front of the television. Even in fourth grade my parents were forced to sit down and watch the general rehearsal for a play I wrote and acted in class. I was always acting while my younger brother was playing about every sport in school. Therefore, it was never a surprise for my parents every time I got home from school excited about a school event, new role, or script I wrote. Eventually, over the years I got to perform in professional theatre productions, radio shows, and television shows with my characters.

The time when I explored the most my performing art's skills was when I was a youth leader at a small Christian church in my town. I could write, direct, produce, and act for almost every topic or occasion throughout the year. I gave birth to the spoiled “Wizito,” a little kid with a great ego and “Don Chú,” the 75 years old happy and wise grandfather. Portraying those characters, and many more, I trans-

mitted to people the passion and faith of Jesus and Bible passages. It was about that same time that I decided to portray a clown in a monologue that talked about happiness and how even clowns need much more than makeup and big shoes to smile. What I didn't know was that a professional clown was in the audience and approached me afterwards to encourage me to take clown classes. So I did. A seven year old from that church wanted to become a clown as well and even gave my character a name: Trapulín.

When Trapulín was born, I wasn't sure of the direction I was taking with him. I seemed to master my other characters, but Trapulín was just pushing me for more. I soon discovered that Trapulín was the sweet and adventurous child I used to be. Now, my mother laughs about the fact that when I was a baby my room was decorated with clowns and I would cry all night out of fear, so she gave everything with clown print on it to my cousin. Trapulín symbolically represented fear once again since he was also the adult I was becoming, but couldn't be. However, Trapulín gave me the opportunity to be creative in a whole different level. I was able to experiment with makeup, colors, and even with my feminine side. One day my mother went through her makeup drawer and gave me, very naturally, some of her eye shadows, blush, eye liners, mascara, and other things. After she gave them to me, she said “I can't believe I am giving my son my makeup.” Neither of us could see it then, but I was molding a very complete and complex character that was at the same time molding me to be the man I really am.

Trapulín started taking me places. Not only Trapulín took me to multiple stages and countries, but he transported me to a place of acceptance and understanding of my sexuality. I understood that I didn't have to deny who I was to pursue my spirituality. I could be gay, funny, and

spiritual all at the same time, and I loved it. Trapulín showed me that religion and spirituality are not the same thing. Trapulín taught me that I could, and actually was, walking in big shoes that fit just right. Oh and I learned how walk and feel comfortable in them!

Many clowns and characters have changed the world. Clowns in many cultures changed the path of their countries, their communities, and the collective history. My character changed me. My character saved my life. I cannot but to recall one of the best clowns on television's monologue. Charlie Chaplin on his speech from his 1940 movie, *The Great Dictator*, said:

“Look up! Look up! The clouds are lifting, the sun is breaking through. We are coming out of the darkness into the light. We are coming into a new world. A kind new world where men will rise above their hate and brutality.”

The soul of man has been given wings, and at last he is beginning to fly. He is flying into the rainbow, into the light of hope, into the future, that glorious future that belongs to you, to me and to all of us. Look up. Look up.

I looked down for many years and couldn't find me, but I looked up, like Charlie, and I found me. It only took a character to show me the light, to become a new man, to fly in hope.

This Spring I can only hope to be able to transmit to my brothers what clowning means to me. I would love to see brothers empowered to seek and find their inner happiness and then share it with the world. No nose is too red, no pants are too colorful, and no shoes are too big when a smile screams out loud who you really are inside. So my dear brother, Trapulín and I are polishing our big red noses in excitement to see you at The Mountain.

