Fall 2012 Writing Retreat Letter and Speakers’ Biographies

As the fall semester begins, I want to invite you to put two dates on your calendar: Friday, November 9 and Saturday, November 10. These are the dates for our fall writing retreat, which will begin after dinner that Friday and end Saturday evening (exact times tba). Our location (with transportation being provided) is Odosagih Bible Conference and Retreat Center in Machias, NY, and our visiting writers will be Dr. Carolyn Weber and Ms. Hannah Catherine Mills-Woolsey. You will find these speakers’ biographies below, as well as an extensive website for Dr. Weber at PressingSave.com.

Our retreat theme is writing and the art of attentiveness. As Dr. Weber explains, “There exists a long and rich religious tradition of paying attention--of trying to discern God’s presence in our world, and His voice in our lives. Writing is one way of creatively participating in cultivating this spiritual discipline. The deep connection between words and the Word bridge faith with perception, apprehension and communication. During this time together, we will examine ways in which to pay closer attention to the divine at work in our lives and stories, and explore how various genres allow us to examine as well as put forth the fruits of this attentiveness.” Preparatory readings for the retreat will include Frederick Buechner’s *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy and Fairy Tale* and Madeleine L’Engle’s *Walking on Water*.

The conference is free to the first 24 students who sign up, and as you are writing majors, minors, or concentrations, I am e-mailing you first, eagerly awaiting your response by this Friday, September 7 if you are able to attend. After that time, the invitation will also be extended to English literature majors, minors, and concentrations.

Thanks, and I look forward to hearing from you soon! Feel free to contact me with any questions and concerns.

Sincerely,
Laurie A. Dashnau
Professor of English and Director of the Writing Center
Houghton College
ext. 5140

(see the next two pages for our speakers’ biographies)
Carolyn Weber

source: PressingSave.com

Professional Biography: Carolyn Weber graduated summa cum laude from Huron College, University of Western Ontario, Canada. She was awarded the Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship to study at Oxford University in England, where she completed her M.Phil. and Ph.D. in Romantic Literature. Also at Oxford, she taught undergraduates and became the first female Dean of St. Peter’s College. Most recently, Dr. Weber has been Associate Professor of Romantic Literature at Seattle University. She has also taught as an assistant professor at the University of San Francisco, and as a visiting professor at Westmont College, Santa Barbara, CA.

Her primary academic research interests have included the following: theories of the soul and the relationship among art, religion and literature in 19th century Britain and Europe; Orientalism; the Gothic; conversion and confessional narratives; spiritual autobiography; academia and parenting.

Personal Snapshot: I am a believer, wife, mother, author and professor. Late last century, I made a ginormous leap of faith, which is now detailed in my book, Surprised by Oxford. I have enjoyed my dream job for 15 years--teaching literature to undergraduates.

I have a particular heart for the student (at least those with their purest qualities, if not their actual stage in life): the curious, the doubter, the skeptic, the restless, the wounded, the idealist in search of truth and beauty. One of the reasons must surely be that it was at university where I experienced my own spiritual transformation, pursued by the Author of Life and “loved into understanding.”
Hannah Catherine Mills-Woolsey

I’ve recently arrived back in the Western New York (along with my two cats) after spending seven years living in St. John’s, Newfoundland, Canada. I studied International Relations at Gordon College and Folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Inspired by my work in a folklore and language archive and the folktales from my childhood home in Tennessee, I wrote my first novel, for which I am currently seeking a publisher. I’m also a participant in an online cooperative writing group.

During the writers’ retreat, I plan to discuss both of those projects, as well as the subject of spiritual attentiveness as it relates to fiction and fantasy writing. I hope to engage in a dialogue with students about their own writing interests as well.