

## Book Review

### ***“Conversations with Silence: Rosetta Stone of the Soul”* by Sally Longley**

**Reviewed by Maureen O’Halloran : Riverina, New South Wales**

Conversations with Silence, ‘oxymoron’? I wondered as I picked up Sally Longley’s book. ‘Or perhaps paradox’? The title piqued my curiosity, and I’m glad it did – it offers some treasures. The book traverses several landscapes: part memoir and part teaching, it offers an earthy vocabulary for the ‘language’ of silence. Sally deftly traverses an ecumenical and inter-faith perspective, and also draws heavily on Christian Mystical Tradition. Examining various ‘types’ of silence, Sally looks at the Hebrew concept of Selah, a ‘sacred pause’ referred to in the Psalms. Selahs - ‘tiny houses of time’; the briefest of silences that create small spaces for God (p.93). This is welcome news for those who, for whatever reason, find extended periods of silence impossible. Sally Japanese concept of Ma – an ‘emptiness’ that is full of possibility. Ma requires a sacred seeing of the gaps ‘in-between’ structures, tree branches, notes of music or ... (the possibilities are endless). Those interested in feminist theology, and the theology of Icons will appreciate this work. Opportunity is given for reflection throughout. This practical book finds small and big ways to engage with silence, and so enrich awareness of God’s permanent presence. It would be useful to spiritual directors, particularly those engaged in retreat work.



### ***“Spiritual Direction Supervision: Principles, Practices, Storytelling”***

**by Lucy Abbott Tucker**

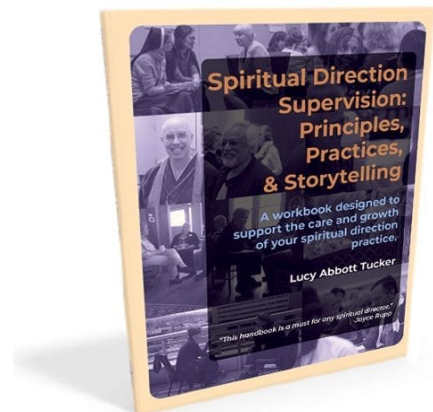
**Reviewed by David King : Sydney, New South Wales**

A wonderful resource for experienced and emerging Spiritual Directors alike. I admire authors who frame ordinary situations of life in descriptive language. For example “companionable silence” has always stayed with me as a beautiful description of genuine friendship. Also apt in Spiritual Direction when Directee and Director are drawn to sit in silence with the Divine.

Other qualities I admire are original thought plus an ability to name elements of life we intuit but cannot adequately describe. Then an author comes along and we say, “yes, that’s it!”

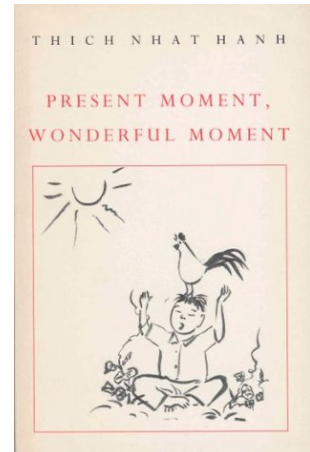
Lucy Abbott Tucker has such gifts with language and ability to name, plus she has many helpful and workable suggestions in her self described workbook. Add gems of originality which cause one to stop and stay awhile. It is no surprise as one of her personal stories concludes, “dare to have independent thoughts, listen to the stories of your life. Allow yourself to become the spiritual director and supervisor that lives within you, and is your gift to the world.”

There is much to recommend and it will be a valuable resource to retain.



**“Present Moment, Wonderful Moment” by Thich Nhat Hanh  
Reviewed by Fran Smullen : Sandhurst, Victoria**

Thich Nhat Hanh, Dhyana Master, and revered Zen Buddhist monk, died in January last year. He is well-known for his many books, activism, meditation, and mindfulness teaching. Present Moment, Wonderful Moment is a collection of short four-line verses (in Sanskrit Gathas) written by Thich Nhat Hanh which seeks to engage readers in mindfulness and meditation practice. The book has five sections presenting Verses for Starting the Day, Meditation, Eating Mindfully, Daily Activities and Entering the Ultimate Dimension. Each Gatha is accompanied by a teaching from Thich Nhat Hanh. He encourages the daily use of gathas to cultivate awareness that allows us to “see beauties and wonders right before our eyes.” He invites readers to compose their own gathas to suit their circumstance. Why I bought this book? It is a simple but reflective introduction to Zen Buddhism and mindfulness, casual and accessible for those interested in developing their practice of mindfulness. From the first section, Verses for Starting the Day.



13. Washing Our Hands  
Water flows over these hands.  
May I use them skilfully  
To preserve our precious planet.

“Our beautiful Earth is endangered. We are exhausting her resources and polluting her rivers, lakes, and oceans, destroying the habitats of many species, including our own. We are destroying the forests, the soil, the ozone layer, and the air. Because of our ignorance and fears, our planet may be destroyed as an environment that is hospitable to human life,

The Earth stores water, and water gives life. Observe your hands as the water runs over them. Do you have clear insight to preserve and protect this beautiful planet, our Mother Earth?”

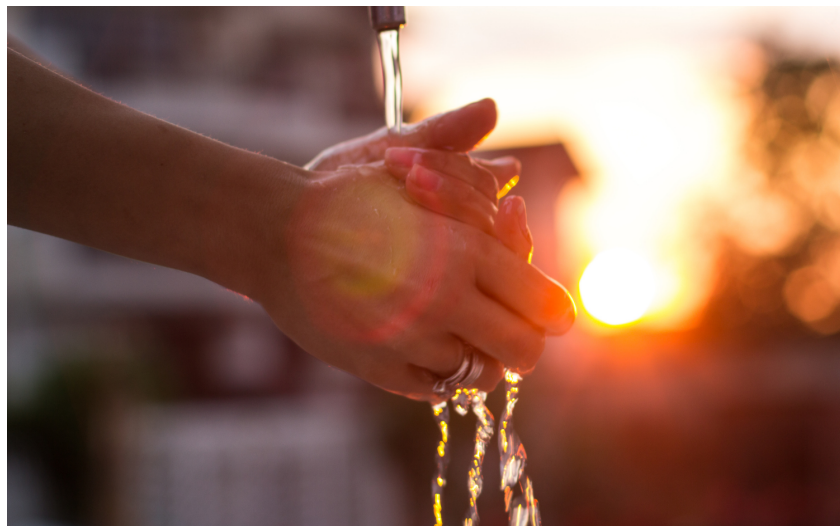


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