



Artistic Inspirations

Diane Beth Constantine

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Art is a gift God kept secret from me until after I was 70 years old. I suddenly desired to capture natural beauty on paper. I had never thought I could draw, but began trying. A dear friend offered to teach me. With daily practice and her coaching, I saw talent emerge.

Then as the whole world changed almost overnight, we were locked down and so many freedoms were lost. That's when watercolor painting became God's way of helping me to continue to see beauty and joy.

These paintings and graphite sketches are as much a surprise to me as they may be to you. I get caught up in the process of layer upon layer and calmly waiting for paper to dry. At one point in the process, the paintings are really ugly. But, I've learned to patiently wait for the next layers and smoothing and details. When they are finished, I step back and I'm so amazed, even though I know it was me that put brush to paper.

When I started sharing this art work, I just told about the process. But I soon saw connections between what I had experienced painting that picture and God's work in my life. I hope in sharing these pictures and the words I've written, you will be inspired to look to God and see what He wants to do in you and through you for others you are near.

Please enjoy this little book and feel free to share with those you love.

In His Service and for His Glory!

Diane Constantine

Yellow Crocus



Crocus flowers were always the first flowers to sprout in the garden of my childhood home. Often, they poked up through some snow to herald the coming spring.

They grow from a bulb planted in the fall. During winter they are buried under snow and ice. Pushing their way out to the sun and changeable weather of Spring is a proof of hidden growth.

Our life may be like the crocus. We were planted here for a purpose by the Master Gardener. When he places a bulb in the ground, he covers it gently with good soil. He expects it to grow and bloom in the early spring. But, like the crocus bulb, we may pass through a mild winter or a very cold, hard winter. We may feel our life is buried and no one, not even The Gardener, remembers we are there. We may feel the pressure of the rain-soaked soil or the load of snow or ice. But His life inside us is causing us to grow. Suddenly our stretching leaves and bud break the surface and we see the bright light of the sun. When we breakthrough, we see He has grown us during that dark season. The joy of that breakthrough is worth all the time buried and

growing.

Stormie Omartian wrote the song, [Believing for the Best in You](#). She describes reaching out to one who is waiting and not yet seeing the breakthrough. Someone you know may need to [hear this song](#)

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Golden Cosmos



Mike took a picture of our neighbor's Golden Cosmos. I loved the color and form of these cheery blooms!

Cosmos flowers were named by Spanish priests who thought they symbolized order and harmony. That seems very appropriate for our world today. We need every reminder possible that as our communities splinter and rage, we must be agents for harmony and order. Many of us feel we have no control over the whims and dictates of those in authority over us. It is a time to quiet our souls and turn to the Author and Creator, the One who knows best how we work and what is good for us.

Before rushing on to the next picture or cartoon or outrage, please take a moment to quiet your soul and listen to God. Ask Him to show you how you can have order and harmony in your life, even amid the chaos.

Robin Red Breast



Have you ever wondered why the Robin Red Breast is orange instead of red? It seems the English language had no word for the color orange when they named the bird. It was only when oranges were imported that the color took the name of the best example of the color, the orange fruit. (Just a little history lesson for fun.)

This is the American Robin. It is usually the first bird we spot in northern USA as Winter is ending. Once you spot a robin, there will be many more soon and Spring is recognized to have started.

Europe has a different Robin Red Breast and Malaysia has a black and white Magpie Robin. All of them have a cheerful song. Robins tend to like to be around people and nest in gardens more than in forests.

My prayer for you today is that you will stop to listen to the bird songs and see the beauty and joy all around you. If you feel lonely, take a walk. If you stop on your walk and listen to a bird call or study a flower or tree, some friendly person will pause to see why you stopped. Take the opportunity to share some beauty and a few cheerful words.

Anemone in Graphite



This anemone flower was a reference photo from Anna Mason's school. When I considered painting it, I was afraid to tackle it. Instead, I used it to practice my graphite skills.

I was afraid of all those very dark stamens. There were so many!

My fear of facing those stamens, reminded me of my fear of speaking to a large group. There were so many! What if I make a mistake?

God helped me conquer that fear when I faced a group of seminary students and faculty. Now they were a group of good speakers. What was I doing there? Why me? I thought all my notes were on my phone. But no! Twice I tried to load them. The wrong file came up. No one moved, they waited for me. They showed no impatience or ridicule. The third time I tried, my notes appeared, and I went on to give a well-received message.

Is there something you fear doing? Maybe try it in a less splashy way, like I did with this graphite sketch. Or maybe do it and watch God set you free from your fear.

Early Apple Blossoms



Apple trees of different varieties must be planted nearby to be fruitful. Bees cross-pollenate these trees so both can produce fruit. A lone apple tree does not produce a crop.

Apple trees need each other and help each other to be fruitful. Like these trees, we need other people to make us fruitful and useful. They challenge, encourage, and help us in many ways.

Paul wrote to the Roman believers that he longed to see them so he could impart some spiritual gift to strengthen them, so that together they would be mutually encouraged by each other's faith. (See Romans 1:11-12)

Do you have someone in your life to encourage and strengthen you and your faith and that you encourage and strengthen in return? Paul found it vital for spiritual growth. Do you? If you don't, pray for God to bring you together with others to be mutually encouraged.

Whimsy the Frog



This is Whimsy the Frog. I was having trouble finding things to laugh about. Usually that is not a problem for me, but then what's usual now? I decided to find a subject that would make me smile. This little guy makes me laugh.

I had to pay more attention to detail on Whimsy than I have on almost any other painting I've done. He has so many colors! My palette was overflowing with colors. What fun! The textures were varied from his pebbly skin to smooth bamboo to super shiny highlights. All this requires lots of water in some parts and almost dry brush in others. Wow. This kept me on my toes. Concentration went a long way to lightening me up.

Little by little this cheeky little frog peered out from my paper. Little by little he took shape hanging on with his sticky little toes to the slippery bamboo. I wondered, "Where will he go when he gets that left foot up on the bamboo?" I knew where he would go for me. He went right to my heart and brought overflowing joy.

"The joy of the Lord is your strength." Sometimes we must look for it in unusual places. This week, Whimsy was where it started for me.

What about you? Are you finding the joy of the Lord to be your strength?

Raccoon Kits in Graphite



I love this darling picture of the raccoon kits.

The white areas had to be marked first, to keep them pure. Then each evening I would use the next darker pencil. I used each pencil everywhere that shade showed in the image. Part way through, it was hard to see how this would ever express my hope for it. But over the week, it gradually became clear and these little guys showed more and more life in their little hidey hole.

This reminds me of how God works in our lives. He begins by marking off areas of our life that need to be protected from smears. He shows us where to 'draw the lines' so we don't smear His image of our lives. Then little by little, He adds the touches we need to make our lives stand out as examples of His handiwork in our world. As we cooperate with Him, our lives will delight Him and all who see us.

Adonis Blue Butterfly



Butterflies usually have a close relationship with one type of plant. They need those plants for food and shelter as they go through their development. Then when they come out with their beautiful fragile wings, they flit from flower to flower spreading pollen that causes their special flowers to form seeds. The flowers and butterflies need each other.

Like the butterfly, we are reliant on our relationship with God for food, shelter, and our development. Without Him, we cannot become all we are meant to be. As we spread our wings, we take the "pollen" we receive from our relationship with God and spread it to those we relate to. I believe He has planned ahead for us to reach His people. He gives us an affinity for those who need to hear what we should share.

What do you have today from God that you can share with those around you? Just touch them gently with His word and let God bless their lives."

Golden Maple Leaf



I did this Fall Maple Leaf as an Anna Mason tutorial. What a joy it was to see the colors develop with layer after layer of slightly different shades of red.

Dad chose two different Maple trees for our backyard. He chose them as shade trees during the summer and for their very different colors. The Silver Maple has jagged leaves that are green on top and silver on the underside. Any little breeze made them flutter and show both colors. They turned yellow in the Fall. The Norway Maple leaves are broad and deep green in the Summer and turn deep red in the Fall. Both trees dropped lots and lots of leaves. We loved to rake them into a huge pile and then jump into the middle scattering the leaves to rake again.

Even as a little girl I appreciated the colors both in Summer and Fall. Those colors only lasted a season and then were gone. What fun I am having learning how to capture the colors and shapes to keep on paper!

Are you making the most of this season in your life? Things you didn't take time for earlier may be worth taking time to do or enjoy now.

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Pink Azaleas



For a season, I was spending time every day using pen and ink. It was good, but I needed color. I got the itch to paint a flower. This azalea is from a photo Mike took.

Like pen and ink, our world can seem void of color when we hear too much bad or discouraging news. We feel weighed down by it. Faith can feel weighed down.

Faith is believing God's promises. Hope is eagerly expecting their fulfillment.

"That is why waiting does not diminish us, any more than waiting diminishes a pregnant mother. We are enlarged in the waiting. We, of course, don't see what is enlarging us. But the longer we wait, the larger we become, and the more joyful our expectancy." Romans 8:24-25, The Message, Eugene Peterson

These glorious blooms, so bright and cheery and fresh helped to lift my heart. My hope was reignited!

I smile every time I look at them, I hope they help you smile too! Let your hope be reignited, too.

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Credits

I want to take this opportunity to thank Anna Mason and her school for the tutorials I used to learn watercolor painting. I did three of her tutorials to try out her method and then in early 2020, I joined the school. The following paintings in this booklet that were painted as projects in her school are:

The Early Apple Blossoms

The Adonis Blue Butterfly

The Golden Maple Leaf

Whimsy the Frog

I continue to learn more from Anna Mason and her online school. I would encourage anyone interested in learning watercolor painting to try her free tutorials and then decide if this is a good fit for learning how to do their own art. Check out: <https://www.annamasonart.com/online-school/>

I also want to thank and honor my friend who helped me learn to draw with graphite pencils and later with colored pencils. She has asked me not to publish her name. But I am so grateful to have her as my friend. She offered to teach me to draw before I even knew she was an artist. I will always be grateful for all she means to me! We share our faith in Jesus, too.