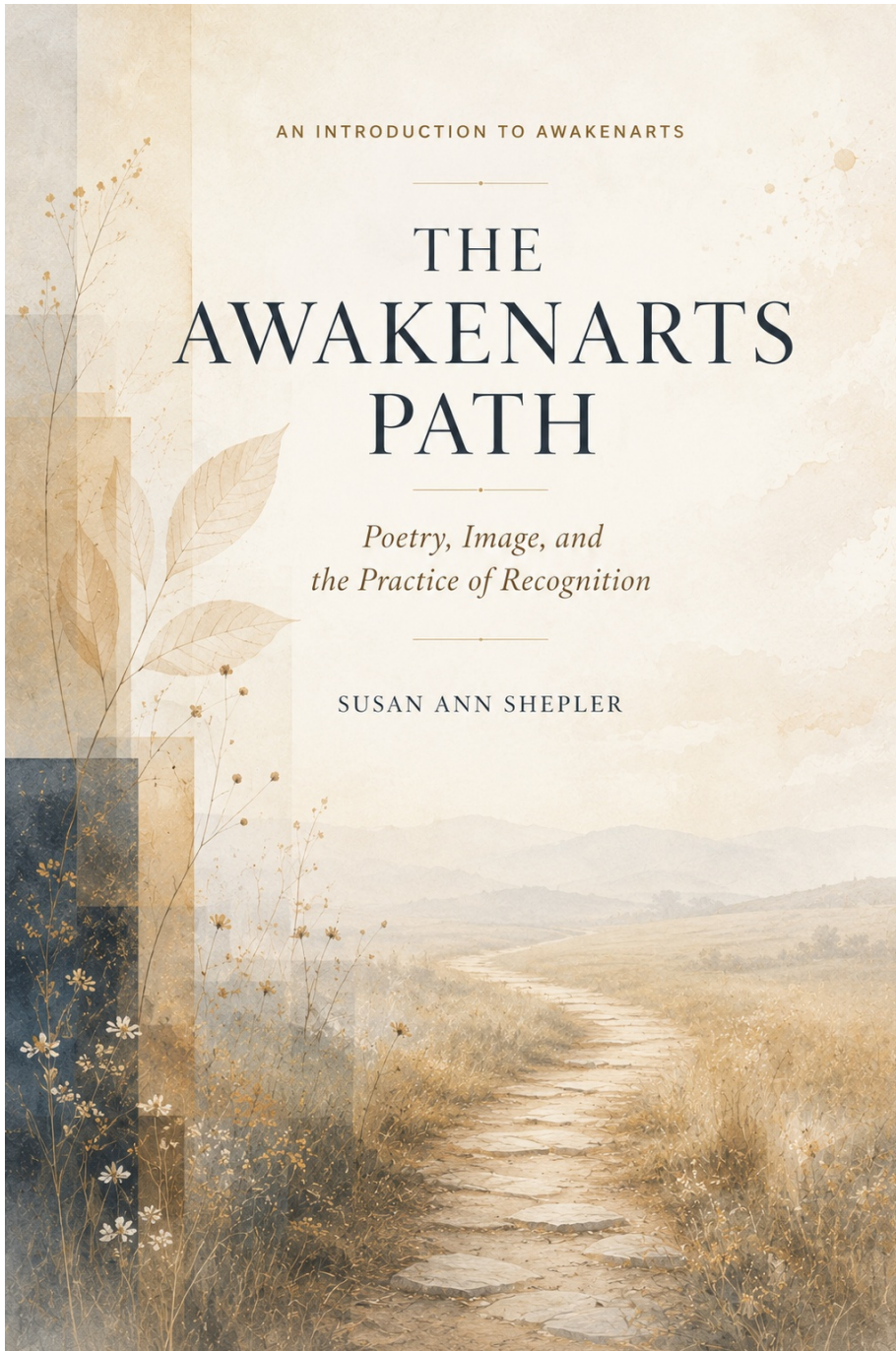


AN INTRODUCTION TO AWAKENARTS

THE AWAKENARTS PATH

*Poetry, Image, and
the Practice of Recognition*

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Language sometimes takes shape before its meaning becomes clear.

When Language Takes Shape



A poem or image can sometimes hold an experience before it can be clearly named. We may recognize its meaning only later, after returning to it with time and attention.

Recognition matters because an experience can shape us before we understand it. When an image, story, or poem gives that experience a form, we can look at it more clearly. What once felt vague may become visible. What was difficult to express may begin to find language. That pause between experience and response opens room for awareness, discernment, and choice.

AwakenArts grew from this practice of returning, noticing, and recognizing. Its purpose is not to offer a fixed interpretation of an image. It is to help us attend to symbolic language — the language through which image, story, poetry, Scripture, memory, and lived experience often carry more than they can explain directly.

This path begins with attention.

Why Symbols Matter

Human beings have always used symbols. We find them in Scripture and parable, in myth and folktale, in poetry and painting, in architecture and ritual, in dreams, memory, and ordinary speech.

Water, fire, bread, gardens, trees, birds, doors, bowls, mountains, bridges, light, and paths appear again and again. Their recurrence does not mean each image has one universal definition. It means certain forms have carried human attention across cultures and generations.

A symbol is not an equation. Water may suggest cleansing, danger, life, grief, passage, or renewal. A garden may hold abundance, enclosure, labor, loss, or return. A bridge may suggest connection, transition, risk, or the crossing from one condition to another. Context matters. The life of the person encountering the image matters. The story in which the image appears matters.

Symbols are powerful because they can hold several dimensions of experience at once. They do not always resolve complexity; often they simply give it a form we can approach.

Scripture and Symbolic Language

Christian Scripture is rich with symbolic language: light and darkness, wilderness and garden, bread and water, seed and harvest, body and vine, gate and path. Jesus often taught through parable, letting familiar images carry spiritual truth beyond a single explanatory statement.

AwakenArts is grounded in Christian faith. Scripture remains an authority and a source of orientation for its creator. At the same time, the practice does not claim that every personal image carries one prescribed meaning, or that every reader must arrive at the same response. Faithful attention includes humility. We look closely, stay attentive to context, and resist turning mystery into formula.

Read My Foundation

Learning the Language of Recognition



Symbolic literacy begins not with a dictionary of meanings, but with attention.

We may sense something before we have words for it — a recurring image, a line of poetry, a remembered place, an unexpected detail that stays with us. Recognition begins when we pause long enough to notice that it is there. AwakenArts asks:

- What draws my attention?
- What stays with me?
- Where have I encountered this image before?
- What is happening around it?
- What memories, feelings, Scriptures, stories, or questions does it awaken?
- What changes when I give my response a form?

These questions do not eliminate interpretation. They slow it down — helping us tell observation from assumption, and letting meaning emerge in relationship with context.

Recognition Rather Than Prescription

Recognition is personal, but not careless. It can be informed by Scripture, history, literature, cultural tradition, psychology, artistic form, and lived experience — sources that deepen attention rather than reduce a symbol to a single answer.

We can hold two truths together:

- Symbols participate in shared human patterns.
- Their meaning is shaped by the particular context in which they appear.

This balance protects both breadth and integrity, letting us learn from recurring symbolic traditions without forcing every image into a predetermined scheme.

What Recognition Makes Possible

Recognition creates a pause between experience and response. Something that once felt vague, recurring, or difficult to express can be observed more clearly, and considered from another perspective.

That pause may make possible:

- greater awareness of recurring patterns;
- language for an experience that has been difficult to name;
- a more considered response in place of an automatic one;
- deeper engagement with Scripture, literature, art, or memory;
- a form that can be carried into reflection, conversation, prayer, or creative work.

AwakenArts offers no diagnosis and promises no particular outcome. It offers a structure for noticing, expressing, and continuing with what becomes meaningful.

Seek · Find · Make



Seek

Seek creates the pause. Look closely before deciding what an image must mean. Attend to color, shape, placement, gesture, repetition, contrast, absence, and atmosphere. Notice what the work presents before explaining it.

Find

Find notices what draws attention, lingers, or connects with something personally recognizable. What detail keeps returning? What feels familiar or unexpected? What connection appears between the image and a memory, story, Scripture, question, or present circumstance?

Make

Make gives recognition a form — a word, question, mark, arrangement, journal entry, prayer, poem, sketch, collage, photograph, conversation, or other creative response. Making allows what has been noticed to become visible enough to revisit.

Together, these movements carry us from an unformed response toward greater awareness:

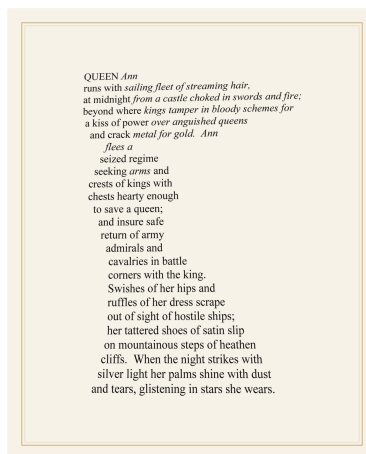
Seek what is present. Find what carries meaning. Make a form that can hold the response.

Original AwakenArts Works as Examples

What does this look like in practice? Three original AwakenArts works show the same movements of Seek, Find, and Make already at work — not as definitions of what a symbol means, but as illustrations of how symbolic form can emerge through attention, memory, faith, and making.



Poppy — Her Mother's Hands



Queen Anne



Angel Gardens

Poppy

Her Mother's Hands began in grief and memory. Poppies recalled the hills near Susanville, where the artist's mother is buried. During the making, the poem's leaf shapes came to resemble two hands joined in prayer, echoing hands that sewed clothes and made quilts.

The form was not planned as an illustration of a predetermined meaning; it became recognizable through the process. Another viewer may first notice color, grief, prayer, renewal, or something altogether different. The work shows how personal memory and shared symbolic forms can meet without requiring identical interpretations.

Queen Anne

Queen Anne was written during a season of change and uncertainty. Only later did the artist recognize something of her own search for a way forward in the figure's passage from a troubled kingdom.

For the artist, Christian faith remained the grounding kingdom toward which she could turn. Another reader may notice danger, courage, exile, transition, or hope. The figure holds the threshold between what has been left and what has not yet been reached.

Download the Queen Ann Poem (PDF)

Angel Gardens

Angel Gardens began in wordplay, rhythm, and the pleasure of hearing language take shape. As the lines lengthened, they formed the suggestion of a dress, placing the figure along an axis between heaven and earth.

The work shows that symbolic form may arise through sound, arrangement, and play as well as through deliberate reflection — meaning is sometimes recognized only after the form has already begun to appear.

Each is offered here as an illustration of process, not as a complete Edition experience. The Editions preserve the fuller relationship among image, poem, sequence, and reflection.

A Practice of Attention

Try it now. Choose an image and stay with it for a few minutes before reading an explanation or searching for a definition.

Ask:

- What do I notice first, and what lingers?
- What is happening in the image, and what is missing?
- What associations arise from Scripture, story, art, memory, or experience?
- Which of those associations belongs to the image's own context, and which belongs to mine?
- What word, mark, arrangement, or image could hold my response?

There is no requirement to reach a conclusion. The practice is complete when attention has deepened and a meaningful response has room to take shape.



Continue the Journey

The AwakenArts Path is an introduction to symbolic literacy and the practice of recognition. It is not a collection of answers, and not a substitute for the fuller works and experiences that follow.

The journey continues most fully through the **Monthly Symbol Series** — AwakenArts' ongoing publication, exploring one enduring symbol at a time through Scripture, literature, art, story, and reflection. Each issue considers recurring patterns while letting context shape meaning, building a growing library of symbolic literacy and an ongoing relationship with the whole of AwakenArts' work.

Encounters

The next step: a guided experience in which image, language, reflection, and Scripture unfold together. Encounters invites participation before explanation.

Enter the Encounter Sequence

What follows are deeper expressions of the same journey:

Editions and Companions

Each Edition offers a complete visual-poetic encounter. Its Companion supports reflection, writing, discussion, and making — material for personal use, guided study, and facilitated conversation.

Experience the Poppy Edition

Seek & Find Journals

Sequences of image, prompt, reflection, and response, shaped for continued use rather than passive reading.

Workshops

An Edition experienced in community — image-led facilitation, poetry, conversation, writing, and take-home practice.

Prints and Cards

Symbolic imagery to live with and share beyond the page, carrying the practice of attention into daily life.

AwakenArts is a way of paying attention, not a set of answers. It invites us to look closely, stay attentive to context, recognize what carries meaning, and give that recognition a form.

The path continues wherever attention becomes recognition.

