



There is a spirit in the woods

17/25

Mary Lou Hess

## Thin Places

June/July/August 2017

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Number 91

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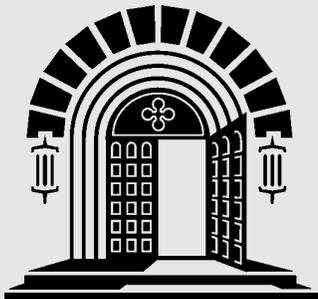
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*Thin Places*, an ecumenical sampler of events and resources for spiritual growth, with a particular interest in the contemplative spiritual journey, is published by the Spiritual Life Community of Westminster Presbyterian Church.

Look for *Thin Places* at:  
[www.thinplaces.us](http://www.thinplaces.us) or  
[westminstermpls.org/publications](http://westminstermpls.org/publications)



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## “a part of” . . . not “apart from” . . .

by Jason Spaeth

The early November day was glorious, there in the northern Minnesota forest. The sun, although well into its annual journey toward the southern skies, was warm and bright. Yesterday’s snow returned to water owing to the day’s warmth, but its gift provided a shimmering polish to the fallen leaves that covered much of the earth. The late afternoon sun was making its transition from yellow to orange, its southerly position in the sky brought intensity to the autumn colors. And its light made vivid the white and black of the aspens, the auburn of the burr oak leaves, and the deep green of the balsams. A gentle breeze from the southwest stirred the oak leaves enough for sound, but not enough to remove the last of their summer dress.

The day’s gifts were hidden from me for I was deer hunting--- the third day of my annual hunt. Days afield like this—sought since I was young—were limited by my responsibilities as a partner in a large investment management business. My professional life often interfered with my outdoor pursuits, much more than my passion for nature interfered with my professional duties. Such interference had existed for the past twenty years. As I’d climbed the ladder of titles, responsibilities and roles, work had gained the upper hand over nature. I had only two more days to hunt, and I was anxious.

I had chosen my stand that day with care. It was on an east-west trail, between a young stand of aspen and an older ash swale. The higher ground of the ash swale contained scattered burr oaks, while a few patches of balsams that the logger had left behind after the last harvest broke up the uniformity of the aspens. Just beyond them was a twenty-acre alfalfa field, a welcome food source for the resident whitetails. The site looked promising, and I’d begun the afternoon with great expectations. The gentle breeze rustled the remaining leaves on the oaks, a rustling that I continued to mistake for an approaching deer. But one never came.

As the third hour of my afternoon hunt passed, I was becoming restless and irritable.

Every ten minutes or so, I would plan, debate, and then each time decide against walking back to camp. Finally, I gave up and accepted the day . . . doing my best to sit, watch, and listen for the remaining hour of light.

To my surprise, the woods were alive on this day. (Although I did not recognize it then, or even know about it then, my acceptance of the day as it was had become a Welcoming Prayer.) All around me was life abundant. A small flock of chick-a-dees fluttered among the hazel in the forest understory where my tree stand was located. Nuthatches followed the chick-a-a-dees with similar movements, but with different roosts and voices. A red squirrel dashed from one fallen log to another, looking for balsam cones, then climbed up the trunk, hopped from branch to branch, scurried along an upper branch, and finally rested to announce its territory to the forest. In the distance, a blue jay called shrilly, startling me and overcoming the sound of the squirrel. Further out in an older section of woods, the Pileated Woodpecker squawked, its voice competing with the Jay for the loudest early winter resident. Even further out, Canadian geese in flight made their beautiful music.

Time moved quickly as it often does at the end of the day. The sun had seemed to take its time moving slowly across the southern sky that afternoon day, but once it neared the horizon, its pace quickened as it started to dip toward the earth. There were only a few more minutes of daylight. The sights and sounds of the November day continued for a few moments, then, just as the sun dipped below the horizon, coloring the sky with orange and pink light, and a quietness spread across the land, I moved from sensing to feeling.

My feeling was that all of nature offers reverence to the Creator. And, at that moment, the hunter stopped hunting and joined in the reverence. We were all exactly where we needed to be and were doing exactly

what we were supposed to be doing. God held us all and blessed us with a November day in the woods together. As orange gave way to pink and pink gave way to blue, the Jay broke the silence with its shrill call announcing the end of day and the transition to night.

That experience may have been the start of a transition in my own life, for as I left the stand and started walking back to camp I carried with me the knowledge that I am and have ever been “a part of” and not “apart from” nature. Awareness of God’s everlasting and ubiquitous presence in all things at all times was a gift to me. I thank the Creator that I did not get what I thought I had wanted that day.

As the awareness took root and grew, my professional drive, passion for investing, and ambition for more and more business growth faded, perhaps a bit like my desire for a deer that day. I have since retired from a twenty-plus year career in the financial services and have started to be active in conservation issues.

I am not yet certain where this path is taking me. But I have greater faith that this is exactly how my journey is supposed to be.

*Jason lives the Minneapolis, MN, area with his wife Anne; his sons Jonah, Samuel and Joshua; and two springer spaniels. These days he gets up early to catch a glimpse of the sunrise and enjoy quiet moments prior to the boys awakening. He spends as much as time as he is able outdoors at his home, northern Minnesota, and western Wyoming. He can be reached at [jspaeth@darriganscreek.com](mailto:jspaeth@darriganscreek.com).*

### **Metanoia**

The English phrase closest to *metanoia*—a Greek word that appears more than fifty times in the *New Testament*—may be “a profound change in heart, mind and spirit,” a change after which one finds oneself to be in a new way of living, receiving new impressions, thinking new thoughts, forming new purposes, developing new aptitudes.

### **Contact Us**

Do you know of anyone—it’s free to all who ask—who would like to receive this ecumenical newsletter?

Do you know of an up-coming Opportunity that might be of interest to others?

If “Yes,” please contact **Kristin Kieft** at: **[news@wpc-mpls.org](mailto:news@wpc-mpls.org)** or **612.332.3421**.

If you have other questions or comments, please contact

Marilyn or Alan Youel at: **[marilynyouel@msn.com](mailto:marilynyouel@msn.com)** or **[alanyouel@msn.com](mailto:alanyouel@msn.com)**

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## Ongoing Opportunities

### **The Taizé Cross: Something Special, Available to All**

Every Friday at the Taizé Community in France, pilgrims come forward during Evening Prayers to Pray around the Cross. The painted wooden Cross used each week in Taizé was made by Br. Eric in the 1980's, as one of two. Both are about five feet tall, are lovely works of art . . . as well as sacred symbols . . . enriched by their association with the Taizé Community. (The small black and white photo below of the one now in Minnesota gives an idea of it but doesn't do it justice.)

This second, duplicate, Taizé Cross came to Minnesota (as part of an eleven-day visit by Brothers to the state) and was left with the explicit wish that—in keeping with the ecumenical character of the Taizé Community itself—it be made available to any church or group who would like to borrow it to have as a part of their own worship service.

It has been borrowed and used by many, from Minnehaha Methodist Church to St. Paul's Monastery to Luther Seminary and many more. The Cross now travels in a new protective case that is not heavy but that, because of its size, normally requires use of a van.

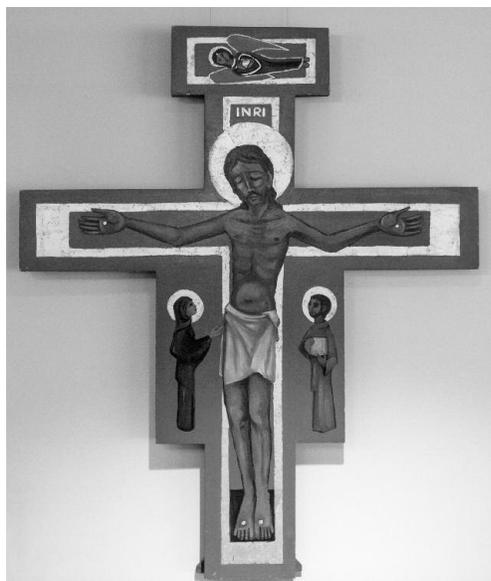
Those who have used it all seem to agree that its artistic quality, its sacred symbolism, its ties to Taizé itself, and its circulating ecumenically all make it something very special, that is available to all of us.

If you would like to borrow the Cross for use by your group, please contact Dr. Rodney Allen Schwartz [RSchwartz@wpc-mpls.org](mailto:RSchwartz@wpc-mpls.org) or 612.322.3421 at:

#### **Westminster Presbyterian Church**

**1200 Marquette Avenue, Minneapolis**

If you would like more information about the Cross itself and its history: [thinplaces\\_us@msn.com](mailto:thinplaces_us@msn.com).



### **The modern Quiet Garden Movement . . .**

began in the 1990's in England when people with estates or gardens would open their outdoor space to others to be nurtured in God's creation, a retreat from the activities of their daily lives.

In this spirit, Christos Center for Spiritual Formation offers **five summer Quiet Garden opportunities**. The grounds at Christos provide beauty and seclusion for meditation and rest. You will find benches, pathways, a labyrinth, and a small garden.

Each Garden Day will begin promptly in the chapel with information and explanation. Each event will be considered full with 15 individuals. Come by yourself, with a friend or a small group for a full or half day retreat. (Half days are 9:00 a.m.-noon or 1:00-4:00 p.m.. Full days are 9:00-4:00. Please bring your own bag lunch for a full day, a refrigerator is available).

Come away a while . . . and be nurtured in the beauty of God's creation:

**Fridays/Saturdays: June 9, June 10, August 18, August 19, and September 23**

**Christos Center for Spiritual Formation**

**1212 Holly Drive, Lino Lakes, MN**

**Tau Center, 26W171 Roosevelt Rd., Wheaton, IL**

To register—Garden Days are free, but a modest contribution is appreciated—or for information about this and other up-coming Opportunities in the Twin Cities, like the regularly scheduled **Twin Cities Writer's Day Away**: 651.653.8207 or [www.christoscenter.org](http://www.christoscenter.org) or [kathryn@christoscenter.org](mailto:kathryn@christoscenter.org) .

For up-coming Opportunities in the Chicago area: 630.868.9425 or [donnascott@christoscenter.org](mailto:donnascott@christoscenter.org) or [www.christoscenter.org](http://www.christoscenter.org).

### **Summer Walks on a Labyrinth**

A labyrinth is an ancient circular pattern found in many cultures around the world, a concentric sacred path with no possibility of going astray, with no dead-ends or false trails.

As such, walking a labyrinth engages body, mind and spirit through the focused attention needed to gently follow its twists and turns. Labyrinths are used for calming and releasing distractions, for ritual, celebration, for gaining spiritual insight on questions, prayer, games and dancing.

At Wisdom Ways, we have three avenues for you to experience the labyrinth:

#### **Walking in Harmony**

This is an indoor labyrinth walk. After a brief reflection, you are welcome to walk the labyrinth as often as you wish. There will be space for writing and artist play as well as time for quiet prayer and meditation:

**Second Fridays every month, 9:30-11:30 a.m.**

**Wisdom Ways Center for Spirituality**

**Carondelet Center, 1890 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul**

also:

**Wisdom Ways also has two outdoor labyrinths**

The Garden labyrinth is smaller, stones and plants create the path. The Chartres-style labyrinth is larger and is made from pavers set in the ground. Both of these labyrinths are open to the public during daylight. For more information about our labyrinths—we also have over a **Dozen Canvas Labyrinths** to rent that can be shipped to you—or about other up-coming Opportunities: [www.wisdomwayscenter.org](http://www.wisdomwayscenter.org) or 651.696.2788 or [rdobias@wisdomwoayscenter.org](mailto:rdobias@wisdomwoayscenter.org).

### **A Centering Prayer Introductory Workshop**

The St. Olaf Centering Prayer group has met every Saturday (except for the few times when Christmas Day fell on a Saturday) for more than twenty-five years. The group is made up of members who have been there since the beginning and others who have only recently been drawn to Centering Prayer.

This combination of long-time practice of Centering prayer and the experience of those who have only recently joined will underlie and enrich the three sessions of this Introductory Workshop. It will be—so to speak—like being in the kitchen with the cook.

Each session will offer both a focused teaching time and the actual experience of Centering Prayer. Sessions are free and open to all, but please let them know (for their planning purposes) if you are planning to come:

**Three Saturdays, 9:00-11:00 a.m.:**

- **June 10, “Prayer as Relationship”**
  - **June 17, “The Method of Centering Prayer” and “Thoughts and the Use of the Sacred Word”**
  - **June 24, “Deepening Our Relationship with God”**
- St. Olaf Catholic Church, in Fleming Hall, 2nd Floor, 215 South 8th Street, Minneapolis**

For information or registration: 612.332.7471 or [carolquest@icloud.com](mailto:carolquest@icloud.com).

### **Guided City Prayer Walk**

This summer, tour the Whittier neighborhood via our new Prayer Walk, stopping at 3 to 5 stops of the 26 Prayer Opportunities surrounding Venite. We'll visit different locations each of the three Thursdays. Expect God to speak to you through landmarks and object lessons causing you to learn, think or question because of a connection to a circumstance, relationship or situation in your daily life.

Bring your family or friends and allow the city to spur conversation with God. And, because this is in the heart of Eat Street, take advantage of breakfast, lunch or dinner while you're here:

### **Beginning each day with gratitude . . .**

A long-time reader uses this Motion Prayer each morning, beginning each day with gratitude.

She writes, “When my feet first touch the ground,  
I stand and slowly pray this prayer,  
sometimes aloud, often silently,  
with nine long, slow morning stretches  
matching the import of each line.

The stretches feel good; the gratefulness better”:

Thanks be to You, God, for this world,  
and for the time and space in which we live.

For all that is above me, . . .  
for all that is beneath me, . . .  
for all that is around me, . . .  
for all that is behind me, . . .  
for all that is before me, . . .  
for all that is within me, . . .

I open myself to new experiences, . . .  
I open myself to new relationships, . . .

praising you for the Gift of this Day. . . .

### **Helping Christian Leaders Soar**

The subtitle of this gentle and insightful newsletter, by Samuel Rahberg, the Director of the Benedictine Center at St. Paul's monastery, may seem to imply that it is written for Christian *Leaders*. But reading its Opening Reflection, Reader's Poem, Spiritual Practice, and other sections each month surely suggests its appeal to a broader audience, to the priesthood of all believers.

If read just after finishing the Meditation above in this issue, the newsletter for April 30 might seem to jump off the page . . . with its Opening Reflection, “**Harvesting Nature's Wisdom for Listening and Leading,**” with a Reader's Poem based on Sigurd Olson's *Listening Point*, and with its remembered words from Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*.

For more information, to read the April issue of Sam's newsletter, or to be added to the mailing list for future issues:

[www.samuelrahberg.com/home/reflections](http://www.samuelrahberg.com/home/reflections) or [info@samuelrahberg.com](mailto:info@samuelrahberg.com).

**Three Thursdays, June 15, July 20, August 17,  
10:00-11:30 a.m. and 6:00-8:30 p.m.**

**Venite Ministries**

**109 East 26th Street, #3, Minneapolis**

For information or registration for this and other upcoming opportunities: [www.veniteministries.org](http://www.veniteministries.org) or 763.333.8976 or [nancy@veniteministries.org](mailto:nancy@veniteministries.org).

**Deeply at Home in the Whole**

In this retreat, we will immerse ourselves in the woods, the four elements, and the evolutionary story of the universe to revitalize our lives with creativity. Our days will be a combination of meditation, time outdoors, qigong movements, group sharing, and rest.

We will also draw upon the repeated meditative step patterns of ritual dance from the Balkans and Asia Minor—an ancient practice for reflecting and enhancing the beauty and order of the cosmos.

This is an opportunity to attune to the universe's movement towards more love and more consciousness . . . to discover a sense of profound belonging that unlocks your creative power. No experience necessary and all abilities welcome:

**Friday, July 7, at 7:00 p.m.-Sun., July 9, after brunch  
The Christine Center, W8303 Mann Road, Willard, WI**

For information or registration for this or other upcoming Opportunities: [christinecenter@tds.net](mailto:christinecenter@tds.net) or 715.267.7507 or [www.christinecenter.org](http://www.christinecenter.org).

**A long-time reader**

. . . Heather Durenberger, with Laurie Erickson, has just published her second devotional guidebook, *Seeing Yourself as God Sees You: Don't Let Lies Be Your Truth*, her second book in seven months. For more: [www.hdurenberger.wordpress.com](http://www.hdurenberger.wordpress.com).

**One-Time Opportunities**

**Spiritual Listening Training**

This will be an opportunity to focus on how to cultivate deep listening and presence, especially with the most vulnerable in our community. We'll learn about homelessness, poverty, empathy, and accompaniment. And we will also explore our own assumptions and judgments in order to build understanding and to become more connected:

**Friday, June 9, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**

**Held at St Mark's Episcopal Cathedral**

**519 Oak Grove Street, Minneapolis**

**Sponsored by City House**

For information or registration or this or other upcoming Opportunities—like **Pilgrimage—Urban**

**Immersion Experience** (June 16): [www.city-house.org](http://www.city-house.org) or [wanda@city-house.org](mailto:wanda@city-house.org) or 651.494.8303.

**Men's Rites of Passage Retreat**

Every *Men's Rites of Passage* retreat is solidly based on the work begun by Richard Rohr several decades ago and is now maintained and supported by a core leadership group called 'Illuman,' a truly international community of men committed to a spiritual journey and the mentoring of younger men.

This summer retreat, offered by Illuman Minnesota, is for all men seeking a richer spiritual life through:

- discovery about masculine spirituality and 'The Holy Mystery,'
- time to savor the healing and awesome power of nature,
- an opportunity to ask questions about your 'next step,'
- an invitation to listen to the 'quiet voice of God,'
- and a chance to return to life with a renewed commitment to your gifts:

**Weds., June 21, at 2:30 p.m.-Sun., June 25, at 1:00 p.m.**

**Sponsored by The Minnesota Chapter of Illuman**

Held at the Audubon Center of the North Woods

54165 Audubon Road, Sandstone, MN

For information or registration: 763.482.1353 or [fr.kevinanderson@gmail.com](mailto:fr.kevinanderson@gmail.com) or [www.illuman.org](http://www.illuman.org) or [www.malespiritualitymn.org](http://www.malespiritualitymn.org).

**The Conspiracy for God Conference Series:**

**"Conspire 2017: Transformation"**

Join Richard Rohr, angel Kyodo williams, Mirabai Starr and Ken Wilber as they help us rediscover all beings' inherent unity and belovedness. Conversion demands

**God's Fingerprints**

"God is within all things, but not enclosed;  
outside all things, but not excluded;  
above all things, but not aloof;  
below all things, but not debased."

Therefore the origin, magnitude, beauty, fullness, activity, and order of all created things are the very "footprints" and "fingerprints" of God.

Now that is a quite lovely  
and very safe Universe to live in.  
Welcome home!

Bonaventure, quoted and paraphrased by Richard Rohr, in his Daily Meditation for 30 March 2017

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immense humility and honesty, rather than zeal or purity. The autonomous, egocentric and separate self must give way to our True Self.

Facing our shadow is a breakthrough to grace and mercy. Embracing the parts of ourselves we've denied also reveals a "golden shadow"—our goodness, giftedness, and generosity!:

**Friday, July 7, at 1:00 p.m.-Sunday, July 9, at noon**  
(you may register for either the retreat or the Webcast)  
**Held at Hotel Albuquerque at Old Town, Albuquerque**  
**Sponsored by The Center for Action and Contemplation**  
For information or registration for this and other upcoming Opportunities: [www.cacradicalgrace.org](http://www.cacradicalgrace.org) or 505.242.9588 or [info@cacradicalgrace.org](mailto:info@cacradicalgrace.org).

### Icon Writing: Jonah and the Whale

Icon writing is a powerful prayer practice, perhaps introduced for many of us by Henri Nouwen's, *Behold the Beauty of the Lord: Praying with Icons*. It is also a technical art form with a rich, inspirational history.

At this retreat for all levels, we will "write," or paint, a classic icon of Jonah and the Whale, in the Byzantine style, following ancient guidelines and techniques while using modern artist's materials. All materials and supplies are provided so that you will finish the week with a beautifully completed icon, varnished and ready to display.

Each day of the retreat will include prayer and meditation, explanation of the technique, history and symbolism of the icons, and several hours of painting. Take home both the work that you will have created and a deep personal experience with the prayer practice of icon writing:

**Sunday, July 9, at 7:00 p.m.-Sat., July 15, at 10:00 a.m.**  
**Franciscan Spirituality Center**  
**920 Market Street, La Crosse, WI**

#### "... the ever-flowing stream of life"

"God is to be found not by stepping aside from the flow of daily life into religious moments and environments, or by looking away from creation to a spiritual realm beyond, but rather by entering the depths of the present moment. There we will find God, wherever we may be. . . .

Our times of religious observation and meditative practice are not alternatives to encountering God in the ever-flowing stream of life. Rather, they are moments of preparing ourselves to be alert to the One who is always and everywhere present, closer to us than we are to ourselves."

John Philip Newell, *The Book of Creation*

For information or registration for these and other upcoming Opportunities—like

- **Radiant Woman—a Yoga Retreat (June 8-11),**
- **Summer Camp for Adults: Put Your Whole Self IN! Mind-Body-Spirit Meets Earth-Water-Fire-Air** (June 19-23), or
- **Eco-Love: Nurturing Your Human Nature with Creation** (August 7-11):

Contact us at: 608.791.5295 or [fscenter@fspa.org](mailto:fscenter@fspa.org) or [www.fscenter.org](http://www.fscenter.org).

### Condensed School of Lectio Divina

The Condensed School adapts what has become the Benedictine Center's keystone experience retreat—which fills early—into a shorter, less-expensive format. But the core teachings and the monastic experience remain intact.

Participants will immerse themselves in a Scriptural text that speaks to their hearts—one that can help them walk through the world in a sacred way. It is both an excellent introduction to the practice of lectio divina and a good review for past participants in the School of Lectio Divina. Maximum of 20 participants, as room arrangements allow:

**Friday, July 14, at 7:00 p.m.-Sun., July 16, at 1:00 p.m.**  
**The Benedictine Center, St. Paul's Monastery**  
**2675 Benet Road, St. Paul**

For information or registration for these and other upcoming Opportunities—the **NEW: Prayer Vigil for Peace** (First Fridays, 7:00-8:00 p.m.): 651.777.7251 or [benedictinecenter@stpaulsmonastery.org](mailto:benedictinecenter@stpaulsmonastery.org) or [www.stpaulsmonastery.org](http://www.stpaulsmonastery.org).

### Healing Our Relationships

This retreat—led by Fr. Matt Linn, and filled July after July—will focus on how to heal our relationships with God, with those who have hurt us, and at times with ourselves.

Each session will end with a prayer process to heal a difficult relationship. The retreat will end with a process to heal future hurts daily and to receive all the life from each day:

**Friday, July 21, at 8:00 p.m.-Sun., July 23, at 12:45 p.m.**  
**Christ the King Retreat Center, Buffalo, MN**

For information or registration for these or other upcoming Opportunities—like **The Premiere of "Take Courage": A Men and Women's Weekend Retreat** (August 25-27): 763.682.1394 or [jhanson@kingshouse.com](mailto:jhanson@kingshouse.com) or [www.kingshouse.com](http://www.kingshouse.com).

### Life in the Spirit – Life in Community

The retreat will open with a Prayer Service to the Holy Spirit, drawing upon poetry, prose and prayer to invoke the Spirit and prepare ourselves to be receptive. Subsequent sessions will be reflections on where and how the Spirit calls us to solitude and community, conversion and healing, freedom and faithfulness.

This is a Conference Retreat for the entire Monastic Community. As such, as lay people who have joined us for Conferences in the past have discovered, a particularly special way to share in our life together: **Sunday, July 23, at 7:00 p.m.–Fri., July 28, at 6:00 p.m. Spirituality Center, Saint Benedict's Monastery**

**104 Chapel Lane, St. Joseph, MN**

For information or registration for these and other up-coming Opportunities—like : **A School of Benedictine Spirituality: Living Benedictine Values** (June 12-15): 320.363.8987 or [www.sbm.osb.org](http://www.sbm.osb.org) or [mweidner@csbsju.edu](mailto:mweidner@csbsju.edu).

### Celtic Consciousness: Native Wisdom

The Celtic spiritual tradition has many resonances with Native American spirituality and the wisdom of indigenous peoples throughout the world.

In our signature week at Ghost Ranch, we will honor this wisdom through Native ceremony and look to the treasure of Celtic spirituality as a rich resource for transformation in our lives and in the world today.

Our days will consist of prayer at the rising of the sun in Ghost Ranch's Agape Center courtyard, teaching and sharing in the mornings and evenings, and rest and silence in the afternoons. The program will be led by **John Philip Newell and Ali Newell** and enriched by the musical talent of David and Winona Poole and the Navajo wisdom of Alta Begay-Piechowski and Terrell Piechowski. They are all good friends of Ghost Ranch and have worked together creatively in the past through word and song and ceremony:

**Sun., July 16, at 10:00 a.m.–Sat., July 22, at 10:00 a.m. Casa del Sol at Ghost Ranch, Abiquiu, NM**

For information or registration for this or other up-coming Opportunities: [www.ghostranch.org](http://www.ghostranch.org) or 505.685.4333, ext. 4152 or [registrar@ghostranch.org](mailto:registrar@ghostranch.org).

### Wisdom School: The Ongoing Quest –

#### Crossing the Threshold to Being

Building upon last year's Wisdom School, we will continue to develop our inner authority or what The Gospel of Thomas calls our "sovereignty." Like earlier Wisdom Schools, this year's is considered to be more advanced work, with instructions helping each

participant to recognize and work with his or her own inner teacher.

Our goal is to help you discover those practices that can increase your awareness of your inner treasure. Our wish is that you will leave with a stronger sense of your inner domain . . . and its resources:

**Monday, Aug. 14, at 6:00 p.m.–Sat., Aug. 19, after lunch** also:

Three locations for:

#### Contemplative Prayer, Community of Practice

At these Evening Prayers, we normally begin with a simple chant, followed by two periods of silent prayer, with a contemplative walk in between, concluding with a simple chant:

- at **The House of Prayer in Collegeville, Wednesdays, 5:30-6:30 p.m.**
- at **The House of Prayer in the City**
  - **St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral (First Floor, under Waldorf Day School), Mondays, 6:30-7:30 p.m.**
  - **Episcopal Homes (Drew Room, under Waldorf Day School), 502 Lynnhurst Ave. East, St. Paul Thursdays, 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

**The Episcopal House of Prayer, Collegeville, MN** and

**The House of Prayer in the City,**

**St. Mark's Cathedral, 519 Oak Grove Street, Mpls.**

For information or registration for these and other up-coming Opportunities—like **Kenosis: The Prayer of Self-Emptying** (June 10-18): 329.363.3493 or [MCOBB@csbsju.edu](mailto:MCOBB@csbsju.edu) or [houseprayer@csbsju.edu](mailto:houseprayer@csbsju.edu) or [www.ehouseofprayer.org](http://www.ehouseofprayer.org).

#### Changewinds . . .

"When changewinds swirl through our lives, they often call us to undertake a new passage of the spiritual journey: that of confronting the lost and counterfeit places within us and releasing our deeper, innermost self—our true selves. They call us to come home to ourselves, to become who we really are."

Sue Monk Kidd, *When the Heart Waits*

"By going out into the natural world,  
I am really going in."

John Muir



Westminster Presbyterian Church  
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Minneapolis, MN 55403-2419

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*“a part of . . .” not “apart from” . . .  
“The Taizé Cross . . .”  
“Thank You, Lord . . .”*



*There is a spirit in the woods* 1968 *Mary Lou Hess*

## Afterwords: “Thank You, Lord . . .”

A story. Reading Thomas Keating’s **Open Mind, Open Heart** opened the door on a whole new part of the journey, one suggesting that “me talking” was not the only way to pray, that there was a way of praying that was in part “me listening” but that could also move into resting in God’s presence. But reading the book only opened the door. A first experience of Centering Prayer happened at House of Hope Presbyterian Church, offered by a Sister from St. Paul’s monastery, and—surprisingly—it seemed to work. Thus encouraged, a daily practice was started, to last only a few days; then started again, and (because of the “busy-ness” of life, one told one’s self) dropped again.

A hunger kept calling, and over many months the days of practice before falling off the wagon grew longer. Discovering the St. Olaf Centering Prayer group, meeting and praying with others, helped. Attending retreats, with instruction and guided meditation helped. But in the end, it was the actual experience of Centering Prayer that made it become a daily practice, a daily necessity. Some subtle nourishment seemed to come, even though nothing very dramatic seemed to be happening most days, and even though there were recurring dry spells. (There is comfort in knowing that many—including Thomas Merton—acknowledge that everyone remains only an amateur.)

From the beginning, it was recognized that—affective as it seemed to be—the contemplative was only another way of praying, . . . was certainly not a better way of praying, . . . was not a replacement for spoken prayer, for the way of praying that has nurtured the very great majority of people since earliest times. And establishing a daily practice of Centering Prayer had been hard, had frequently seemed to italicize the discipline part of a daily prayer discipline.

But how simple was spoken prayer? Beyond the set prayers of meal time and Sunday morning and a fortunately few times of deep need, knowing what to really pray about wasn’t easy. A book again helped. **Meister Eckhart’s gentle advice**, “If the only prayer you ever say in your life is ‘thank you,’ it will be enough,” opened another door. For this was something that could be done. A friend, no longer in his thirties, introduced his fiancée, exuding a deep happiness, “Thank you, Lord, for the gift of love and human companionship.” Stopping by another friend’s garden to see tulips emerging, with specks of color deep within, “Thank you for the promise and for the hope in green growing things.” Daily opportunities were there (but dry spells, too).

Dry periods and busy days were real. When they came, a friend’s sharing of the **Motion Prayer** [Page 4 above] became a Blessing. On those days, the prayer and its stretch in the morning, and its opening words at bedtime, beginning and ending each day with gratitude . . . have been enough,

*“Thank you, Lord, for the gift of this day, . . . and for the time and space in which we live.”*