



Minnesota El Camino Pilgrims, traditional Pilgrim's Shells on their packs

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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)  
[westminstermpls.org/publications](http://westminstermpls.org/publications)



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## Pilgrim, . . . you make your own path, . . . you are not alone . . .

by *The Rev. Dr. Timothy Hart-Andersen*

Twenty years ago, *Thin Places* was launched. The little journal wanted to provide information on contemplative opportunities in the Twin Cities and offer reflections on spirituality. Westminster members Marilyn and Alan Youel have shepherded *Thin Places* from the start and still do today, for which I and countless others are grateful.

Along the way over these twenty years, some surprising things have happened. The journal expanded to an online presence; nearly three thousand people now subscribe to *Thin Places*. People beyond the Twin Cities area began reading the journal; we often hear from new friends in faraway places, including overseas. *Thin Places* has become a clearinghouse of information on spiritual retreats and opportunities for contemplative prayer locally, and in other areas of the country, as well.

An ecumenical contemplative community has grown up around the journal. That community has gathered occasionally to worship, and that community will do so again in an ecumenical *Thin Places* service on Wednesday, October 3, at 6:00 p.m. in the new Westminster Hall at Westminster Presbyterian Church, 1200 Marquette Ave. Minneapolis, MN—with free parking available in the church's underground garage. Leaders from various denominations have been invited to participate in the service. A reception will follow.

We invite you to plan to participate in this 20th Anniversary *Thin Places* ecumenical worship service, on Wednesday, October 3, at 6:00 p.m. at Westminster.

This fall marks the beginning of my twentieth year as Senior Pastor at Westminster. My service in this congregation has paralleled the development of the *Thin Places* community. I remember early in my ministry the decision by leaders at Westminster to change the name of the Spiritual Growth Committee to the Spiritual Growth Community. I also recall describing that community as akin to a religious order in this Protestant congregation, a group whose sole purpose was to pray for the church. They have gathered and continued to gather in quiet worship, contemplative settings, centering prayer, evening services in the Taizé and Celtic traditions, and retreats.

My own spiritual journey over these nearly two decades has been enriched by participating in these contemplative experiences. Given the demands of my role here at Westminster, quiet times of reflection and prayer have proven to be key to finding balance and energy to keep moving forward with the congregation, responding to

pastoral needs and new opportunities for ministry.

Last spring, I was privileged to participate in Macalester College’s hosting of former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Anan’s visit to the Twin Cities. Anan was asked if he had known when he was a student at Macalester where his life would take him. His reply resonated with me. He quoted a portion of a poem by Antonio Machado:

*“Pilgrim, your footprints are the only road.  
Nothing else.  
Pilgrim, there is no road;  
you make your own path as you walk.  
As you walk, you make your own road,  
and when you look back you see  
the path you will never travel again.  
Pilgrim, there is no road;  
only a ship’s wake on the sea.”*

Over the last six years my wife and I have adopted pilgrimages—long walks—as an important part of our spiritual journey and our life as a couple. We have walked more than 1,300 miles and spent more than 14 weeks on the path (or looking for it, as has sometimes been the case!) over those years.

As pilgrims, we have learned much. We never are entirely alone on the path. We may make our own road, but we do not travel it by ourselves. Even on the most remote paths we have traversed, we have always come across at least one other pilgrim walking the way.

Everyone we have met on these walks is working on something. That is true of us, as well. The hours spent in quiet walking—typically at least eight hours a day—help surface that which has lain hidden within us.

One day on the El Camino in Spain, about three weeks into our pilgrimage, I found myself silently weeping as I walked. They were tears of grief over my father’s death nine months earlier, tears that had not been able to flow freely until that moment. For many silent miles I wept, remembering, grieving, rejoicing, giving thanks to God as I walked.

We frame each day on our walks with prayer and psalms, always spoken aloud. That practice reminds us

that we have a constant companion on our pilgrimage through life, one who will not leave us without the wherewithal to find our way to that night’s lodging.

Psalms 121 is a pilgrim’s poem, and a favorite of mine:

*“God will keep your going out and your coming in . . .  
God will keep your life.”*

That is good news for all pilgrims making their path through life. Thanks be to God.

*The Rev. Dr. Timothy Hart-Andersen has served as Senior Pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church in Minneapolis since 1999. He recently led the congregation through Open Doors Open Futures, a strategic effort to position the historic downtown church for a thriving ministry in the 21st century.*

*Tim serves on the Minneapolis Downtown Council and on the Board of Trustees of Macalester College. He is married to the Rev. Elizabeth Hart-Andersen, and they have three grown children.*

*He may be reached at: Tim@wpc-mpls.org.*

### This Issue’s Quotations

We believe that ten of the ninety-three men and women who have written lead Meditations for Thin Places have since, to use an old-fashioned phrase, gone on to glory.

Remembering their voices, this anniversary issue offers portions from six of their shared journeys.

## Ongoing Opportunities

### Sabbath House

Will and Ariel Durant, after completing the tenth volume of their *The Story of Civilization*, stopped, stepped back to think over all that they’d learned, then wrote their summarizing volume, *The Lessons of History*, and in it concluded that perhaps the central reality of history is “change.”

Change has come to the Twin Cities with the closing of Sabbath House, at 3228 Portland Avenue in south Minneapolis. It was just a house on a busy street. But it became a welcoming place for many, hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls, a welcoming place for so many years for their Advent and Lenten weekly Evening Prayers, for their New Year’s Eve Open Houses, and for many other opportunities for spiritual growth and friendship.

Thank you, Sisters. Thank you, Sabbath House.

### Centering Prayer Groups

**Except for those few years** when Christmas Day fell on a Saturday, the St. Olaf Centering Prayer Group—the

### 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 you can say, “Yes,” to either question, please contact Kristin Kieft at:  
**news@wpc-mpls.org** or 612.332.3421.

If you have other questions or comments, please contact us at: **thinplaces\_us@msn.com**.

area's oldest—has come together to pray every week for twenty-five years (25 x 52 = 1,300):

Everyone who comes is welcomed:

**Every Saturday morning, 9:15-11:15 a.m.**

**St. Olaf Catholic Church**

**215 South 8th Street, Minneapolis**

For additional information: 612.332.7471 or carolquest@q.com.

**For more than sixteen years**, and after the retirement of founders Carolyn and Dick Young,

**Colonial Church of Edina, in the Fireplace Room,**

**6200 Colonial Way, Edina,**

continues to offer:

**Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina**

**First & Third Thursdays, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Oct.-May**

For information: 952.926.2711 or

www.colonialchurch.org or cjoanne1@comcast.net.

**Beginning its fifteenth year**, the Centering Prayer group at **Incarnation Lutheran Church** (Tuesdays, at 7:30 a.m.) now has an outgrowth in downtown Minneapolis:"

**"How can you be born after growing old? . . . "**

"I was sixty-two years old when I awoke to (was born to?) the me that is, rather than the me I think I should create. I was in the last third of my life before I became aware of that spirituality in me which I don't have to create but which is a generic quality of my humanity, something I was born talented for, just as I was born with a talent for eating.

Having discovered that I am a spiritual being, whether or not I do anything about it, there are now many more moments in life—some painful and some joyful, some thin and some full—which resonate with my inner spiritual life. . . .

'How can you be born again after growing old?' Nicodemus asked (in John 3). Unfortunately, most of us Presbyterians don't use 'born again' language to describe our religious experiences. . . . But since it happened to me in the ordinary flow of life, I know it can happen and that it's not all that exotic. If this is true for me, it's also true of you. Let me encourage you to pay attention to your inner self—you might find God there! . . . "

The Rev. Dr. Dan Little, Issue 2  
[Dr. Little was the Interim Senior Pastor at Westminster before Tim Hart-Andersen came]

**Wednesdays, at noon, in the Bates Room**

**Westminster Presbyterian Church**

**1200 Marquette Avenue Minneapolis**

For information: l.linderscholer@gmail.com or 612.322.3421 or www.westminstermpls.org.

**Taizé Evening Prayers**

**Now beginning** its twenty-first year, the **First Friday Taizé Prayer** group—the area's oldest—offers to each one who comes a time for . . . contemplative prayer and silence, with traditional Taizé songs and chants:

**First Fridays, 7:00-7:45 p.m., beginning September 7**

**St. Luke's Episcopal Church**

4557 Colfax Avenue South, Minneapolis

For information: first.friday.taize@gmail.com or

www.facebook.com/firstfridaaytaize or

larryreynolds52@gmail.com.

For the fifteenth year,

**Minnehaha United Methodist Church,**

3701 East 50th Street, Minneapolis,

a church that—like many Methodist churches—takes its singing seriously, continues to offer, October to May:

**Second Friday Taizé Worship, 7:00-8:00 p.m.**

with sung prayers, scripture and silence

For information: www.minnehaha.org or

612.721.6231 or becky@minnehaha.org.

**These six Minneapolis faith communities** begin again in October their truly ecumenical—as at the Taizé Community in France—monthly Taizé Evening Prayers:

St. Frances Cabrini Catholic Church, Prospect Park

United Methodist Church, Faith Mennonite Church,

Compassion of Christ Catholic Community, Church of

Gichitwaa Kateri, and Dignity/Twin Cities

All are invited to this season's first gathering:

**Thursday, October 11, simple supper at 6:00 p.m.,**

**Taizé Evening Prayer at 7:00 p.m.**

**St. Frances Cabrini Catholic Church**

**1500 Franklin Avenue SE, Minneapolis**

For information about this and for the dates/places of the rest of this year's ecumenical Taizé Evening Prayers:

612.339.3023 or chris@cabrini.org or

www.cabrini.org.

**Compline for a New Millennium:**

**Contemplative Night Prayer**

Now beginning its twenty-sixth year, the Minnesota Compline Choir is now partnering with Pilgrim Lutheran Church in St. Paul. *Compline*, also known as *Prayer at the End of the Day*, is an ancient contemplative liturgy,

its compilation often ascribed to St. Benedict (480-543):

**Third Sundays, at 6:51 p.m., September-March**

Compline thus joins Pilgrim's two long-standing contemplative Evening Prayers:

**A Celtic Journey into the Mysteries:**

**Celtic Contemplative Communion**

**Second Sundays, at 6:51 p.m., September-April**  
and

**Nordic Contemplative Evening Prayer: A Celebration of the Rich & Haunting Music of the Scandinavian Peoples**

**Fourth Sundays, at 6:51 p.m., September-April**

**Pilgrim Lutheran Church**

**1935 St. Clair Avenue, St. Paul**

For information on these and other up-coming opportunities: [www.pilgrimstpaul.org](http://www.pilgrimstpaul.org) or 651.699.6886 or [pilgrimlccomm@gmail.com](mailto:pilgrimlccomm@gmail.com).

**“Prayer: The Mystery of Our Being . . . “**

“A certain shyness pervades me as I think about prayer. I don't want to analyze it; and I hesitate to make claims for it, such as 'prayer works.' For, in addressing prayer, I am describing an experience of the soul. An encounter of my spirit with God's Spirit. Therefore, I must enter the 'secret place of the most High' as entering a 'closet' and—after closing the door—fill the inner space of my soul with silence, contemplation, pondering God's presence with me. . . .

I pray because my very existence compels me to pray; I pray so that I might breathe in God's fresh air; I pray so that I may consciously speak to the One Holy God of the Universe regarding the needs of others and of my own needs. . . .

Prayer is the word all humans of every conviction ascribe to a 'connection' (a crude word) or a 'communion' (a better word) we humans instinctively feel with our Creator. Prayer is a reality of human experience. . . . Prayer is the fresh air, the spiritual atmosphere in which we humans live and move and have our being. Prayer is the 'Mystery of Our Being,' the 'Ultimate Thin Place' . . . “

The Rev. Dr. Henry W. Andersen, Issue 14  
[‘Hank’ Andersen was Tim Hart-Andersen's father]

## All are invited...

### The Thin Places Twentieth Anniversary

#### Ecumenical Worship Service

What happens to time? Can it be that long since a proposed ecumenical newsletter with an interest in the contemplative spiritual journey tried to round up two hundred names, so it could qualify for bulk mailing? Can a good handful of “Opportunities” in the early issues, on a page and a half, have become more than twenty, picked from among many more, in the current issue?

Time has brought a richness to the contemplative community in the Twin Cities area. To celebrate and give thanks for that richness, there will be an Ecumenical Worship Service on October 3rd at 6:00 p.m., at Westminster in downtown Minneapolis. Unless something comes up, the Worship Leaders will include:

Abbot John Klassen, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville;  
Dean Paul Lebens-Englund, St. Mark's Cathedral;  
Rev. Judy Zabel, Hennepin Avenue Methodist;  
Rev. Jim Bear Jacobs, Church of All Nations/Bethel University; Rev. Dr. Alika Galloway, Liberty Church;  
Rev. Dr. Curtiss DeYoung, Minnesota Council of Churches; Rev. Peter Nycklemoe, Central Lutheran;  
Rev. Dr. Jeff Japinga, Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area

Ample free parking is available beneath the new Open Doors Open Futures building (enter off Alice Rainville Place, between Marquette & Nicollet Mall—see [www.westminstermpls.org/contact/parking](http://www.westminstermpls.org/contact/parking)).

***All are invited to come together to celebrate the richness of the contemplative community that has grown up in the Twin Cities, and across the land.***

A reception will follow:

**Wednesday, October 3, 6:00-8:00 p.m.**

**Westminster Presbyterian Church, in The Clearing,  
1200 Marquette Avenue, Minneapolis**

Additional information: [www.westminstermpls.org](http://www.westminstermpls.org)  
or 612.322.3421 or [jteliczan@wpc-mpls.org](mailto:jteliczan@wpc-mpls.org).

“The depth of the contemplative network in the Twin Cities is unparalleled in the country”  
John Philip Newell

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## One-Time Opportunities

### **From Wild to Wise: The Spiritual Language of Men**

Join us for this two-part journaling and story-telling experience into the ways of masculine spirituality, directed towards fostering male wisdom.

Together we will seek to explore how men are hard-wired for meaning, purpose and to experience the sacred in life. Included among the topics we will discuss are: the landscape of the masculine soul, strong masculine role models, and lessons for men found in nature. Using memory, imagination and group sharing we will be led in our exploration by men's wisdom teacher, Steve Robach:

**Two Wednesdays, September 5 and 12, 7:30-9:00 am  
Wisdom Ways Center for Spirituality**

**Carondelet Center, 1890 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul**  
For information about these and many other upcoming opportunities [like **Liberating the Heart: A Day Retreat with Joyce Rupp and Sara Thomsen, Sept. 22, or Women of Wisdom and Imagination: Teresa and Therese, October 18**]: [www.wisdomwayscenter.org](http://www.wisdomwayscenter.org) or 651.696.2788 or [rdobias@wisdomwayscenter.org](mailto:rdobias@wisdomwayscenter.org).

### **Embracing Change:**

#### **A Retreat on Navigating Life's Wavering Terrain**

Many of us react to change with resistance and insistence—resisting the way our lives are unfolding and insisting that it should be otherwise, according to our plan. This retreat is an opportunity to explore how transitions and change are beckoning us to clean things up in our lives and how facing qualms, uncertainties and indecisions are an integral part of our lives and spiritual journeys.

We'll examine these questions: What have we neglected for ourselves that gives our life a greater sense of depth and meaning? How do we live a life from a deeper place of spiritual awareness and wisdom? Throughout, we will explore ways to embrace ourselves and our lives from a place of grace and skill, with more patience, openness and compassion:

**Saturday, September 15, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.  
Franciscan Spirituality Center**

**920 Market Street, La Crosse WI**  
For information or registration for this and other upcoming opportunities [like **Mining the Meaning of Our Sacred Stories, Oct. 26-27 or Wisdom Houses, Oct. 20**]: 608.791.5295 or [skalas@fspa.org](mailto:skalas@fspa.org) or [fscenter@fspa.org](mailto:fscenter@fspa.org) or [www.FSCenter.org](http://www.FSCenter.org).

### **Spiritual Listening Training**

As noted in the lead Ongoing article in the last issue, City House's chief ministry focuses on "spiritual listening with people in our community who are generally unseen and unheard."

Because of this focus, they have been particularly interested in developing listening skills and now offer a quarterly workshop open to anyone who would like to participate. (City House doesn't mention it, but observation suggests that many of us are better at talking than at listening, and that listening may often be the more important skill.)

All are invited. Take a day to hone your deep listening skills:

**Friday, September 21, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**

**Offered by City House—to be held at:**

**Westminster Presbyterian Church  
1200 Marquette Avenue, Minneapolis**

(with ample free on-site parking)

For information or registration for this or other upcoming opportunities: [rena@city-house.org](mailto:rena@city-house.org) or [www.city-house.org](http://www.city-house.org) or 651.494.8303.

### **Spiritual Grandparenting: Ideas & Inspiration for Passing Your Spiritual Legacy on to Your Grandchildren**

Maybe your adult children no longer practice your faith and you're wondering how to share your beliefs, values, and worldview with your grandchildren in a way that does not make waves with their parents.

**"Bar None . . . the inclusivity of all of us . . ."**

"Henry is the inmate. He is twenty-seven, a veteran of this jail who—this trip around—waits a trial on theft charges. He is short, brick solid. He is angry about many things. I am the jail chaplain. . . ."

My encounter with Henry happened more than three decades ago. In the ensuing years, I have come to appreciate that the bars that divide people are peculiar thin places.

It seems to me now that whatever the bars are that divide us, and that may seem to 'keep us safe' from one another, those bars serve as places where God most intensely dwells, most profoundly awaits our companionship, . . . places where we may be molded into who we already are in God's heart."

The Most Rev. Dr. E. Brian Carsten, Issue 48  
[Fr. Carsten was the Presiding Archbishop of the Orthodox Catholic Church of America]

Or maybe you do all share one tradition, and you want to make the most of your role as the spiritual matriarch or patriarch of your family.

For a fun mix of storytelling, individual reflections and group discussions, come to this workshop and gain,

- A clearer picture of wisdom received from your own spiritual journey
- Age-appropriate ideas and storytelling seeds for passing this wisdom onto next generations
- An understanding of the psychological importance for young people to have a spiritual faith:

**Saturday, September 22, 1:00-4:00 p.m.**

**Loyola Spirituality Center**

**389 North Oxford Street, St. Paul**

For information or registration for this and many other up-coming opportunities [like **Spirituality in the Second Half of Life**, Oct. 27]: [loyolassr@comcast.net](mailto:loyolassr@comcast.net) or 651.641.0008 or [www.loyolaspirtualitycenter.org](http://www.loyolaspirtualitycenter.org).

Admissions are now open for the 2019-2021

**Living School for Action and Contemplation**

The Rev. Jim Dodge

“The physicians diagnosed a pressure wound deep within my body, not a small surface wound but one that went ‘all the way to the sacrum,’ the large, triangular bone in the lower part of my spine. Years earlier I’d been diagnosed with cancer and, in the course of radiation treatment, nerves were damaged in my legs, causing muscle weakness and atrophy. Eventually, I had needed a wheelchair and—now—pressure from sitting had created this deep, extensive wound.

In the dark days of being homebound with no end in sight, . . . I had time to pray, read, journal, and to pay attention to whatever might be stirring in my soul. During one of those reflective times, I wondered if there might be a relationship between ‘sacrum’ and ‘sacred.’ Was it possible that this sacral wound was indeed a sacred wound? A thin place? . . . God giving us the opportunity to be broken, to be empty, to surrender again. . . .

As I write this, my wound is still not healed. On far too many days I find myself not being as compassionate or serene or as forgiving as I truly want to be. But on other days I hear God whisper in my ear, ‘Trust Me’—a reminder that God is in control and all I need to do is to receive the gift of the sacred wound with gratitude. . . .”

*The Gift of the Sacred Wound . . .*, Issue 60

[Jim became the Founder and first leader of City House]

Do you long to make a difference in the world? Are you committed to grounding your actions in contemplation? Are you willing to be shaken and changed?

If your answer is a resounding “Yes!” we invite you to enter an intentional discernment process by applying to the two-year Living School program with Richard Rohr, Cynthia Bourgeault and James Finley. Begin your discernment process at [www.cac.org/living-school](http://www.cac.org/living-school):

**Completed applications are due 30 September 2018**

**The Center for Action and Contemplation**

**Albuquerque, NM**

For information about CAC’s other up-coming events, its on-line opportunities, and Fr. Richard’s daily meditation: 505.242.9588 or [www.cac.org](http://www.cac.org) or [info@cac.org](mailto:info@cac.org).

**Welcoming Prayer Retreat**

This year’s Fall Retreat is full, but last year people on the Wait List did get to come—for information on its status: [laurieberickson@msn.com](mailto:laurieberickson@msn.com) or call 952.457.6396:

**Friday, Oct. 12, at 3:00 p.m.-Sun., Oct., 14 at 1:00 p.m.**

**Sponsored by Minnesota Contemplative Outreach**

**Held at Christ the King Retreat Center, Buffalo**

For information on other up-coming opportunities, including our extensive list of regional Centering Prayer groups: [info@minnesotacontemplativeoutreach.org](mailto:info@minnesotacontemplativeoutreach.org) or [www.minnesotacontemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.minnesotacontemplativeoutreach.org).

**Healing Trauma and Grief through Meditation**

Science tells us that a regular meditation practice and supportive listening are effective tools that promote healing and wholeness. In this two-part class, you will find ways to bring memories of deep trauma and grief gently into light and through Christian meditation find new ways to find healing and peace:

**Two Tuesdays, October 16 and 23, 7:00-8:30 p.m.**

**The Benedictine Center, St. Paul’s Monastery**

**2675 Benet Road, St. Paul**

For information or registration for this and other up-coming opportunities [like **The School of Discernment**, Nov. 30-Dec. 2, or the monthly **Dementia Support Group**, Second Tuesdays, 7:00-9:00 p.m.]: [benedictinecenter@stpaulsmonastery.org](mailto:benedictinecenter@stpaulsmonastery.org) or 651.777.7251 or [www.stpaulsmonastery.org](http://www.stpaulsmonastery.org).

**Do You Need to Get Away?**

**The Great Escape** is a long weekend in the woods, designed to help you release all the [deleted] in your life and reconnect to yourself. . . . Learn to let go.

The Great Escape is like summer camp for Unrulies, only in the Fall, and with better food. All of the learning opportunities will be tied to our theme of releasing the [deleted], including tools and techniques for releasing

attachments and grounding ourselves in these chaotic times. We'll also dig into The Enright Process Model of Psychological Forgiveness.

*We will play, dance, create, and gather by the fire.*

*We will connect with ourselves and with one another.*

*We will release everything that no longer serves us:*

**Wednesday, October 17, at 6:00 p.m.—**

**Sunday, October 21, at 2:00 p.m.**

**ARC Retreat Community, Stanchfield, MN**

For information or registration for this or other up-coming opportunities: 763.689.3540 or [www.ARCretreat.org](http://www.ARCretreat.org) or [ARCretreat@hotmail.com](mailto:ARCretreat@hotmail.com).

### **The Celtic Knot: What Celtic Christians Can Teach Us about Life, Mission and Ministry Today**

Everything in the Celtic world is interconnected as symbolized by the Celtic Knot. The knot looks multi-faceted but is actually a circle intertwined into one entity; it is a symbol for the church.

The Rev. Dr. Jerry Doherty will share how the lifestyle, sacred place, meditation, pilgrimage, and community are all vital parts of the life of the church today. There will be regular times of silent meditation reflection and prayer:

**Friday, October 19, with check-in, 3:00-5:00 p.m. and dinner at 6:00 p.m.—Sunday, October 21, after lunch**

**The Episcopal House of Prayer, Colledgeville, MN**

For information or registration for this and other up-coming opportunities [like **The Enneagram for Millennials**, September 8, and **Mindfulness for Millennials**, September 15]: 320.363.3293 or [houseprayer@csbsju.edu](mailto:houseprayer@csbsju.edu) or [www.ehouseofprayer.org](http://www.ehouseofprayer.org) or [www.ehouseofprayer.org/hopc](http://www.ehouseofprayer.org/hopc).

### **Making All things New: Becoming a New Creation**

The call of the gospels is to become a new creation in the Risen Christ, a profound belief that each and every person, made in God's image and likeness, can be restored and renewed in Christ.

This retreat will explore in practical and prayerful ways what it means to become a new creation and to serve with a renewed sense of purpose and with a passion for life:

**Friday, Nov. 2, at 8:00 p.m.-Sun., Nov. 4, at 12:45 p.m. Christ the King Retreat Center, Buffalo, MN**

For information or registration about this or other up-coming opportunities [like the **Married Couples Retreat, Be Patient in Affliction**, October 12-14]: [jpolman@kingshouse.com](mailto:jpolman@kingshouse.com) or 763.682.1394 or [www.kingshouse.com](http://www.kingshouse.com).

### **Introduction to Iconography**

Christos Center for Spiritual Formation welcomes world

renowned iconographer, Debra Korluka, in our first annual workshop which offers entry into the study of icon painting, technique, and the theology and spirituality of icons.

Since the earliest days of the Church, icons have been a spiritual art form—consistent and constant, across countries and generations—whose primary purpose has been and is to enable a personal, face-to-face encounter with a holy person or to make a sacred event more fully present.

The icon, the **Holy Face of Christ**, will be the focus of this year's workshop. We welcome you to come and to experience icons as a vehicle of witness and of ministry:

**Saturday, November 10, 9:00 a.m.-noon**

**Christos Center for Spiritual Formation**

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

To register for this and many other up-coming opportunities at our Twin Cities campus [like this year's eight-month exploration of how we have been and how we are being spiritually formed, **Sacred Connections: Where Spirituality Meets Real Life**

#### **"Encouraging Angels: A Testimony . . ."**

"As I look back over my ninety-one years, I am more and more conscious of—and deeply thankful for—the 'encouraging angels' who have appeared at special times to help me on my journey. I call them 'angels' because I didn't ask for their help. They seemed to just appear when I needed them, opening opportunities, and helping me on my way.

Most of my early memories are of 'hard times,' poverty, and struggle. We moved sixty miles to a rented farm . . .

Remembering the ordinary people who have encouraged me, I am conscious of those many small and often silently given kindnesses of life that have lifted me up and helped me on my way. As I now begin my 92nd year,

'Thank you, friends. Thank you, encouraging angels. Thank you, Lord, for the gifts that have helped me to be myself and perhaps more than myself. And thank you, Lord, for the opportunities open to each of us to quietly help others on their way.'"

Maxine Sinclair, Issue 63

[Maxine grew up in rural Iowa and spent much of her working life as a missionary partner in South America.]

(whose deadline is September 15)]:  
Andrea@christoscenter.org or 651.653.8207 or visit  
our newly designed web-site:  
www.christoscenter.org/events.

### Longing to Belong: Finding Home in Silence and Solitude, An Advent Retreat

All are invited to come to a heated, restored country barn . . . to experience there a partial silent retreat, in community. There will be opportunity for scripture reflection, prayer, journaling, creative art expression, and space to wander at the farm . . . as you ready your heart for the season of Advent:

**Saturday, December 1, 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

**Sponsored by Restoration Ministries, to be held at  
Shepherd's Hill Farm in Montgomery, MN**

We would love to meet you. Learn more about us and about other up-coming opportunities—like our weekly **Listening Prayer: An Experience of *Lectio Divina***, Wednesdays, (6:30-8:00 p.m., 11985 Technology Drive, Eden Prairie): [www.restorationmn.org](http://www.restorationmn.org) or [info@restorationmn.org](mailto:info@restorationmn.org) or 952-241-4150.

### Abbey Advent Retreat: Journey Partners Magi, Mary, John the Baptist, and more. Who is your

“What I’m discovering . . .”

“Working as part of a Climate Change Initiative, I am discovering that we cannot assume that God is on our side unless we love our ‘enemies,’ for they too may have some truth! . . .

Action and contemplation. We are discovering how to put them together! . . .

And I’m beginning to discover anew that life is sacramental. Outside and inside. Sometimes it’s awareness of beauty and peace, sometimes of suffering and of seeming absence. . . .

And now, as I take communion, I’m aware that the blessing and the suffering are there together. We have communion with the broken body of our Lord and our mutual brokenness. . . .

That’s what I’ve been discovering. What about you? ‘Where are you aware of the next step in your contemplative journey?’ I ask that question more and more of myself and others—perhaps it’s a new spiritual practice. What are you discovering? . . .”

The Rev. John Ackerman, Issue 77  
[John established the first Spiritual Growth Committee at Westminster in the 1980s, with a special interest in the contemplative. He died while this issue was being printed.]

### travel partner this Advent?

Advent is a time of journeying deeper into the mystery of Christ’s incarnation. Fortunately, we are not asked to travel alone. Scripture provides us with a number of travel partners and images to assist us in our Advent journey toward Christ. This retreat will take a fresh look at the people and images often associated with Advent and will offer participants the chance to invite them as partners into their Advent journey:

**Friday, December 7, with supper at 5:30 p.m.—**

**Sunday, December 9, after lunch**

**St. John's Abbey and Guesthouse, Collegeville, MN**

For information or registration for this or other up-coming opportunities [like the perennially favorite, **Abbey Days of Reflection**, on Second Fridays each month]: [spiritalife@osb.org](mailto:spiritalife@osb.org) or 320.363.3929 or [www.abbeyguesthouse.org](http://www.abbeyguesthouse.org).

Extracted from Contemplative Outreach’s July e-bulletin:



“Centering Prayer practitioners pray together in living rooms, church halls, chapels, and now via online video conferencing. If you're wanting to experience greater support, profound connection and a sense of global unity, join in the Meditation Chapel, an ecumenical, global platform for silent prayer groups.

*All practices and faith traditions are welcome.*

Those for whom online video conferences may be out of their comfort zone are especially welcomed. For more information about this Interfaith Online Mediation Community and to view the calendar: [www.meditationchapel.org](http://www.meditationchapel.org).”

## Reading Opportunities

### *The Climate of Monastic Prayer*, by Thomas Merton

December 10th will mark the 50th anniversary of Thomas Merton’s accidental death, at a joint gathering of Buddhist and Christian monks in Bangkok, just after offering the key-note address. (December 10th is also the 77th anniversary of his becoming a Monk, at Gethsemani Abbey in Kentucky.)

*The Climate of Monastic Prayer*—which was also published separately as *Contemplative Prayer*—was

completed just before Merton left for Asia in October 1968 and is thus often thought of as his final testament to us. Although it was—importantly—written primarily for other later-in-life monastics, Merton’s sharing of insights and understandings gained from his own journey will probably resonate with many.

Reading Merton’s words from fifty years ago offered us a chance to slow down . . . to look back . . . and to listen anew or with greater attention. And the fact that it was Merton’s later-in-life voice seemed to make a difference. Or perhaps it was, as Thomas Keating has often said, that one only really hears what one—at some deep level—already senses or knows.

Four passages from the three opening chapters may capture some of the broadest understandings Merton reached about contemplative prayer and meditation, from his long personal practice:

“The prayer of the heart introduces us into deep interior silence so that we learn to experience its power. For that reason, the prayer of the heart must always be very simple, confined to the simplest of acts, and often making use of no words and no thoughts at all. . . .

It is a prayer of silence, simplicity, contemplative and meditative unity, watchful listening. . . .

Meditation and contemplative prayer is not so much a way to find God as a way of resting in him. . . .”

“In meditation we should not look for a ‘method’ or a ‘system,’ but cultivate an ‘attitude,’ an ‘outlook’ of faith, openness, attention, reverence, expectation, supplication, trust, joy. . . .

There are ways of meditation, but we should not expect to find magical methods, systems which make all difficulties and obstacles dissolve into thin air.

Meditation is sometimes quite difficult. But if we bear with the hardship and wait patiently for the time of grace, we may well discover that meditation and prayer are very joyful experiences.

However, we should not judge the value of our meditation by ‘how we feel.’ . . .”

“Humility and docile acceptance of sound advice are very necessary [for] anyone who is trying to deepen his life of prayer. . . .

The work of the spiritual director consists not so much in teaching us a secret and infallible method for attaining to esoteric experiences, but in showing us how to recognize God’s grace and his will, how to be humble and patient, how to develop insight into our own difficulties, and how to remove the main obstacles keeping us from becoming people of prayer.”

“One cannot begin to face the real difficulties of the life of prayer and meditation unless one is first perfectly content to be a beginner and really experience oneself as one who knows little or nothing and has a desperate need to learn the bare rudiments. . . .

We do not want to be beginners but let us be convinced of the fact that we will never be anything else but beginners, all our life!”

Merton spells out what many readers, perhaps, have discovered for themselves. Contemplative prayer, a prayer of silence, simplicity and oneness, is not a technique or a system, but an opening of one’s heart. It is not easy, but it does work if we allow it to. The companionship of an experienced spiritual friend can be a great help, especially in helping us to recognize God’s real presence and to understand our own difficulties on the way. And, finally, don’t be discouraged; we are all beginners.

Fifteen additional chapters follow, on subjects reflecting Merton’s extraordinarily broad reading . . . enlightened by his own experience. Chapters on “mysticism”; on “solitary contemplation” and “active charity”; on the “dark night of faith”; on the fact that “the inner depths of the spiritual life are mysterious and inexplicable, can hardly be described”; and more.

And then the final chapter surprised. Many will remember Karl Rahner’s declaration that, “In the days ahead, you will either be a mystic (one who has experienced God for real) or nothing at all.”

Perhaps for many, Rahner may have been felt to be pushing the boundary. But in this last chapter, Merton warns that religion “easily comes to serve as the ‘opium of the people’” if it is not true to itself, if it is not a lived experience.

“Real contemplatives,” Merton acknowledges,

“will always be rare and few. But that is not a matter of importance, as long as the whole Church is predominately contemplative in all her teachings, all her activity, and all her prayer.”

Then, in sentences that almost might have been written today, Merton asserts that churches must foster that people must have the experience of God’s real presence and of his unconditional love. For,

[Reading Opportunities continues on Page 10]



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*“Pilgrim, . . . you make your own path, . . .  
you are not alone . . .”*  
**The Thin Places Twentieth Anniversary  
Ecumenical Worship Service**  
*“Twenty Year Voices, remembered. . .”*

[continued from Page 9]

“without this contemplative orientation we are building churches not to praise him but to establish more firmly the social structures, values and benefits that we presently enjoy.”

“Without this contemplative basis for our preaching, our apostolate is no apostolate at all, but mere proselytizing to insure universal conformity with our national way of life.”

“Without contemplation and interior prayer, the Church cannot fulfill her mission to transform and save mankind.”

And then the final sentence of the book Merton had turned in just before leaving for Asia,

“Without true, deep contemplative aspirations, without a total love for God and an uncompromising thirst for his truth, religion tends in the end to become an opiate.”

[Merton’s late insight and understanding continues in the “Afterwords”]

## Afterwords

These last are the concluding words in *The Climate of Monastic Prayer*, the book Thomas Merton completed in October of 1968, just before leaving for Asia, and not long before his unexpected death there on 10 December 1968.

But they were not to be Merton’s last words. Just after his key-note speech in Bangkok, at a joint gathering of Christian and Buddhist monks, in the hall on his way to his room to take a shower, Merton was confronted by a priest who accused him of not having sufficiently emphasized to the assembled monks that it is Christ who is the Way. And Merton replied,

“What we are asked to do is, not so much to speak about Christ, as to let him live in us . . .  
so that people may find him by feeling how he lives in us.”

A few minutes later, turning on a fan after his shower, Merton was accidentally electrocuted. His body was brought back to Gethsemani in a body bag, in a plane full of body bags from the war in Viet Nam.