Mystics of the Ordinary

The Changing Face of Spirituality

What does it mean to be “spiritual” in 2020? In the crucible of what Thomas Berry called the Ecozoic Era (the age of Earth), what does a “spiritual person” look like? Eminent Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner (1904-1984) famously predicted that “The devout Christian of the future will either be a ‘mystic,’ one who has experienced ‘something,’ or he will cease to be anything at all” (“Christian Living Formerly and Today,” Theological Investigations VII, 1971). And what does it mean to be a “mystic” in today’s unraveling globe? A noted Rahner expositor explains it this way: “Rahner’s theology of the mysticism of everyday life challenges everyone to look more closely at what is actually going on in the depths of their daily lives. What is implicit, hidden, anonymous, repressed, or bursting forth from the center of all we do?” (Harvey D. Egan, Karl Rahner: Mystic of Everyday Life, 1998).

Undeniably, there is a phenomenon that captures our depth of experience today. It is an ever-growing awareness of ecology (study of home) and its centrality for global well-being and, thus, spirituality. What is happening to our common home, and how should we care for the web of life that depends on its thriving?

Spirituality is evolving to reflect our profound care for creation, especially as it deteriorates. The medieval St. Francis of Assisi, known as the patron of ecology, had praised “Brother Sun and Sister Moon,” and declared that Mother Earth and her creatures were worthy of protection and care. Today we hear his namesake Pope Francis’ call to tend to Earth’s cries with an “integral ecology,” one that finds Earth’s web of life as central, not peripheral, to our vocations as planetary pilgrims (Pope Francis, Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home, 2015). We find ourselves steeped in the mysticism of the “ordinary”, experience of creation, whether bathing in autumn’s forested majesty, or basking in the garden’s spring musk. It was just such a mystic of the ordinary who captured a brilliant sunrise consecrating Earth’s crust in the desert (Teilhard’s Mass on the World), and another who perceived Earth as a (continued on p. 3)
A recent guest told me that staying in a Hermitage here at Prairiewoods was an unexpected experience. “My first few hours I was thinking, ‘It’s so quiet here’ (said with a sneer) but by the next day I was like, ‘It’s so quiet here’ (said with arms spread wide and a sigh of contentment).” Another time, a contractor told me about his early-morning encounter with a doe and her newborn fawn. “I came around the side of the van and there they were, right in front of me. We made eye contact and just stood there, looking straight into each others’ eyes! I can’t even describe how that felt.” In recalling these stories, what seems clear to me is that both individuals experienced an invitation to move more deeply into the mysticism of daily life (see “Mystics of the Ordinary: The Changing Face of Spirituality,” p. 1 and 3).

As we move together into a new decade—one we fully expect to be fraught with serious personal, communal and geopolitical challenges—we invite you to join Prairiewoods in exploring the unfolding future of spirituality in these times. In this newsletter we offer our annual New Year’s Examen of Consciousness (p. 3), based in Ignatian spiritual tradition, updated to reflect the deep conversion to integral ecology called for by Pope Francis in Laudato Si’ and beckoning to us from the divine presence in all of Creation.

Also in this issue, you’ll find our annual Retreats Brochure (insert). Our team at Prairiewoods is focused on offering a richly varied and diverse menu of opportunities to nurture your relationships with Source of All Being, self, others and Creation. While the Retreats Brochure allows you to plan your engagement and schedule your retreat time, each issue of the newsletter also provides information on two months worth of program offerings (from one-time classes to prayer experiences to ongoing groups). Up-to-the-minute information is always available on our website, and newly scheduled offerings are shared on our Facebook page.

As always, we invite you to come to Prairiewoods just to BE as well. The prairies and woods are healing spaces in all seasons. And inside at the Center, there is always a welcome and a hot beverage available, too!

Peace and all good,

Jenifer Hanson, Director

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**Mission:** Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center is a sacred space where people of all faiths and cultures are invited to explore and nurture their relationships with the Source of All Being, Earth, Self and Others with an increasing awareness of the story of the Universe.

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The Prairiewoods staff collaborates to publish this newsletter bimonthly. Content, except where otherwise noted, is created by our staff in consultation and with care to offer a uniquely Prairiewoods perspective.

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ordinary mystics who perceive Earth’s fragile integrity and its breath-taking magnificence, we realize that we must “focus on the whole, on the unity and not the division” (Stephen Hawking). Mystics of the ordinary seek grounding in creation and wholeness.

Spirituality today celebrates, keens, reveres and protects creation and the inter-connection of all life. Following upon the cosmic mysticism of Teilhard de Chardin, we are evolving into a more complex, more unified mode of being. The idea of “inter-being” (Charles Eisenstein, The More Beautiful World Our Hearts Know is Possible, 2013)—which draws us beyond entrenched dualisms and a hierarchy of being—is taking hold. We are all one. Ecologist Thomas Berry admonished us to commence our Great Work in both caring for and renewing Earth. Many are devoting their life’s work to the good of the whole like eco-activists Bill McKibben (350.org) and Greta Thunberg (youth strike for climate). This is the Active Hope in the ecospirituality of Joanna Macy, who celebrates the work that reconnects us with the web of life. We are reclaiming the practice of learning Earth’s language, as eco-philosophers Wendell Berry and David Abram have urged. In the Age of the Anthropocene, branded as consumer-driven techno-sapiens, we have all but lost Earth language. Now we are relearning that ancient tongue. Poets of creation like Mary Oliver and Drew Dellinger have offered new psalmody for daily prayer and remind us of the deep wisdom of the ancient biblical verse, “Deep calls unto deep” (Psalm 42:7). We are all going deeper, deeper, returning to Earth, grounding ourselves, enraptured by the “ordinary.”

Today, people of spiritual depth are contemplative activists, defenders of remnant wilderness, shamans of Earth’s language and dancers of its rhythms. We are caretakers of seed and harvesters of hope. We are called to protect terrestrial eco-systems, to defend forest cathedrals, threatened waterways, wetlands and reservoirs, precious soil and air. Thus, we are called to protect and defend all life on the planet, as intricately inter-connected as strands of a cosmic web of which we are all part. Our indigenous elders have shown us the way. Spirit-Creator is still weaving, still breathing across the still waters to birth new life. We need not be astounded by a global turn toward the “spiritual.” Spirituality is a profound awareness of the sacred—in—all, an ever-deepening consciousness of all that is Holy, and a desire to respond with all our hearts, a love-offering of authentic humility, awe and gratitude. We need only listen to those prophets who have heard Earth’s call, many who perceive the indwelling of the Divine especially in Earth’s unraveling. We are called to be both hospice ministers and midwives, accompanying what is dying with compassion and shared grief, and holding space open for new life. Spirituality today calls us to the radical edges, to the “dearest freshness deep down things” (Gerard Manley Hopkins, God’s Grandeur, 1877), and to the white-hot stars, seeking the light as wise ones do, even if we can only perceive the traces and remains.

As mystics of the ordinary, we are opening once again to the love of the Divine, and rediscovering the tensile web that connects and sustains all creation.

Eco–Examen for Mystics of the Ordinary

We invite you to sink into a time of quiet contemplation, to come home to that place in your own soul where your dreams and desires and hopes rest. In this time of deep listening, use these questions to help you nurture your relationships with the Source of All Being, Creation, self and others:

- Where/how do I find the Holy?
- Where is the Holy evident/hiding in me?
- Where is the Holy hiding in those with whom I struggle?
- Where is the Holy in what is dying, as well as living and thriving?
- Where is a special place in creation that I connect with the Holy?
- What is actually going on in the depths of everyday life?
- What new thoughts visited me?
- Where could I have exposed myself to the risk of something different?
- How were my conversations?
- What reached me today? How deeply did it imprint?
- What found me hopeful? Lost? Wondering? Wanting more?
The following are programs that Prairiewoods is hosting in the next two months. For more information or to register, visit www.Prairiewoods.org or call 319-395-6700. For information on retreats, please see Retreat Brochure insert.

**Hatha Way Yoga**
Mondays & Thursdays; Jan. 2–Feb. 27; 9:30–10:30 a.m., 10:45–11:45 a.m., & 5:30–6:30 p.m.
**Facilitators:** Cindy Hathaway, Carla Brems & Cheryl Lindo
Join us as we link our movements with our breath and cultivate strength, flexibility and relaxation through regular yoga classes. Cindy Hathaway, Carla Brems and Cheryl Lindo offer multiple one-hour Gentle/Beginner’s and Chair Yoga classes each Monday and Thursday. Please bring a mat if possible. People of all fitness levels are welcome. Let’s see how our bodies and souls can benefit from yoga!
**Fee:** $99 for eleven-punch card or $60 for six-punch card, one punch per session

**Prayer Experience Series**
**Tuesdays:** Jan. 7, Jan. 21, Jan. 28, Feb. 4, Feb. 18 & Feb. 25; 11:30 a.m.–12 p.m.
**Facilitators:** Angie Pierce Jennings, Emelia Sautter & Betty Daughterty, FSPA
We are blessed with many ways to pray, including songful prayer, contemplative prayer, silent meditation and body prayers like walking the labyrinth. Join us for this ongoing prayer series and experience the joys of prayer and meditation together.
**Registration** is appreciated but not required.
**Fee:** Free-will offering

**Men Exploring Faith**
Thursdays, Jan. 9, Jan. 23, Feb. 13 & Feb. 27; 7–8:30 p.m.
**Facilitator:** Bob Davis
As men mature, we undergo a major life transformation from goal driven-ness to receptivity, from ego to wisdom. The transition may seem quite disruptive while on the way to being life-enhancing. Join with a small group of reflective men in honest conversation about life’s changes and faith’s response.
**Fee:** Free-will offering

**Spirituality of Bread**
Sunday, Jan. 12, 1–5 p.m.
**Facilitators:** Tara King, Laurie Erlacher & Jenifer Hanson
Bread baker and author Donna Sinclair writes, “Bread offers connection—as Jesus connected with his friends; as we connect with our children; as Demeter, the goddess of grain, bound herself to her daughter. People of every culture are tied together by the breads they bake. Bread helps us remember who we are and whom we love.” Join Prairiewoods for an afternoon of bread baking and exploration of the connections bread has made in our lives and spirits. We will return home with a fresh-baked loaf of bread we make ourselves.
**No bread making experience** is necessary.
**Fee:** $30 includes all materials

**Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton**
Thursdays; Jan. 2, Jan. 16, Feb. 6 & Feb. 20; 6:30–8 p.m.
**Facilitator:** Betty Daugherty, FSPA
Do you long for a more contemplative life? Do you want to respond to life’s events with greater faith? Join us the first and third Thursday of each month to study the *Bridges to Contemplative Living* series, which includes musings of Thomas Merton and other spiritual writers. Feel free to enjoy this as a series or as individual sessions.
**Fee:** $5 per session

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**Registration** is appreciated but not required.
**Fee:** Free-will offering

**Wednesday Women**
**Wednesdays:** Jan. 8–15 & Jan. 29–Feb. 26, 10–11:30 a.m.
**Facilitator:** Ann Jackson, PBVM
Join women seeking spiritual enrichment, inspiration and motivation in the supportive setting of Prairiewoods each Wednesday. Topics arise from within the hearts and minds of those gathered. We view TED Talks, converse, reflect, support and challenge one another to personal growth, no matter what stage of life. Together we will foster deep reflection, learning, lively conversation, laughter, storytelling and inquiry to generate incredible energy and spiritual stimulation!
In January and February, we will be awakening our spiritual practices: living sustainably, always in discernment, honoring our body in movement, discovering mantras, remembering love, inviting relationship and creating abundance. Feel free to enjoy this as a series or as individual sessions. Please register for each session by the previous day. *This group will not meet Jan. 22.*
**Fee:** $10 per session

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**No bread making experience** is necessary.
**Fee:** $30 includes all materials

**Drumming for Healing**
**Mondays:** Jan. 13, Jan. 27, Feb. 10 & Feb. 24, 6–7 p.m.
**Facilitator:** Sheri Mealhouse (Hawkwoman)
In the cosmic experience, drumming touches many people at a deep level and brings all creation together. Let’s see how drumming—and feeling the Creator’s rhythm inside us—resonates with our your inner spirit! No experience is necessary, and instruments are available.
**Fee:** Free-will offering to the facilitator
Mindfulness for Families
Sunday, Jan. 12, 3–4:30 p.m.; & Mondays; Feb. 10, March 23 & April 13; 6–7:30 p.m.
Facilitators: Kim Seward, BSN, RN, CMI, & Ann Jackson, PBVM
We continually look for creative ways to bring awareness, compassion, kindness, peace and tranquility into our homes. These monthly opportunities are for parents and children from kindergarten through grade 12 to attend together. We will focus on simple, mindful practices to create peaceful awareness in the parent, child and home. We will explore and engage fun mindfulness activities to do together as a family. Practicing foundational aspects of mindful awareness—noticing senses, emotions and thoughts in fun and practical ways—will cultivate awareness and a greater understanding of emotions, kindness and compassion in all relationships, especially the parent-child relationship. As parents and children attend these sessions together, we will build a comprehensive mindfulness toolkit to use for future family enjoyment. Monthly themes include:
• Jan. 12: New Beginnings & Intentions
• Feb. 10: Loving Kindness
• March 23: My Wonderful Calm Body
• April 13: Spring into Mindfulness
Some activities will occur outside, so please dress for the weather. Each session is limited to 30 total parents and children. Please register by the previous Monday with your children’s ages. Fee: $20 per family for each session, or $60 for four-week series, if paid in advance (some financial assistance is available)

Prairiewoods Knitters & Stitchers
Tuesdays, Jan. 14 & Feb. 11, 9:30–11 a.m.; & Wednesdays, Jan. 22 & Feb. 26, 6:30–8:30 p.m.
Facilitators: participants
Practice knitting and stitching in the company of new friends! This group of crafters of various skill levels create handmade goods—such as hats, mittens, blankets and baby items—for charity twice a month. New participants (even those who don’t knit or stitch yet!) are always welcome.
Fee: Free

Celebration of Mass
Tuesdays, Jan. 14 & Feb. 11, 11:30 a.m.–12 p.m.
Please join us for the celebration of Catholic Mass on the second Tuesday of each month. Father Mark Ressler is the celebrant, and registration is not necessary.
Fee: Free

Evening Centering Prayer
Tuesdays, Jan. 14, Jan. 28, Feb. 11 & Feb. 25; 5:30–7 p.m.
Facilitator: Judith Edwards
Centering prayer is a form of meditation focused on praying in silence. Join us as we relax, clear our minds and find God’s presence within us during this time of silence and centering prayer. Feel free to enjoy this as a series or as individual sessions.
Fee: Free-will offering

Y.O.L.O. (Your Other Lunch Option!)
Wednesdays, Jan. 15 & Feb. 12, 11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m. (buffet line opens at 12 p.m.)
Facilitators: Tara King, Laurie Erlacher & Rochell Potter
Tired of the same old lunch places? It’s time that we renew our bodies and refresh our spirits in a beautiful setting! Join us for Y.O.L.O. (Your Other Lunch Option!)—a lunch choice celebrating wholesome, fresh food made from scratch by chefs Tara King, Laurie Erlacher and Rochell Potter in Prairiewoods’ no-waste kitchen. We will dine in a community setting (at small-group or communal tables) with friends we bring with us or new friends we meet over a delicious themed lunch:
• Jan. 15: Animal Affinities—What animals are we drawn to? What qualities of these animals appeal to us? Do we emulate these qualities?
• Feb. 12: Celebrate Love with Hugs, Laughs & Smiles—Tara, Laurie and Rochell want to be your Valentines this February! The special ingredient is always love—but even more so during this Y.O.L.O.!
Please register at least two days in advance. Each lunch is limited to 35 people, so register early!
Fee: $12 per session

Offered in Partnership with Unity Point Hospice
Soul Care: Creative Arts Grief Support Group
Wednesdays, Jan. 15 & Feb. 19, 5:30–7 p.m.
Facilitators: Jamie Siela, LISW, & Julie Wehner, LMSW, M.Div, BCC
Take time to be with others in grief and engage the creative spark! Jamie Siela and Julie Wehner from Unity Point Hospice facilitate this monthly grief group open to anyone grieving loss through death. On the third Wednesday of each month, we explore a different creative medium.
• Jan. 15: Mirror Mirror Activity—Sometimes we need a gentle reminder to be kind to ourselves. Using prompts, we will ask, What would we tell a friend who lost a loved one? We will encourage the same gentleness we provide others when we look at our own grief journeys.
• Feb. 19: Bright Spots—Sometimes in cold, winter months we need a little pick me up. We will use our time together to make positivity rocks to place throughout the community. Bring your creative ideas to help brighten the days of others.
Please register by the previous Friday.
Fee: Free, includes all art supplies

Going Inward with Sounds & Vibrations
Wednesdays; Jan. 15, Feb. 5 & Feb. 19; 6–7 p.m.
Facilitator: Kathy Broghammer
Experience sound, stillness, gentle movement, playfulness and relaxation through the enigmatic vibrations of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls.
Kathy Broghammer will lead us in gentle movement through the song of bowls to connect with our inner selves. We will sit or lie on yoga mats to listen and just be. We will hear the sounds and feel the vibrations of the singing bowls going inward. Let's let our souls rest and allow ourselves to be recreated!

Fee: $10 per session

**Sweat Lodge (Inipi) Ceremony**
Saturdays, Jan. 18 & Feb. 15, 5–9 p.m.
Facilitator: Kerry Batteau
Participate in a sacred ceremony focused on prayer, purification and healing. The lodge is a small dome-shaped structure in which we sit on the earth around heated stones. The ceremony includes sacred songs and prayers and is followed by a communal meal. Please register and sign a release form.

Fee: Donation of $10 to Prairiewoods for materials

**Spiritual Art Journaling**
Tuesdays, Jan. 28 & Feb. 18, 1–2:30 p.m.
Facilitator: Angie Pierce Jennings
Read and reflect on passages from various spiritual writers including Annie Dillard, Christine Valters Paintner and Caitlin Mathews. We will use the process of art journaling as a creative way to further contemplate and explore our spirituality. We are invited to bring a journal or mixed media tablet, colored pencils and water color paints, and some art supplies will be available. Artists of all experience levels, including beginners, are welcome.

Please register by the previous day. Feel free to enjoy this as a series or as individual sessions.

Fee: $10 per session

**Forest Bathing with the Seasons**
Friday, Jan. 31, 1–4 p.m.
Facilitator: Dr. Suzanne Bartlett Hackenmiller, MD, FACOG, FABOIM
Spend the afternoon exploring the mindfulness practice of forest immersion with Dr. Suzanne Bartlett Hackenmiller, a practitioner of integrative medicine. We will learn about evidence supporting the healing benefits of forest bathing and then experience an extended gentle, contemplative, guided walk with the Prairiewoods land. We will use our senses to enhance well-being in the healing embrace of nature. Breathe, relax, wander, touch, smell, taste, see, listen, share and engage! Please register and pay by the previous day.

Fee: $50 includes snacks

**Seasonal Tree Rock Painting**
Friday, Jan. 31, 6:30–8:30 p.m.
Facilitator: Andi Lewis
At different times in life and even various times within a year, we find ourselves in different seasons of the heart. In this contemplative and creative workshop, we will read from spiritual texts to discern which season of the heart we are in. Then we will use a paint brush and fine dotting tools to create a beautiful, one-of-a-kind seasonal tree. This is a fun, relaxing process that can be done by anyone but may be too contemplative for young children.

Fee: $13 per person includes art supplies

**Rock Mandala Painting for the Whole Family**
Saturday, Feb. 1, 10 a.m.–12 p.m.
Facilitator: Andi Lewis
Bring the whole family for our popular original rock painting class. We will learn the art of rock painting with mandalas, which are sacred circular works of art. This is a fun, relaxing process that can be done by anyone. No experience or artistic skill is necessary, but kids 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult. This class always sells out, so register today!

Fee: $13 per person includes art supplies

**Day of Self Renewal**
Monday, Feb. 10, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
Facilitator: Angie Pierce Jennings
Find rest and relaxation for mind, body and spirit! This tranquil day features two 40-minute holistic services, group guided meditation, a private guest room, access to walking trails and all that Prairiewoods has to offer, a fresh lunch and hours of free time. (Choose from massage, head and shoulder massage, reflexology, healing touch, spiritual direction, dream processing, guided ecospiritual experience, yoga or chair yoga.) Please register, pay a nonrefundable/nontransferable deposit of $50 and list your top three services choices by Feb. 5.

Fee: $110 includes guided meditation, singing bowl prayer, two holistic services, private guest room and lunch (or $95 without private guest room)

**Singing Bowl Prayer**
Monday, Feb. 10, 12:45–1:30 p.m.
Facilitator: Kathy Broghammer
Throughout history, singing bowls have been used around the world to foster meditation, relaxation, prayer and mind-body-spirit wellness. In this session, we will let the resonant sounds of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls relax the entire body and create a pathway for clearer connection with the divine. We will just receive and breathe! Some yoga mats and pillows are available.

Fee: $5 per session

**Guided Ecospiritual Experience: Winter Wisdom**
Monday, Feb. 10, 2:30–3:30 p.m.
Facilitator: Emelia Sautter
Let's get our “vitamin N” fill and immerse ourselves in the natural world with our plant, animal and elemental kin! Our relatives have much wisdom to share. As St. Francis said, “Praised be You my Lord through Sister Water, so humble, precious and pure.” Let's connect and make new friends! Please dress for the weather, as we will be outdoors.

Fee: $5

**Tallgrass Conversations Book Reading & Discussion**
Saturday, Feb. 15, 2–3:30 p.m.
Facilitator: Thomas Dean
Prairiewoods played a significant role in the inspiration for *Tallgrass Conversations: In Search of the Prairie Spirit*, a book of short writings and photographs, and much of its content—in both

**In Search of the Tallgrass Conversations: Tallgrass Conversations**

*Prairiewoods played a significant role in the inspiration for *Tallgrass Conversations: In Search of the Prairie Spirit*, a book of short writings and photographs, and much of its content—in both*
We appreciate all of the generous people who donate their time, money and other gifts to Prairiewoods! For a complete, up-to-date list between Newsletters, visit www.Prairiewoods.org/Donate.

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Judith Edwards

**Programs & Donors (Sept. & Oct. 2019)**

**Thanks!**

**Women in Interfaith Dialogue**
Saturday, Feb. 29, 10 a.m.–3 p.m.
**Facilitators:** Angie Pierce Jennings, Virginia Melroy, Dr. Paula Sanchini & Mary Beth Siemann

Come together quarterly with women of various faith traditions for conversations about faith and spirituality. Our topic this session is: How does our spirituality inspire our care for all creation, including our non-human family and whole planet? We are invited to bring a reading or prayer to share with the group, and an object that represents our faith tradition or the topic in general. Please register with any dietary restrictions by Feb. 26.

**Fee:** $15 includes lunch

**Save the Date!**
**Mother/Daughter Retreat**
Sunday, May 10, 1–5 p.m.

Plan ahead this year for Mother’s Day, have brunch with the whole family and then bring Mom out to Prairiewoods for a fun and meaningful afternoon together with activities that include Zentangles, connecting and honoring our lineage, dance and gratitude.

**Fee:** $40

**In honor of Prairiewoods staff**
M.L. Folkedahl-Meehleder

**In honor of Prairiewoods**
Bob Goetzinger
Dorothy Goetzinger
Christine Gust
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Tracy Clasen
Deb Crane
Marie Desjarlais, FSPA
Norie Drahazol
Judith Edwards

**In honor of Nancy Hoffman, FSPA, & Ann Jackson, PBVM**
Anonymous
In honor of Prairiewoods founding sisters & the easement Rita Heires, FSPA

**Poetic, beautiful, meditative and informative, Tallgrass Conversations (co-authored with Cindy Crosby) encourages experiencing the prairie through the heart, mind and spirit, as well as sight, sound and other senses.** With a special focus on Prairiewoods, Tom will discuss how the book came together, including how the idea of “conversations” with the living world informs the writing and photos. He will read selections from the book and share photos that accompany the short writings. After the reading, all are welcome to sow seeds in the prairie. Please register by the previous day.

**Fee:** Free-will offering
You may send this by mail, email ecospirit@prairiewoods.org or call 319-395-6700. If mailed, please include this address label.

☐ Please send your mailings electronically to _________________.
☐ Please take us off your mailing list.
☐ Please note the address change.
☐ We receive duplicate mailings; please send only one to this address.

―Thomas Merton

May you sense the Divine shining through the darkness during this holy season!

photo by Becky Brooker