

November/December 2023

Prairiewoods

A FRANCISCAN ECOSPIRITUALITY RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER

be Still
let Fall

Many spiritual traditions recognize the rhythm of nature, human experience and divine spirit. In attuning to the rhythms of Earth, Esther de Waal writes in *The Celtic Way of Prayer* (p. 61–62):

“A people who farmed and knew the patterns of the seasons, who lived close to the sea and watched the ebb and flow of tides, above all who watched the daily cycle of the sun and the changing path of the moon, brought all of this into their prayer.”

As we move into Fall, we are invited to hold together seemingly contrasting energies: vibrant color and stark dormancy, abundant harvest and barren landscape, dark and light, cold and warmth, death and rebirth. Spiritual author John Philip Newell cites in *The Rebirthing of God* (p. 60):

“We know that if we do not give ourselves over to the darkness and dreaming of nighttime, entering its intimate invitation to sleep and rest, we will be only half awake to the demands and creativity of the day. Yet ... we forget the natural patterns that we are part of. Or we pretend that we can be deeply engaged and productive while pushing ourselves and others in ways that are antithetical to the essential rhythms of Earth’s cycles and seasons.”

Fall embodies nature’s spiritual discipline: letting go and waiting. We begin to balance—being and doing, inner awareness and outward engagement—which leads us to living life as fully and as relationally as possible. Or as Newell says, “to experience the Sacred at the heart of life in ways that will shape how we live and undergird how we work to heal the world” (p. 64).

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As I prepared to write to you, I began thinking about November and December and all that they bring. In the early winter, we are entering a season most often characterized by busyness. In fact, I have often measured my satisfaction with the holiday season by the hurry, the invitations, the number of gifts both given and received. Success is measured by consumption of time, money and activity. Almost like a drug, I have sought the breathless exhilaration of nonstop action and the long list of tasks checked off. And yet, as a result I often find myself, in the still dark of January, feeling as though I have “missed it.” What I am seeking in all this busyness is joy, deep connection and a fullness of experience. Instead, all of the rushing often leaves an aftertaste of disappointment.

This season I have set my intention to go slow, be present and carve out the space for stillness.

*Hollowed out,
Clay makes a pot.
Where the pot's not
Is where it's useful.*

—Lao Tzu, from *The Uses of Not*

I wonder what I may catch and hold in this open space? I wonder what I may have the opportunity to hear in the stillness? And I wonder what more I will see during a slow amble through the season. I can imagine myself, eyes adjusting in the stillness, hearing growing sharper without all the noise around me. I can imagine the vessel that is my spirit overflowing—catching and holding the stories of loved ones and the warmth of shared experience. The tastes and smells of the food I love will linger because I take the time to savor it. I will carve out quiet space in the darkening days to hear the quiet breath of all creation as it rests. I will let go of my doing and simply be.

I hope that each of you has the opportunity to move through this season filling the vessel of your life with love during the coming season.

Peace and all good to you,

Leslie A. Wright



Prairiewoods is an ecospirituality retreat and conference center in the Franciscan tradition. It is a nonprofit ministry sponsored by Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration of La Crosse, Wisconsin.

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.

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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How and what can we “let fall” so that we can move into the landscape of inner reflection? This involves letting fall the over-stimulation of the ego—our individual and collective ego—the ego of our religious tradition as the one true religion, or our sports team as the best, or our family as any more or less dysfunctional than another, or our nation mightier than another, or our human species as dominant over the myriad of other species ... All of these manifestations of over-stimulated “ego” (and more!) define us in terms of separation, one over another, creating within and around us more dualism and defensiveness rather than unity and compassion.

How might we use this time of fall to dig deep into the foundations of our being, to examine our inner life—how we identify ourselves not in terms of political party, religion, race, social status, sexual orientation ... rather, by the very ground of our being?

Returning to the innermost ground invites us to those certain parts of ourselves that separate us from our true self. As we release the shallow, superficial aspects that seemingly identify us, a deeper, more qualitative sense of SELF emerges.

Time: How can we make productive use of solitude during the season of fall? How might we create a stable foundation of presence—presence to oneself while also recognizing the presence of other people, the land, plants, elements, animals ... that assure us that we are not alone?

Spiritual author David Benner in his book *Presence and Encounter* notes:

“This is one of the main potential gifts that can come from a silent retreat. Stripped of the distractions, those who survive the first couple of days of silence invariably begin to awaken to powerful, previously unnoticed forms of presence.”

Letting fall, people begin to notice the LIFE that had been present to them all along. They awaken! And begin to live in the NOW, rather than in the past or future. It frees!

One doesn't have to attend a silent retreat to practice this. Often as the land lies fallow, we are invited inward and, sometimes, we experience absence. We try to fill time with meaningless forms of presence: shopping, screen time, busyness, procrastination, expectations, resistance ... These can perpetuate the cycle of hopelessness, fear, anxiety ... and diminish the chance for meaningful relationship, possibility and transformation within ourselves and within our relationships. If we are to live as truly and fully as we possibly can, we must develop the capacity to embrace absence.

Resist Resistance: How might we develop a spiritual practice of noticing our resistance?

Can we relax into the moment and notice, grow curious about the energy that we are resisting? Push through. Grin and bear it. Attend a gathering and then complain or gossip our way through it ... We sometimes try to work harder in defiance, hoping to overcome our resistance.

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Poet Mary Oliver (1935–2019) wrote about “letting fall” in her poem “Song for Autumn.”

Song for Autumn

Don't you imagine the leaves dream now how comfortable it will be to touch the earth instead of the nothingness of the air and the endless freshets of wind? And don't you think the trees, especially those with mossy hollows, are beginning to look for the birds that will come—six, a dozen—to sleep inside their bodies? And don't you hear the goldenrod whispering goodbye, the everlasting being crowned with the first tufts of snow? The pond stiffens and the white field over which the fox runs so quickly brings out its long blue shadows. The wind wags its many tails. And in the evening the piled firewood shifts a little, longing to be on its way.

—Mary Oliver, *Upstream*



image by Thomas Dean

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Instead, could we pause? Note the emotions attached to our resistance. What is the source of the resistance? Unmet needs? Forgiveness for a hurt? Deep fatigue? In identifying the source, and honoring and validating the feelings attached, we might ease our way through “either/or mentality” to both/and curiosity.

Can we let fall anything that prevents us from openness and trust? Recently, a scripture scholar who specializes in the psalms unpacked a familiar line, Psalm 46:10: “Be still, and know that I am God.” She mentioned that many people may find this Greek translation an invitation of simplicity and ease. The scholar suggested the value of the Hebrew translation. The Hebrew word for “still” is *raphah*, meaning to “sink down, relax, cease striving or withdraw.” *Be still* comes from a Hebrew term that means “that which is slack, to drop, to be vulnerable.”

The scholar cited the deeper challenge in the Hebrew translation: “You’ve been holding onto something for far too long. Let it fall.” So which is it, the Greek translation or the Hebrew? our dualistic mindset asks. Practicing unitive curiosity, we explore: Why not combine both translations of Psalm 46:10!

You’ve been holding onto something for far too long.

Be still.

Let it fall.

Know that I am God.

This powerful invitation urges us to stop clinging to what we perceive gives us a sense of identity, safety and security, and invites us to reflect on what opens or closes our body, mind and spirit ... to discern what is healthy and unhealthy, growth-producing and growth-inhibiting.

“Be still.” This phrase supports us to stop our striving, to cease our efforts and to rest in the presence of the Source of All Being. It is a call to quiet in mind and heart, making space for Spirit to speak and work in our lives. The more we can enter into reflection and deeper awareness, the more profound peace, freedom and contentment we experience, allowing ourselves to feel through the pleasure and the pain, and to move beyond them.

Perhaps as we enter into the autumn season, we can simply still ourselves and ponder, “What have I been holding onto for far too long?” And then, like the magnificent and vibrant trees, let it fall!

image by Joni Reed Cooley

The land is quieting down at Prairiewoods. Animals are going into hibernation or migrating. Plants and some animals are no longer growing and will be using the least amount of resources to survive the long winter months. Our gardens have all been cleaned up and harvested from, fruit has been picked from the orchards and summer vacations are in the past. So if we take a pause and observe nature, we'll see how she's showing us to follow her lead to slow down now and let things lie. We hope that many of our programs and holistic services at Prairiewoods will help you to slow down and take a pause from the busy lives that we all lead.

Diane Morris, a longtime Prairiewoods volunteer, talks about how our singing bowl programs help her to just let go and be. She says:

"As a volunteer at Prairiewoods, I have had the pleasure of welcoming participants to the experience of the singing bowls. I'm always excited to introduce new people to this beautiful practice. The ethereal sounds and vibrations of the Himalayan and crystal bowls surround and penetrate your soul and body. For me, it is a spiritual practice of letting go, to just be. For some, it is a time for meditation and others the ultimate relaxation."

"I love to listen to newcomers express how they have experienced the joy of the bowls. I have brought friends, neighbors and family to share the enchantment of the bowls. Some are hesitant because they don't know what to expect, but I explain that they should dress for comfort and can bring whatever would make them more comfortable. You can sit in a chair or lie on the floor. I encourage those who are comfortable in the chair to at least take their shoes off so they can better feel the vibrations. I prefer to lie on the floor and bring my yoga mat and pillow. I would encourage everyone to enjoy the peace and beauty of the bowls that sing!"

Nancy Hoffman, FSPA, one of Prairiewoods' foundresses, speaks about how much the land has taught her about resting and letting go. "After 85 years of winter resting with my old friend Mother Nature, I thought I knew it all. Grandmother Oak chuckled at me during a recent visit. 'In my hundreds of years,' Grandmother Oak said, 'I now only know what I still don't know about resting in God's divine care and plan. I'm always invited deeper. This year I really am not ready to give up my leaves, my food making factory. The drought has limited the amount of food they produced. So if I could just keep them a few more months I'll have enough, but God tells me, 'No, that's not the way it works. Let go now—trust and rest in my presence.' 'Yes, I know each spring my energy once again rises in more vibrant ways than ever.' 'Wait, stop!' I said. 'Maybe if I ...' Grandmother Oak winked at me with a colorful leaf falling on my head."



The following are retreats and programs that Prairiewoods is hosting in person or online via Zoom in the next two months. For more information or to register, visit www.Prairiewoods.org or call 319-395-6700.

Silent Mindfulness Meditation Retreat

Friday, Nov. 3, 6:30 p.m.–Sunday, Nov. 5, 1 p.m.

Facilitator: Chris Klug

As Jon Kabat-Zinn writes in *Full Catastrophe Living*, “Life unfolds in moments. The healing power of mindfulness lies in living each one as fully as we can.” Mindfulness is the awareness that knows what is happening in the present moment as it is happening. It shapes a wise and compassionate relationship with and response to experience as it unfolds moment by moment. As Joseph Goldstein writes in *A Heart Full of Peace*, “Mindfulness is the quality and power of mind that is deeply aware of what’s happening—without commentary and without interference ... keeping us connected to brushing our teeth or having a cup of tea ... connected to the people around us.” Scientific research shows that mindfulness can positively affect stress resilience, physical and mental health, the ability to sustain attention, self-regulation of emotions, interpersonal skills, and general wellbeing and happiness. Join facilitator Chris Klug for a weekend retreat to cultivate mindfulness in silence amid instruction, questioning, sitting meditation, walking meditation, mindful movement and mindful eating. All are welcome to participate, whether we are interested in beginning a formal mindfulness meditation practice or have been practicing for some time.

Fee: \$230 includes sessions, lodging and all meals

Commuter Fee: \$180 includes sessions, Saturday lunch and dinner, and Sunday lunch



Winter’s Wisdom, Rest & Renewal: A Solstice & Advent Retreat

Friday, Dec. 15, 6:30 p.m.–Sunday, Dec. 17, 1 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

Like quiet Earth in winter, we—amid the stress and conflicts of these times—need revitalizing ways to pause for rest and “letting be” amid the darkness so we can open to mysterious healing forces working with and in us to birth life anew. Come for a weekend of cultivating Night Vision and awareness of Light in everything—even in darkness, in wintery seasons of our lives and in our very being. This retreat includes ways of transforming our relationship with uncertainty or fear, and for experiencing mystical union with The Sacred amid silence, The Dark Night, all of Creation, and in our bodies, minds and souls. Join Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel as we experience this increased awareness of Oneness and peace via inter-spiritual mystical wisdom, rest and mind-body-spirit practices. It includes winter’s wisdom from our brothers and sisters found in the rest of nature and integrates



soothing night prayers, insights from Advent and Celtic Christian ways of being, Buddhism, Taoism and Traditional Chinese Medicine. Spiritual practices include slow, meditative energy and compassion-based qigong movement and acupressure, yogic sleep, and vibrational singing bowls for rebalancing mind, body and spirit. **Fee:** \$230 includes sessions, lodging and all meals **Commuter Fee:** \$180 includes sessions, Saturday lunch and dinner, and Sunday lunch

Save the Date!

Prairiewoods Spirituality in the 21st Century 2024

Friday, April 26, 6–8 p.m., & Saturday, April 27, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

in person in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, & online via Zoom

Join us in April 2024 to be inspired by and learn from leaders who are committed to creating a hopeful and regenerative future. We encourage you to come with your friends, your congregation or any group of committed humans to which you belong. Get inspired, get informed and get into action!

Susan Bauer-Wu, PhD, RN, FAAN, is the president of the Mind & Life Institute, which serves as the primary convener, catalyst and community builder for the contemplative sciences. Her new book, *A Future We Can Love: How We Can Reverse the Climate Crisis with the Power of Our Hearts and Minds*, shares the words of the Dalai Lama and Greta Thunberg in dialogue with climate



scientists, activists and spiritual leaders as they start a world-changing conversation. Learn more at www.mindandlife.org/person/susan-bauer-wu.

Rev. Veronica M. Johnson serves as Outreach Director for Faith in Place, whose mission is to “empower people of diverse faiths and spiritualities to be leaders in advancing environmental and racial justice, providing resources to educate, connect, and advocate for healthier communities.” She has a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering and a master of divinity degree from McCormick Theological Seminary. She currently serves as co-pastor of Hyde Park Union Church. She has served previously in the Baptist, AME and UCC churches, and is the former president of the council for the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago.

Register by April 1 for a \$10 discount. Learn more and register at www.Prairiewoods.org/Spirituality-in-the-21st-century.



Labyrinth Walk

Thursday, Nov. 2, 6–7:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Leslie Wright



Come walk the Labyrinth with us! In this season of darkness and light, it is important to take time to slow down, reflect and renew our spirits. Join us as we walk our indoor labyrinth. All are welcome and no experience is required. We will provide some brief guidance at the beginning for those who may be new to this practice or have been away from it for a while. Labyrinths have been around for thousands of years. The circle and the path are symbols found across cultures and religious traditions. The

labyrinth and other spiritual practices help to ground us during unsettled times when our foundations seem to shift; sometimes we can't think our way out of or to something, and sometimes we need another way of being. When engaging with or praying a labyrinth, a person travels on a single path where the way in is the same as the way out. The labyrinth can be a metaphor for how we walk through life and the situations that may currently be confronting us. In her book *Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool*, Lauren Artress presents a four-fold path for praying the labyrinth:

- Remembering: Be open as you begin, notice what comes and remember you are loved.
- Releasing: On the way to the center, release those things that are causing you pain and confusion.
- Receiving: Enjoy the center, be still and linger. Take a deep breath. Receive what God has for you.
- Returning: Move back out into the world, more replenished, grounded, empowered, receiving a kindness and mercy. Look for an invitation with God to do the work in the world that is yours to do.

Fee: Free-will offering

Day of Self Renewal

Thursdays, Nov. 2 & Dec. 7, & Mondays, Nov. 13 & Dec. 11,
8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

This popular program is now offered twice a month!

Facilitator: Rev. Jean Sullivan

Find rest and relaxation for mind, body and spirit! This tranquil day features your choice of two services, group guided meditation, Singing Bowl Prayer or Healing Sound Bath & Yogic Sleep, a private guest room, a fresh lunch, and access to the labyrinth and all that Prairiewoods has to offer. (Depending on the date, you may choose from massage, head and shoulder massage, reflexology, healing touch, spiritual direction, qigong, yoga or chair yoga. Visit www.Prairiewoods.org for details.) Registration, a nonrefundable/nontransferable deposit of \$50 and your top three service choices are required eight days in advance. (Masks and vaccination may be required.)

Fee: \$110 includes two services, guided meditation, singing bowls, private guest room and lunch (or \$95 without a private guest room)

Into the Oneness: Qigong for Energy, Equanimity & Peace

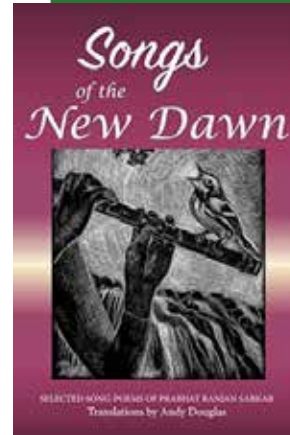
Thursdays, Nov. 2–16 & Nov. 30–Dec. 21, 12:45–1:35 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

Based on age-old Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), this gentle and accessible class involves meditative, healing energy and compassion-based standing movement, breath work, visualization, acupressure and seated practice. We begin by opening, rebalancing and cultivating Qi (universal life force energy-

Book Introduction

Songs of the New Dawn by Andy Douglas (an introduction by the author)



In the mid-1980s, I visited India and developed a love for mystical and devotional songs and poetry. In West Bengal I met a remarkable man, Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, Indian philosopher, activist and spiritual teacher, who was sharply critical of the caste system and economic inequality in India.

Between the years 1982 and 1990, Sarkar composed over 5,000 songs, mostly in the Bengali language. I wanted to help capture in English the literary depth and beauty that the Bengali songs conveyed and decided to try to render some translations into a poetic form. The result is a new book, *Songs of the New Dawn*, a project I have been working on for many years.

Sarkar's songs are marvels of rhythm, melody and lyrical inspiration. The metaphors he uses for the spiritual life are rich and wide-ranging, his depictions of the natural world beautiful and his vision of social justice stirring. Most of all, his songs movingly depict the intimate relationship between human and Divine beloved.

These songs have been injected with a powerful insight, sense of purpose and love-energy. I strove to find a balance between the original spirit, rhythm and meaning of the lyrics, and a poetic, inspiring sensibility of the word's meanings in English. I have studied and can read the Bengali language, but I am not fluent.

These songs and this book are part of a larger movement, aimed at creating a more just and loving world. Sarkar developed a profoundly ecological philosophy called Neohumanism which calls for extending our love and respect not only to other humans, but to plants, animals and the inanimate world. Hundreds of schools around the planet are using this outlook as a basis for their educational pedagogy. He also created a new socioeconomic theory, the Progressive Utilization Theory, a rational and inclusive cooperative-based alternative to capitalism and communism. He was persecuted for his ideas but remained eternally optimistic.

These songs, and I hope these poems, contain elements of all these influences. Like the poetry of Rumi, I believe they can be powerful tools for opening one's heart and expressing the infinite desires within.

Spirit) throughout the body's energy pathways, centers and organs to assist with mental, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing. Wisdom from the Tao Te Ching, TCM Five Element Theory and beyond is sprinkled in to assist your practice of living life with greater ease, peace and harmony with the rest of nature. Class ends with seated meditation, which includes sending healing compassionate intention to others and the planet.
Fee: \$12 per session



Healing Sound Bath & Yogic Sleep Thursdays, Nov. 2 & Dec. 7, 1:45–2:35 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

Rebalance mind, body and spirit through the soothing, penetrating power of healing sound and vibration via singing bowls. Then drop into deepest levels of relaxation and peace through authentic, age-old Yogic Sleep (*Yoga Nidra*)—a reclined, meditative experience used by stress reduction clinics, integrative health care and mystics who savor resting in blissful Oneness with The Sacred. We will close with prayerful sound healing, including a lower-octave bowl played on or near (your choice) the shrine of your heart.

Fee: \$8

Civilized Wildlings: A Collaborative Community Art Project *Offered in Partnership with Iowa Ceramics Center & Glass Studio*

Saturday; Nov. 4; 9–10:30 a.m., 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m., 1–2:30 p.m. or 3–4:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Jill Foote-Hutton at the Iowa Ceramics Center & Glass Studio

The Iowa Ceramics Center & Glass Studio (ICCGS) and Prairiewoods, with grant funding from the Iowa Arts Council, are excited to announce Civilized Wildlings with multi-media artist Jill Foote-Hutton. This project uses

inspiration from native prairie grasslands in Eastern Iowa to create a mosaic art project during a series of free workshops at ICCGS. From the workshops, 20–35 mosaic projects will be selected to be a part of a larger community art installation at Prairiewoods next April. On Nov. 4, participants will learn to assemble small pieces of ceramics and glass to create a mosaic landscape design on a 10-by-10-inch board. We will cut, design and assemble pieces of pre-made and upcycled glazed ceramics and glass into our very own design. Projects should evoke inspiration from the native prairie grass landscape of Eastern Iowa. The mosaic design will then be affixed to the board with adhesive and dried overnight. All mosaic boards will be grouted, and the one-of-a-kind projects will be available for pick-up one week later. If your project is selected to be part of the large community art installation project, you will receive an email with detailed instructions. Registration through ICCGS is required.

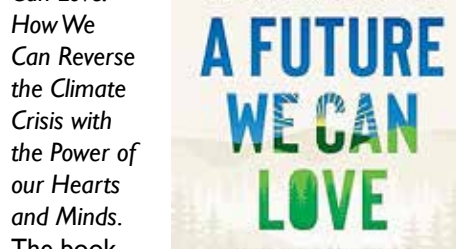
Fee: Free, but registration is required

Journey Toward: A Future We Can Love

Mondays; Nov. 6, Nov. 13, Nov. 20 & Dec. 4; 4–5 p.m.

Facilitators: Ann Jackson, PBVM, & Rev. Jean Sullivan

Join us for a winter read and conversation of Susan Bauer-Wu's *A Future We Can Love: How We Can Reverse the Climate Crisis with the Power of our Hearts and Minds*.



The book was inspired by a conversation between the Dalai Lama and Greta Thunberg. We will journey toward active hope through four themes: Knowledge of Science and Spirit; Capacity of Earth and Humans; Will of Heartbreak and Wonderment; and ACTION! Join us in person or via Zoom for any one or more sessions.

Fee: \$20 per session, or \$75 for four-part series

Going Inward with Sounds & Vibrations

Mondays; Nov. 6, Nov. 20, Dec. 4 & Dec. 18; 6:30–7:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Kathy Broghammer

Experience sound, stillness, playfulness and relaxation through the enigmatic vibrations of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls. During this hour, we connect with our inner selves through the song of bowls. We are invited to sit or lie down to listen and just be. Registration is required.

Fee: \$10 per session

Drum Circle

Sundays, Nov. 12 & Dec. 10, 2–4 p.m.

Facilitator: Drum Iowa

Join Drum Iowa and Prairiewoods for a wonderful indoor drum circle. Don't forget your drums! (We also will have instruments available for you to borrow.) You don't need to be a magnificent drummer or musician to enjoy this



fun drum circle, and you are by no means obligated to participate. Spectators are welcome, and we'll have you drumming in no time! Registration is not necessary.
Fee: Suggested donation of \$10 (but this is a free event for all to enjoy)

Singing Bowl Prayer

Mondays, Nov. 13 & Dec. 11, 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 these in-person sessions, we let the resonant sounds of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls relax the entire body and create a pathway for clearer connection with the divine. Registration is required by noon.

Fee: \$8

Threshold Conversations

**Tuesday, Nov. 14 & Dec. 12,
7–8:30 p.m.**

Facilitator: Karen Hering

Whether you're living through significant personal transitions or navigating a world reshaping itself faster than ever, you are invited to join an online conversation about how to make change more trustworthy. Each session focuses on one of the ten threshold skills featured in Karen Hering's book, *Trusting Change*. The time together will include selected content from Karen's book, silent time for writing or reflection, and small group sharing. The November topic is Widening What We Trust, and the December topic is Blessing the Journey—New Moon. Your voice will bring wisdom for others, while theirs may offer just the perspective you need on your threshold.

Fee: \$15

Soul Care: Creative Arts Grief Support Group

**Wednesdays, Nov. 15 & Dec. 20,
5:30–7 p.m.**

Facilitator: Jamie Siela, LISW
*Offered in Partnership with
UnityPoint Hospice*

In grief, our very foundation can be rocked. Take time to connect with others in grief and engage the creative spark. This monthly grief group is open to anyone grieving loss through death. On the third Wednesday of each month, explore a different creative art medium. On Nov. 15, create a memory box decoupage, a special place for mementos with your loved one. Feel free to bring copies of special recipes or photos to decoupage to the outside of your box, or use the materials provided. On Dec. 20, we will create string art to process how our grief is woven into different areas of our lives. We will reflect on how grief is experienced in physical wellbeing, relationships with others, self-identity, daily responsibilities and more. Registration is required nine days in advance. This group is a hybrid, offered both online and in person.

Fee: Free includes all art supplies

Every Step Is Home Book Discussion

Wednesday, Nov. 15, 6:30–8 p.m.

Facilitator: Lori Erickson

Join Lori Erickson as she speaks about her new book *Every Step Is Home: A Spiritual Geography from Appalachia to Alaska*, a memoir about spiritual sites and experiences in the United States. From the California redwoods and

South Dakota's Buffalo Roundup to New Mexico's Chaco Canyon, she explores the themes of sacred water, air, fire, stone and other elements. Lori, who lives in Iowa City, is one of America's top travel writers specializing in spiritual journeys. She's the author of books that include *Holy Rover*, *Near the Exit* and *The Soul of the Family Tree*.

Fee: Free-will offering

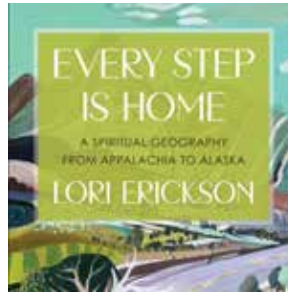
Rock Mandala Painting for the Whole Family

Saturday, Dec. 9, 2–4 p.m.

Facilitator: Andi Lewis

Spend a few hours creating art with your favorite people! Learn the art of rock painting with mandalas, which are sacred works of art in the form of a circle. Using smooth stones, paints and fine dotting tools, we will make beautiful, detailed mandalas. This is a fun, relaxing process that can be done by anyone, regardless of age. We will have time to paint several rocks and will be encouraged to take one rock home and leave one as a secret gift for a stranger to find. No experience or artistic skill is necessary, but kids 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult. (It is ideal for ages 10 and older.) Experiences together make a great holiday gift, so register today!

Fee: \$13 per person includes all supplies



Ongoing Programs

Metta Yoga

**Mondays & Thursdays; Nov. 2–20,
Nov. 27–Dec. 21; 9:30–10:30 a.m.,
10:45–11:45 a.m. (chair yoga) &
5:30–6:30 p.m.**

Facilitator: Heather English

Experience the healing powers of meditative yoga.

Fee: \$120 for eleven-punch card, \$72 for six-punch card or \$15 for single class

Go Deeper Thursdays

**Thursdays, Nov. 2–16 & Nov. 30–
Dec. 21, 4–5 p.m.**

Convener: Ellen Bruckner

Join this online community exploration and deepening of spiritual topics.

Fee: Free-will offering

Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton first & third Thursdays; Nov. 2, Nov. 16, Dec. 7 & Dec. 21; 7–8:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Carole Butz

Practice contemplative living to respond to everyday experiences with greater awareness of our connections over Zoom.

Fee: Free-will offering

Men Exploring Faith second Thursdays, Nov. 9 & Dec. 14, 4–5:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Linzy Martin

Join with a group of reflective men in honest conversation about life changes, either in person or via Zoom.

Fee: Free-will offering

Prairiewoods Knitters & Stitchers

**second Tuesdays, Nov. 14 & Dec. 12,
9:30–11:30 a.m.**

Facilitators: participants

Practice knitting and stitching as we create items for charity.

Fee: Free

Evening Centering Prayer second & fourth Tuesdays; Nov. 14, Nov. 28 & Dec. 12; 5:30–7 p.m.

Facilitator: Judith Smith

Practice a contemplative prayer form to help deepen your relationship with God.

Fee: Free-will offering

We Want to Hear from You!

Please share your feedback about our newsletter with us in this brief survey that takes about four minutes to complete. We are continually striving to create a newsletter that inspires and informs you. We cannot do that without your input. There are several ways you can share your thoughts with us:

Take the survey in paper form and mail it back to us at 120 E Boyson Rd, Hiawatha IA 52233.

Take the survey in paper form and scan and email it back to us at ecospirit@prairiewoods.org.

Scan the QR code at right (or click here) to take the survey online.



1. How long have you received the Prairiewoods newsletter?
 1 year or less
 2–5 years
 More than 5 years
 2. How do you receive the newsletter?
 By mail
 Electronically
 Both
If both, why do you choose to receive it in both formats?

 3. Overall, how satisfied are you with the newsletter?
 Very satisfied
 Satisfied
 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 Dissatisfied
 Very dissatisfied
 4. What do you enjoy most about the newsletter?

 5. What do you enjoy least?

 6. How important is the newsletter to you?
 I read every issue
 I read most issues (3 or more per year)
 I read the newsletter sporadically
 I rarely read the newsletter
 7. What sections interest you or do you read the most?
 Front page article
 Retreat information
 Program information
 Donation and/or volunteer list
 Special event information such as Holiday Bazaar, Garden Party, etc.
 Other: _____
 8. How often have you registered for a program or retreat after receiving the newsletter?
 Several times per year
 Once a year
 Less than once a year
 Never
 9. What information, topics or features would you like to see in future newsletters?

 10. How likely are you to recommend our newsletter to friends or family members?
 Very likely
 Somewhat likely
 Not likely
 11. Are you willing to help cover the cost of producing the newsletter with a gift of \$10 per year?
 Yes (see below)
 Not at this time
- Tell us a little about yourself:
12. How do you identify?
 Male
 Female
 Non-binary
 Prefer not to answer
 13. How do you describe your spiritual or religious affiliation?
 Christian
 Muslim
 Jewish
 Buddhist
 Hindu
 Spiritual not religious
 Agnostic
 Other: _____

Help Support Our Newsletter

Here are two ways you can help us be good stewards of our resources and produce a beautiful, informative and inspiring newsletter:

1. **Contribute a free-will offering of \$10.** Your gift of \$10 pays for a full year of newsletters delivered to you electronically or by mail. If you would like to make this gift, please visit www.Prairiewoods.org/Donate and mark “Newsletter” in the notes field, mail a check to Prairiewoods or call 319-395-6700 with your credit card information.
2. **Read your bimonthly newsletter online.** If you are willing to switch from paper to electronic, please scan the QR code at left with your phone’s camera and give us your name, address and email address. We’ll do the rest! (You can also call us at 319-395-6700 or email ecospirit@prairiewoods.org and we can make the change for you.) *Thank you for all you do to support Prairiewoods’ mission!*



We appreciate all of the generous people who donate their time, money and other gifts to Prairiewoods! For a complete, up-to-date list of donors and volunteers, please visit www.Prairiewoods.org/Donate.

Volunteering at Prairiewoods: Gina Sison Talks about Volunteering

In 2013 Metro Catholic Outreach (MCO) started a vegetable garden where my family volunteered to help in growing vegetables for their food pantry. In April of 2014, we got an email that the new garden site (Green Prairie Garden) would be at Prairiewoods, and that MCO had a new garden coordinator for those gardens. I mainly volunteer at the Green Prairie Garden (GPG) and the tower garden inside Prairiewoods that grows lettuce greens and herbs aeroponically.



What I like about volunteering is that whatever is being done here benefits not only the people in the community but the environment as well. The GPG, for example, not only produces food for the MCO food pantry and the Prairiewoods kitchen, but the vegetables are grown using organic practices. When I work at the tower garden inside the Center, I am reminded that the electricity being used by the aeroponic system is from a renewable energy source.

One of my favorite places to volunteer is in the GPG hoop house. Being someone who grew up in a place without winters, I noticed that the growing season in Iowa is too short. I wanted to learn how to use the hoop house in extending the growing season. Fortunately, Prairiewoods also offers classes about different topics, and I was able to attend a master gardener's class about extending the growing season. After a few years of helping plant the GPG hoop house, it was also exciting to collaborate with the former Prairiewoods ecospirituality coordinator and one of my fellow GPG volunteers to automate the cooling of the hoop house.

Another favorite of mine is working with the tower garden. When it arrived in 2017, I was able to work with the ecospirituality coordinator to understand how an aeroponic system works. Today, the tower garden is another tool for extending the growing season and an alternative for growing plants that do not do well in the heat of summer.

I think the chance to deliver food downtown at the MCO food pantry is always special for me. I get to see the MCO staff, who are always excited to see fresh produce being donated. And if you stay for some time during distribution, you would be able to see fresh produce being given away. I think it is why I keep coming back every year and try to help grow the best produce we can grow.

Volunteering on Wednesdays is what makes me understand more of what Prairiewoods is doing for the community and the environment. I've helped control invasive plants, collected seeds to propagate in the prairie, helped plant fruit trees and edible shrubs, harvested fruits from the orchard, and built garden plots for the Green Community Gardens.

I am able to do these things because there is always a very supportive Prairiewoods staff who guide and support me or my family as we do the work. Also, as with all the other areas I have volunteered, I am always amazed and inspired to see how my fellow volunteers give their time and talent when they come to Prairiewoods.

Donating at Prairiewoods: Carol Nilles & Bob Engler on Why They Donate

How long have you been coming to Prairiewoods, and what initially brought you here?

Carol: In the fall of 2008, I returned to Iowa after 30 years in Milwaukee. I needed a retreat and was told of a retreat center called Prairiewoods. The retreat was a "taste and see" experience. I felt at home.

Bob: I've been coming to Prairiewoods since 2016—seven years now. My wife brought me here with stories of her experiences with the people and volunteering in the laundry. I had to experience this Center. I couldn't believe such a place could exist in Cedar Rapids.

Is there a program or service that we provide that you particularly connect with?

Carol: I connect with the buildings, the gardens, the woods, the staff, the speakers, the musicians and the variety of participants' beliefs.

Bob: The "service" I connected with was the opportunity Prairiewoods provided to pursue spirituality not related to any particular religion but to the healing, exciting life that is modeled for us in nature—open to all beings, all inclusive, sharing responsibility with all for each other in a new way of living on this planet.

Where did you learn the importance of giving?

Carol: I learned the art of giving by having much given to me. I enjoyed working for nonprofits and was blessed with a family who supported me.

Bob: I learned the importance of giving from growing up in a small house with seven people, a couple animals, a piano, and a garden that sustained us through wars and economic depression. And now I see the Sisters and staff giving and giving—their time, their attention, their strength for all of us.



What inspired you to give to Prairiewoods?

Carol: Its example and message of caring for this planet in all of its facets is an absolute necessity.

Bob: The dynamism of the Prairiewoods mission is what inspires me to give of my time, my money, my enthusiasm, my encouragement. When there is a place doing something critical for all of us to live and survive the challenges of our times, it's crucial that we step up and give it our support.



120 E Boyson Rd
Hiawatha IA 52233

Help Us Update Our Records

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.

Are you on social media? Find "Prairiewoods FSC" on:



Prairiewoods Holiday Bazaar

Saturday, Nov. 18, 8 a.m.–1 p.m.

Join us for Prairiewoods' annual Holiday Bazaar to jump start your Christmas shopping and get in the spirit of the season! There is no entrance fee, and coffee, warm apple cider and breakfast pastries will be available for purchase.

The Holiday Bazaar features more than a dozen local artists with handcrafted items including:

- one-of-a-kind jewelry
- pottery
- handknit hats, mittens, blankets and other goods
- wood crafts
- purses and bags
- and much, much more!

In addition, check out the following items from the Prairiewoods Gift Shop:

- fresh cut greenery from the grounds at Prairiewoods
- Prairiewoods Tree-shirts (long-sleeve and short-sleeve)
- Trappistine caramels and assorted candies
- books on spirituality and ecology
- wind chimes
- and so much more!

Don't miss this chance to shop handcrafted goods from local artists and get into the spirit of the season!

