

# Prairiewoods

A FRANCISCAN ECOSPIRITUALITY RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER

## Our Deeper Memory: Embodying the New Universe Story

The “New Universe Story” by Thomas Berry transforms and redefines our understanding of the 14-billion-year-old evolving universe and our place within it! It takes us from the formation of the galaxies and the origin of Earth and life to the development of self-reflective consciousness. Berry bridges scientific understanding and spiritual consciousness. Rooted in his awareness of the cosmos and ecology, Berry’s story reinterprets the universe’s evolution from the Great Flaring Forth (Big Bang) to the present. A visionary thinker and cultural historian, Berry spent many years studying world history and religions.

He experienced a personal transformation while flying from an environmental conference in the Seychelle Islands back to North America. Upon viewing the Nile River from 30,000 feet, he realized that he was no longer a theologian, rather he viewed himself as a *geologist*—a human who emerged out of eons of Earth’s geological and biological evolution *who could reflect on the world!* For Berry, this *capacity for reflection* identified humans at an ever deeper and more expansive species level.

Berry’s view of the human’s role regarding reflection was enhanced when a young mathematical cosmologist, Brian Swimme, who spent years studying evolutionary history at the University of Oregon, became a student of Berry’s. Together they launched an intense decade of research. They gave lectures and conferences culminating in a 1982 jointly authored book, *The Universe Story*. It was a new moment in history! In the telling of this story of evolution, humans played a critical role: reflection! Reflection allowed us to reimagine humanity’s role within Earth.

Thomas wrote prolifically about the ecological crisis in *The Dream of Earth*, *The Great Work* and *The Sacred Universe*, among other titles. These texts elaborated on the importance of human reflection. This weaving together of scientific insights with spiritual reflections presents a wonderfully holistic view of the cosmos. Pivotal is the realization that the universe is a single, dynamic entity, continuously unfolding and evolving. This new perspective sharply contrasts previous perspectives that dominated Western thought, views of the world as a collection of separate parts. Influenced by the work of Teilhard de Chardin, Berry emphasized that humans are not isolated but rather central, participating, integral species in the cosmos. Human actions have profound implications for the entire Earth community. Berry revealed that the outdated anthropocentric perspective led to a plethora of problems: environmental degradation, social injustices and a spiritual disconnection from the natural world.

(continued on page 3)

1. 13-14 billion years ago  
the Great Flaring Forth  
of the  
Emerging Universe

## PRAIRIEWOODS STAFF

**Rose Blank**  
Spiritual Director

**Aaron Brewer**  
Land Sustainability  
Coordinator

**Derek Doan**  
Cook

**Joann Gehling, FSPA**  
Holistic Services, Spiritual  
Director

**Trace Harshman**  
Housekeeper

**Nancy Hoffman, FSPA**  
Holistic Services  
Coordinator, Outdoor/  
Land Management

**Robert Hogg**  
Program Assistant

**Ann Jackson, PBVM**  
Spiritual Services  
Coordinator, Spiritual  
Director

**Andi Lewis**  
Marketing Coordinator

**Erik Meggers**  
Maintenance Coordinator

**Sandy Rosenberger**  
Development Coordinator

**Nancy Schrimper**  
Office Administrator

**Leslie Schwarting**  
Spiritual Director &  
Retreat Facilitator

**Jean Sullivan**  
Outreach, Engagement &  
Hospitality Coordinator

**Lucille Winnike, FSPA**  
Retreats, Spiritual  
Director

**Leslie Wright**  
Director

**Ali Yoka**  
Chef & Kitchen Manager



*"We need to open ourselves up to the God who is forever seeking to reach us—in and through the creation itself."*

—Diarmuid O'Murchu, *Ecological Spirituality*, p. 73

These words challenge us to pay attention to what creation is (and has been) attempting to share with us from the very beginning. Ann Jackson, PBVM, gave me a copy of Diarmuid O'Murchu's new book *Ecological Spirituality* a few weeks ago and it felt like an answer to a prayer! I had been wrestling with questions such as: What do we mean when we talk about ecological spirituality? How can we speak about complex ideas in an accessible and inspirational way? What are the questions we should be asking ourselves now?

O'Murchu reassured me I am not alone in wrestling with the meaning of ecological spirituality. I am challenged and inspired when he describes the "deep interconnectedness between transcendent Spirit-power and its energetic influence on every living organism, human and nonhuman alike" (p. 3).

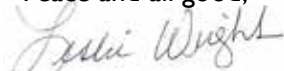
Eco-spirituality is the foundation of Prairie Woods' mission and guiding principles. Informed by these core concepts named by O'Murchu for almost thirty years now. Eco-spirituality:

- is not bound to any one religious tradition
- rejects dualistic splits, between humans, sacred and secular, spirit and matter
- requires us to examine our assumptions and our interpretation of history—especially as it is expressed in theology and culture
- is centered in a sense of oneness
- is informed by "multi-disciplinary wisdom" that integrates and transcends science, theology and ancient wisdom for an evolutionary worldview.

So, what does this look like in practice? How shall we live into these principles in community—with this beautiful land, humans and non-humans alike. How shall we practice our ecological spirituality in such a way that it inspires and influences others beyond the boundaries of Prairie Woods?

Beginning this summer, Prairie Woods will explore these big ideas in our upcoming newsletters. We will begin with the Universe Story, which has been central to the mission here. It is a story of energy, transformative relationship and the endless creativity found in the Source of All Being. It is our origin story and tells the 14-billion-year history of the universe. If you'd like to learn more about the Universe Story, we invite you to walk the Cosmic Walk on the Prairie Woods trails. This walk is a physical depiction of the story of the universe and helps ground us in its reality. Come walk with us!

Peace and all good,

  
Leslie A. Wright



Prairie Woods 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:** Prairie Woods 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 Prairie Woods 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 Prairie Woods perspective.

Please address all correspondence to:

Prairie Woods  
120 E Boyson Rd  
Hiawatha, IA 52233  
319-395-6700

[www.PrairieWoods.org](http://www.PrairieWoods.org)  
[Ecospirit@PrairieWoods.org](mailto:Ecospirit@PrairieWoods.org)



(continued from page 1)

*In contrast, the biocentric New Story recognizes the intrinsic value and interdependence of ALL life forms on Earth.*

Human wellbeing depends on the health of the entire planet. This new ecological consciousness positions humans differently, engendering a sense of awe and reverence for Earth and the entire cosmos. Informed by the findings of contemporary science, particularly in cosmology, biology and ecology, the New Story integrates scientific discoveries with wisdom from various religious, indigenous and spiritual traditions. It calls for us to shift from seeing humans as separate and superior to nature to *recognizing our role* as participants in a larger, sacred community of life. Science, nature and spirituality are intricately interconnected.

*Founded in 1996, Prairiewoods is rooted in the New Universe Story*

At Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center, Berry's New Universe Story finds practical application. The founding Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration dedicated themselves to fostering ecological awareness and spiritual growth through a deep connection with the natural world and engaging in environmental stewardship. The center's mission was birthed out of Berry's vision, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all life and the sacredness of Earth.

The New Universe Story and *environmental education* direct Prairiewoods initiatives and offerings of workshops, retreats and programs. All delve into that interconnectedness of life, encouraging guests to develop a deeper understanding of their place in the cosmos. All 70 acres of Prairiewoods' land, which features woodlands, prairies and wetlands, serve as a living classroom. Guests of all ages and cultures experience firsthand the beauty and complexity of the universe.

Berry's epiphany moved his and our understanding of the world and our place in it forward, shifting from the limited view of Sir Isaac Newton and Descartes, who thought the universe was fixed and complete, to the expansive ideas of Albert Einstein and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Other thinkers and activists—including the 100Grannies Uniting for a Livable Future and Swedish climate protection activist Greta Thunberg—continue to embody an emerging universe, a universe alive and evolving. How we understand this and what we do with these insights is critical at this time in history. "What's your pledge? What's your practice?" asks psychologist Rick Hanson.

*Prairiewoods Integrates Theology, Science and the Arts*

At Prairiewoods, communal gardening, land

conservation projects and promoting eco-friendly practices model the importance of sustainable living. Ecological awareness is spiritual awareness. *Retreats and programs centered on ecological spirituality incorporate contemplative practices* from diverse faith traditions and indigenous cultures. Through massage, yoga, nature and labyrinth walks, meditation sessions in nature assist individuals to connect spiritually with Earth. Major shifts continue to emerge as religion and science find common ground for dialogue and action.

Scientists, awed by the mystery of the universe, experience the mystical through their work. Theologians are turning to scientists to understand the Source of All Being. Both offer new ways to understand the Divine, Earth and ourselves as spiritual beings. We move from a God who is wholly transcendent, above creation, out there, beyond, to a sense of the Divine who acts from within each of us and in all of creation. Humanity and Nature and Scripture—all reveal the Divine!

Prairiewoods incorporates art, music and ritual into its programming, reflecting Berry's belief in the *importance of creative expression in nurturing a holistic relationship with Earth*. These activities not only enrich the spiritual lives of guests; they cultivate and reveal a profound appreciation for the beauty, awe, wonder and diversity of the natural world.

Prairiewoods is committed to fostering and engaging an ongoing *learning community with shared responsibility for Earth*. The center hosts events that gather persons with diverse perspectives to explore common ecological and spiritual concerns. Echoing Berry's call for a collective awakening to our ecological challenges, Prairiewoods invites guests to become engaged global, Earth citizens.

*Sustainability* is a central focus at Prairiewoods. The center's facilities are designed with ecologically friendly principles, featuring solar panels, straw-bale construction and organic gardens. These demonstrate ecological principles that can be integrated into daily life. Furthermore, food choices, models of collaborative leadership, treatment of natural resources and how we farm ... all reflect interdependence. As the universe evolves, it becomes more and more diverse. We are invited to understand and celebrate the diversity of "truths."

Thomas Berry's New Universe Story calls for a deep, transformative shift in how we perceive and interact with Earth and all its inhabitants. Prairiewoods embodies this ecological consciousness through its commitment to ecological education, ecological spiritual growth, creative expression and community engagement.

For more inspiration and some resources, see pages 4–5.

# Reflecting on the Universe Story

“According to the Universe Story, we are star dust. And so is every rock, every tree, every bird, every animal, every human. Literally everything we know is made up of the same primordial elements. And this fact alone is proof that we are interconnected to all life on Earth and to the Earth herself. We are not separate; we are one.



Imagine how different life would be if we made choices that were rooted in our interconnectedness—if we saw all life as a reflection of ourselves, if we linked our wellbeing with the wellbeing of all life. This awareness is essential if we wish to co-create a world that is regenerative, just, peaceful and flourishing.

The Universe Story reminds us that we humans arrived here such a short time ago, and yet we’ve managed to so alter our world that our actions are threatening all life on the planet. We don’t have billions of years to figure out how to reverse climate change or to heal the generational traumas that perpetuate oppression, cruelty and wars. But we do have billions of years of energy and evolutionary experience living within each of us and a deep knowing of our belonging and interconnection to Earth and all her inhabitants. Fueled by this awareness, I’d like to believe that we can bring about a healing transformation in as little time as it took us to cause such great harm. The Universe Story calls us to make changes now that will bring us back into alignment with our cosmological truth for the wellbeing of all.”

—Kathleen Rude,  
[www.prairiewoods.org/blog](http://www.prairiewoods.org/blog)

“If the world is to be healed through human efforts, I am convinced it will be by ordinary people, people whose love for this life is even greater than their fear.”



—Joanna Macy and Chris Johnson, *Active Hope: How to Face the Mess We’re in without Going Crazy*

“We exist, grow, and flourish because the creation we inhabit makes all that possible. And yet we are, like all other life organisms, totally unique. Our uniqueness, however, is not in lording it over all other lifeforms—as often understood by the mastery of life reference in Genesis 1:26—but in bringing our uniqueness to the table of mutual interaction with all other living organisms. That uniqueness is often stated as follows: We are creation becoming conscious of itself. Our self-consciousness and the consciousness of creation are of one and the same substance. Having received from creation the capacity to be aware, the quality and depth of our awareness contributes to and enriches the consciousness of creation. The mutual enrichment of that process very much depends on the quality of our attention and intention. How sensitively aware are we to what is happening within and around us? What is the quality of intention (desiring) that we bring to all our life engagements?”



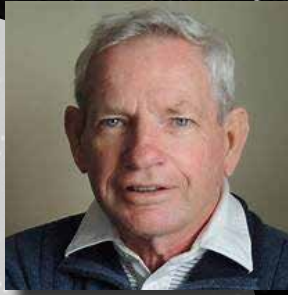
—Diarmuid O’Murchu, *Ecological Spirituality*

Join us for retreats with:

- Kathleen Rude
- Diarmuid O’Murchu &
- Barbara Mahany!

See pages 6–7 for details.

“The story itself unfolds throughout the prayers and reflections. It is a story of all life existing in God, of God’s creative Spirit always and everywhere active as the universe itself bursts forth and as life develops on this planet. It is a story telling us that we ourselves give the mystery we call God a way of coming to expression. In this story God is never absent, never distant. Life is not a journey to God; it is a journey in God ... The ‘New Story,’ unknown to our ancestors, challenges all religious people to think in a religiously inclusive way. We must take into account all of creation and all human beings when we speak of God being present and active. Such an inclusive understanding has the capacity to heal, educate, and transform the human community.”  
—Michael Morwood, *Praying a New Story*



“The new universe story is the intercommunion of life itself, of each part with the whole. Everything is in communion in the vast web of the universe. The intense communion within the material world enables life to emerge into being ... We have an invitation to go to church in a new way, by praying before the new leaves budding through dormant trees or the wobbly flowers by the side of the road pushing through the solid earth ... (Like Francis of Assisi,) we too can sing with the air we breathe, the sun that shines upon us, the rain that pours down to water the earth ... For we are Easter people, and we are called to celebrate the whole earth as the body of Christ. Every act done in love gives glory to God: a pause of thanksgiving, a laugh, a gaze at the sun, or just raising a toast to your friends at your virtual gathering.”  
—Ilia Delio, *The Hours of the Universe: Reflections on God, Science, and the Human Journey*



“To turn the pages of the Book of Nature is to come to know the elegy, the language of grief, of sorrow, of heart-piercing brokenness. The small-scale heart breaks, the ones that fall from your trees, or land by your toes, they hurt plenty. But the ones on the global scale, they’re grief squared, and squared again. Or they should be. And the alarm is sounding louder than ever. The echoes rise all around. When the forest burns, and the skies thicken with smoke. When the river runs murky, or worse. And the lake turns red from a toxic bloom. Be it tsunami or cyclone, drought or hundred-year flood. Or a pandemic that locks down the globe for all of two years, leaving a death count in millions ... ‘We no longer read the Book of Nature,’ wrote theologian Thomas Berry in his call to attend *The Great Work*. ‘We no longer coordinate our human celebrations with the great liturgies of the heavens ... We have silenced too many of those wonderful voices of the universe that spoke to us of the grand mysteries of existence.’”  
—Barbara Mahany, *The Book of Nature: The Astonishing Beauty of God’s First Sacred Text*



For more information or to register, visit [www.Prairiewoods.org](http://www.Prairiewoods.org) or call 319-395-6700.

## The Power of Silence: July Silent Directed Retreat (in person)

Sunday, July 7, 4 p.m.– Saturday, July 13, 1 p.m.

*This retreat also offered Oct. 6–12!*

**Facilitators:** Cindy Dunn; Ann Jackson, PBVM; Leslie Schwarting; & Lucille Winnike, FSPA

What's the deepest silence you've ever known? Silent Directed Retreats offer opportunities to enter into deep silence to sense what it feels like to awaken a quiet and palpable connection with the Source of All Being. Each day you will receive ongoing direction as you and a professionally-trained spiritual director intentionally listen to the movement of the Source of All Being in your heart. Silence assists you to get in touch with feelings, thoughts and actions as you reflect, meditate, pray and rest. Silence deepens the capacity to sense the movement of the Source of All Being within the whole of your life. Sharing with a professional may bring you clarity, deepen your commitment and accountability to the direction of your life. We try to hold any outside stimulation to a minimum so that everything—the silence, solitude, reflective activities, meals, etc.—supports your journey within. A daily centering practice is offered. Optional reflective activities such as artwork, yoga and singing bowl meditation are available throughout the week.

**Fee:** \$525 includes lodging, meals and spiritual direction (*Partial scholarships are available.*)



## Finding Peace in Mothering Retreat (in person)

Friday, July 26, 6:30 p.m.–Sunday, July 28, 1 p.m.

**Facilitators:** Tammy Bayer & Rev. Jean Sullivan

Explore our “mothering journey,” not only how we currently mother, but also how we were mothered and how we want to mother in the future. Join nurturers in community and conversations, rejuvenate and relax through healing practices to send you home revitalized, resourced and reconnected. Friday evening, we will spend some time getting to know each other, unwinding and caring for ourselves. Our Saturday includes gentle yoga movement, breathwork, time in nature and opportunities for connection, rest and self-reflection. After we wrap up on Sunday morning, you'll find yourself refreshed and ready to return to your mothering role with fresh eyes and a plan to care for yourself. Participants will gain a recognition of what influences their beliefs in their mothering values; identify parental beliefs vs. parental practices; be able to describe who they are at their core: before, during and after mothering; identify practices that will support them in “filling their own cup” for the long haul of mothering; explore mindful movement, relaxation techniques, guided meditation, energy work/ chakras and grounding practices; and make connections in a warm



and protected space. **NOTE:** You do not have to be a birth mother to enjoy or benefit from this event. This is for anyone who mothers others.

**Fee:** \$255 includes presentations, Friday and Saturday lodging, and Saturday breakfast through Sunday lunch

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

## Navigating Transitions: A Path to Reset & Renew Retreat (in person)

Friday, Aug. 2, 6:30 p.m.–Saturday, Aug. 3, 3 p.m.

**Facilitators:** Jill Saunders & Leslie Schwarting

Are you currently facing a transition, either big or small? Have you experienced a change in your job status, a divorce, empty nesting or loss of a loved one? Are you searching for some meaning and clarity on what next? In this overnight retreat, you'll be treated to a path forward that will help you to reset and renew as you navigate your transition. Come for a heart-centered, guided journey where you will:

- learn a map for how to navigate your transition, a map that gives you insights and permission to step forward in your truth
- practice acceptance for your journey, and consider the healing power of accepting what is
- play with a resiliency toolkit and spiritual practices to provide you with renewal for your transition
- clarify your core values and gain insight on how living in alignment with your deepest values can propel you forward
- experience the wisdom of your future self and the guidance it has to shape a meaningful vision of possibility
- get clear on your focus for the next six months to one year
- learn practices to focus your energy on what's most important and more!

**Fee:** \$175 includes presentations, Friday lodging, and Saturday breakfast and lunch

**Commuter Fee:** \$95 includes presentations and Saturday lunch



## Active Hope for a Troubled World Retreat (in person)

Friday, Aug. 9, 6:30 p.m.–Sunday, Aug. 11, 3 p.m.

**Facilitator:** Kathleen Rude

Whether you're troubled about the state of the world or struggling with personal challenges, you'll find a safe and sacred place in this retreat to honor your feelings and discover that you are not alone. Working with the transformative power of The Work That Reconnects process, you will be embraced in a compassionate experience that will ground you in gratitude and allow you to honor your pain, feel your



interconnectedness to all life and embrace your unique Light for making a difference in your life and in the world. This weekend retreat will offer you a supportive community, transformative rituals, healing time on the land, deep sharing, quiet reflection, song, movement and celebration.

**Fee:** \$255 includes presentations, Friday and Saturday lodging, and Saturday breakfast through Sunday lunch

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

### **Becoming the Elder Tree: Purpose in the Second Half of Life Retreat (in person)**

**Friday, Aug. 16, 6:30 p.m.–Sunday, Aug. 18, 1 p.m.**

**Facilitators:** Thomas Dean & Chris Johnson

This weekend retreat invites you to envision a second half of life that calls forth your truest self and unique purpose and to consider what it means to be an “elder” in the deepest sense: when our lived years contribute to a special wisdom, vision and wholeness of self that are shared for the benefit of the community and society. We will place the development of elderhood in the context of our interdependent relationships with the more-than-human world, from nature outside our window all the way out through our entire solar system, the world soul and the greater universe story. Inspired by ecologist Suzanne Simard’s revelations about how forests are communities that are cooperative, collaborative, communicative and reciprocal, we will consider how we can be the elder trees that nurture, support and pass wisdom to others for the health and wellbeing of the entire community. Prairiewoods’ revered Grandmother Oak will thus be our touchstone and inspiration for the weekend. This retreat will follow the Circle of Trust® approach developed by Parker Palmer and the Center for Courage and Renewal. This retreat will welcome participants of all ages and at any stage of life.

**Fee:** \$255 includes presentations, Friday and Saturday lodging, and Saturday breakfast through Sunday lunch

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

### **Pathways of Peace: Food as Relationship—Autumn Table (in person)**

**Friday, Sept. 6, 6:30 p.m.–Saturday, Sept. 7, 4 p.m.**

**Facilitators:** Christina Campbell & Ann Jackson, PBVM

Michael Pollan wrote, “What would happen, for example, if we were to start thinking about food as less of a thing and more of a relationship?” Harvest is just beginning! Nurturing body and spirit, autumn harvest foods play a significant role in fostering peace at personal, community and global levels. Come celebrate and reflect on new ways of nourishing and promoting health of self, local and global community and Earth.



**Fee:** \$175 includes presentations, Friday lodging, and Saturday breakfast and lunch

**Commuter Fee:** \$95 includes presentations and Saturday lunch

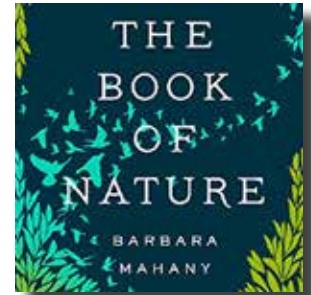
### **The Book of Nature: The Astonishing Beauty of God’s First Sacred Text (hybrid)**

**Wednesdays; Sept. 11, Sept. 25, Oct. 2 & Oct. 9; 6–7:30 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Barbara Mahany (author will attend via Zoom)

*The Book of Nature: The Astonishing Beauty of God’s First Sacred Text*, by Barbara Mahany, is a deep-dive into an ancient and timeless theology that sees all creation as “theophany,” a lens through which to catch a glimpse of the sacred, be it in the dapplings of sunlight, the percussions of storm or the susurrations of prairie grasses playing with the wind. At its core, it’s a book about seeing and a book about reading. And it weaves threads from all religions, drawing especially from ancient Celtic and Jewish traditions where the natural world is the lens through which the sacred is perceived and illuminated. It’s been written that *The Book of Nature* is “a field guide into the depths of your holiest places.” Over the course of four weeks, in sessions lasting an hour and a half each, we will read and engage with Barbara’s book and with our own “pages” from the Book of Nature that is inscribed in all of creation.

**Commuter Fee:** \$100 for the four-week series



### **Diarmuid O’Murchu returns!**

### **Ecological Spirituality: New Horizons for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Retreat (hybrid)**

**Wednesday, Sept. 25–Friday, Sept. 27, 9 a.m.–1 p.m. daily**

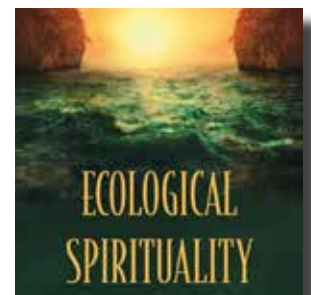
**Facilitator:** Diarmuid O’Murchu (author will attend via Zoom)

Most of us are not aware of the fact that we live within the context of a world-view (a way of being in the world and understanding it). Thanks to new scientific insights of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, our sense of the world has expanded enormously. For over 50 years now, we have been inspired by geologist Thomas Berry and others on the pioneering work of the New Universe Story. How to ground that vision—ecologically and spiritually—remains a formidable challenge, the aspects of which will be explored in this retreat/workshop. Come spend the mornings with us as we welcome Diarmuid O’Murchu online from Ireland. Spend the afternoon and evenings in reflection at Prairiewoods or in your own home.

**Fee:** \$230 includes Wednesday and Thursday lodging and Wednesday lunch through Friday lunch

**Commuter Fee:** \$150 includes three morning presentations and daily lunch

**Online Fee:** \$100 includes three morning presentations



## Save the Date!

for these upcoming retreats:

**Digital Detox: An Unplugged Experience (in person)** with Leslie Schwarting, Sept. 27–29

**The Power of Silence: October Silent Directed Retreat (in person)** with Cindy Dunn; Eric Evans; Ann Jackson, PBVM; Leslie Schwarting; & Lucille Winnike, FSPA; Oct. 6–12

**Cultivating Love & Trust in Times of Change Retreat (in person)** with Karen Hering, Oct. 25–27

**Silent Mindfulness Meditation Retreat (in person)** with Chris Klug, Nov. 1–3

**Pathways of Peace: Food as Relationship—Winter Table (in person)** with Christina Campbell & Ann Jackson, PBVM, Nov. 8–9

**The Cup of Our Life Retreat (in person)** with Pastor Amy Eisenmann, Nov. 9–10

**Winter's Wisdom Retreat (in person)** with Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel, Dec. 13–15

**Day of Self Renewal (in person)** Mondays, July 1 & Aug. 12; & Thursdays, July 25 & Aug. 1; 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

**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 meditation, a private guest room, a fresh lunch, and access to the labyrinth and all that Prairiewoods has to offer. (Services may include massage, head and shoulder massage, reflexology, healing touch, spiritual direction, qigong, forest therapy, yoga or chair yoga. Visit [www.Prairiewoods.org](http://www.Prairiewoods.org) for details.) Registration, a nonrefundable/nontransferable deposit of \$50 and your top three service choices are required eight days in advance.

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

**Singing Bowl Prayer (in person)** Mondays, July 1 & Aug. 12, 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 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:** \$10

**Nature & Forest Therapy Experiences (in person)**

**Afternoon Nature & Forest Therapy:** Mondays, July 1 & Aug. 12, 2:30–3:45 p.m.

**Forest Bathing with the Full Moon:** Saturday, July 20, & Monday, Aug. 19, 7–9 p.m.

**Facilitator:** Emelia Sautter

Join certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide Emelia Sautter and the land for a walk with the natural world. Experience Forest Therapy, a sensory-focused practice that invites us to slow down and be present with self and the natural world around us.



According to the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy, “Forest Therapy is a practice that supports health and wellness through guided immersion in forests and other environments to promote the well-being of both people and the land.” This is a trauma informed practice, and all are welcome. This is not exercise or hiking; it is a slow, sensory walk with the land. Registration is required by the previous day.

**Fee:** \$15 for afternoon sessions, \$20 for longer evening sessions

**Going Inward with Sounds & Vibrations (in person)**

Mondays; July 1, July 15, Aug. 5 & Aug. 19; 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:** \$12 per session

**On the Cusp of Change: Preparing for the Journey (Zoom)** Tuesday, July 9, 7–8:30 p.m.

**Facilitator:** Karen Hering

How can we pause to make sense of our changing world and better understand our choices in living with change, whether it's personal or global? This yearlong series of twelve stand-alone online programs and three in-person retreats takes a deeper dive into Karen Hering's book *Trusting Change*, exploring how to engage our memory and imagination when encountering the uncertainties of the present day. On the second Tuesday of each month (except August), Karen will lead an online session of embodied practices, guided reflection and conversation with a specific focus on how to make change more trustworthy. On July 9, we'll talk about preparing for the journey.

**Fee:** \$15

**Soul Care: Creative Arts Grief Support Groups (in person)**

**Family-Centered Soul Care (for children and the adults who support them):** Wednesdays, July 10 & Aug. 14, 5:30–7 p.m.

**Soul Care for Adults:** Wednesdays, July 17 & Aug. 21, 5:30–7 p.m.

**Facilitators:** Jamie Siela, LISW, & Jackie Koster, BSW

*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. These monthly grief groups are open to anyone grieving loss through death. In July, we'll explore imprinting on air dry clay discs to make nature designs. In August, we'll explore paint splattering, as beautiful things can come from messy beginnings. Registration is required one week in advance.

**Fee:** Free includes all art supplies (dinner is provided for the family group)



## **Into the Oneness: Qigong for Energy, Equanimity & Peace (in person)**

**Thursdays, July 11–Aug. 29, 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-Spirit) throughout the body's energy pathways, centers and organs to assist with mental, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing. Class ends with seated meditation, which includes sending healing compassionate intention to others and the planet.

**Fee:** \$12 per session

## **Drum Circle (in person)**

**Saturday, July 13, 6–8 p.m.; & Sunday, Aug. 11, 2–4 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Drum Iowa

Join Drum Iowa and Prairiewoods for a wonderful outdoor drum circle (weather permitting). 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 time. 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)

## **YOLO (Your Other Lunch Option) (in person)**

**Wednesdays, July 17 & Aug. 21, 11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.**

**Facilitators:** Ali Yoka & Derek Doan

Tired of the same old lunch places? Let's renew our bodies and refresh our spirits in a beautiful setting! Join us for YOLO (*Your Other Lunch Option*)—a lunch choice celebrating wholesome, fresh food made from scratch by our chefs. We dine in a community setting with friends we bring with us or new friends we meet over a delicious themed lunch. Check our website for monthly themes. Feel free to arrive at 11:30, and the buffet line opens at noon. Registration is required by the previous Friday.

**Fee:** \$15 per lunch

## **Blood Drive (in person)**

**Wednesday, July 17, 3–5 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** ImpactLife Blood Center

This blood drive is open to all! Giving blood is a great way to help people, including those fighting cancer, undergoing surgery or involved in a trauma. Please join us in supporting those in our community who need this life-saving assistance!

**Fee:** Free

## **Healing Sound Bath & Yogic Sleep (in person)**

**Thursdays, July 25 & Aug. 1, 1:45–2:30 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:** \$10 per session

## **Rock Mandala Painting for the Whole Family (in person)**

**Saturday, Aug. 3, 1–3 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. 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.) This will be a great activity to do as a family before school starts!

**Fee:** \$15 per person includes all supplies



## **Thelen-Benson Christophany Group (hybrid)**

**Wednesday, Aug. 7, 3–4:30 p.m. or 5:15–6:45 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Steve Sovern

Based upon the belief that love is the fundamental energy of evolution, we gather in community, recognizing that we have the opportunity to co-create the universe and participate in the energy of evolution. These groups are formed as spaces of deep relationality with a vision to heal our world and transform lives through the real-world experience of communal reflection, shared friendship and collective spiritual practice based on the insights of Teilhard de Chardin and the authors who interpret and advance his vision.

**Fee:** Free-will offering

## **Harvest Labyrinth Walk (in person)**

**Thursday, Aug. 8, 6–8 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Leslie Wright

Are you seeking clarity during a time of transition? Walk the labyrinth with us!



August and September are often a time of change, harvest and new beginnings. Many find that time in the labyrinth offers a sacred space to allow our minds to relax and open—to ask a question, perhaps to hear something we never have before or to experience and be present to the moment we are in. Walking the labyrinth can ground us in unsettled times. Come join us in the outdoor labyrinth for a chance to slow down, pay attention, and connect mind, body and spirit in a deeper way. We will gather for a brief introduction at 5:45 and begin walking at 6 p.m.

**Fee:** Free

## **Art as a Mindful Way to Connect with Nature (in person)**

**Saturday, Aug. 24, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.**

**Facilitators:** Jacob & Rebecca Lesan

Most people hurry through the woods, counting calories burned. Artists take the slow approach, with bare

feet on ground, sketchbook in hand and an eye ready to enjoy everything around them. Deeply connect with the outdoors through nature journaling in this creative morning spent in the woods.

**Fee:** \$10



## Sweat Lodge (Inipi) Ceremony (in person)

**Saturday, Aug. 24, 4–7 p.m. (setup begins at 2, ceremony starts at 4)**

**Facilitator:** Kerry Batteau

The Sweat Lodge Ceremony pre-dates recorded history and was practiced in some form by every culture in the world. These sweats were held for reasons ranging from relaxation and socialization to healing and purification. Join us for a sweat focused on prayer, purification, recognition and healing. During the ceremony, we sit on the earth in the lodge, a small dome-shaped structure. Heated stones are placed in the center of the lodge and the water pourer, or leader, pours water over the stones to create steam. There are four rounds that include the singing of sacred songs, and after each round the lodge door is opened for more stones to be brought in. *Please note that the lodge is a small enclosure that is dark and extremely hot inside. If you have claustrophobia or any medical conditions that prevent you from going into a sauna, you should not participate in this ceremony.* Please visit our website for safety protocols and to register. You will be asked to sign a release form.

**Fee:** Suggested donation of \$10 to Prairiewoods for materials

## Ongoing Programs

### Metta Yoga (in person)

**Mondays & Thursdays; July 1–Aug. 29 (except July 4); 9:30–10:30 a.m., 10:45–11:45 a.m. (chair yoga) & 5:30–6:30 p.m.**

Experience the healing powers of meditative yoga.

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

### Prairiewoods Knitters & Stitchers (in person)

**second Tuesdays, July 9 & Aug. 13, 9:30–11:30 a.m.; & fourth Wednesdays, July 24 & Aug. 28, 6–8 p.m.**

Practice knitting and stitching as we create items for charity. All are welcome!

**Fee:** Free

### Evening Centering Prayer (in person)

**second & fourth Tuesdays; July 9, July 23, Aug. 13 & Aug. 27; 5:30–7 p.m.**

Practice a contemplative form of prayer to help deepen your relationship with God or Source of All Being.

**Fee:** Free-will offering

### Go Deeper Thursdays (Zoom)

**Thursdays, July 11–Aug. 29, 4–5 p.m.**

Join this online community exploration and deepening of spiritual topics.

**Fee:** Free-will offering

### Men Exploring Faith (hybrid)

**second & fourth Thursdays, Aug. 8 & Aug. 22, 4–5:30 p.m.**

Join with a group of reflective men in honest conversation about life changes. Please note that this group will not meet in July.

**Fee:** Free-will offering

### Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton (Zoom)

**first & third Thursdays; July 18, Aug. 1 & Aug. 15; 7–8:30 p.m.**

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

**Fee:** Free-will offering

## One Participant's Reflections on Evening Centering Prayer

Like many of you, often I'm curious about programming I haven't tried. Last month I leaned in by trying Evening Centering Prayer. With the guidance of Judith Smith, I learned about the roots of centering prayer and practiced on a Tuesday evening at Prairiewoods.

Evening Centering Prayer consists of two 20-minute "sits" in which participants are silent and yet full of intention. Judith explained that we choose a sacred word and/or feeling. These are meant

to embody and invite the presence and action within of God (or Spirit). Judith used *courage*, and I used *breath*. (Don't worry, you don't have to share your word!) Within the sit I would return to *breath* when I felt myself noticing other thoughts or feelings. Toward the end of each sit, Judith would quietly ring a bowl to return our awareness to the room. In *Manifesting God*, Father Thomas Keating writes, "God just is—without any limitation. And the way to connect with this 'Is-ness' is to just be, too."

As a practice, centering prayer is meant to connect each individual to the Source of all Being. Judith recommends the works of Keating as a further resource, as well as the group Contemplative Outreach. In my experience, centering prayer was a reminder of my connection to that Source, and a reminder—within each breath, for just a few minutes—of what it feels like to just be.

—Robert Hogg,  
Prairiewoods Program Assistant

Evening Centering Prayer meets at Prairiewoods on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month from 5:30–7 p.m. Join us!

## New Volunteer Perks

We're gearing up for our busy season, both indoors and out, and we would love to find some new volunteers to help us give great hospitality to our guests and maintain our beautiful grounds and gardens. Beginning in June, any new or current volunteer that works at least a three-hour shift can take a free monthly class of their choice. To fill out a volunteer application please visit [www.prairiwoods.org/volunteer-application](http://www.prairiwoods.org/volunteer-application). Groups are welcome too!

*Our current volunteer needs include:*

### 1. Land Care & Maintenance

**Volunteers:** You'll play an important role in carrying out our sustainability mission on our 70 acres of woodlands and prairie. Work varies by season and according to the weather, but includes trail maintenance, gardening, invasive species removal, harvesting, plowing, mowing, woodworking, and other specific conservation or building projects.

### 2. Hospitality Volunteers:

Front office volunteers play a critical role in carrying out our mission. Our guests come to Prairiwoods for many reasons, including attending a class, meeting or retreat. Your duties will include greeting our guests, checking them in, answering the phone and providing other administrative support as needed. Shifts are predominantly nights and weekends.

**3. Garden Volunteers:** Do you love to garden? We have lots of different gardens here, and our volunteers help us weed, water, harvest produce, and plant vegetables or flowers. Most hours are during the day, but weekend accommodations can be made.

**4. Kitchen Volunteers:** We serve meals to many of our guests and try to make as much as possible from scratch. We would love to have some kitchen volunteers who could help do meal prep or bake deserts or breads. If you love to be in the kitchen, this is the opportunity for you!

Free classes you could take include Yoga, Qigong, Singing Bowl Meditations or Rock Mandala Painting. Please visit our website to find descriptions of each class.

- You must complete your volunteer hours prior to taking the class.
- All volunteers will need to register by phone for the class they're taking, and participation is based on space availability.



## Nature Playscape Welcomes All

It all started in 2022 when Prairiwoods staff saw a presentation by an Iowa BIG student to build a Nature Playscape in the Cedar Rapids area. Iowa BIG is a project-based learning school where students leave their school to collaborate with businesses and nonprofits to build real-life skills and create something they are passionate about. Students conducted thorough research, working with local conservation groups like Backyard Abundance to develop a plan of action, with one of the key goals being to reclaim as many building materials as possible. For the past two school years, Prairiwoods has become a classroom for eight students to construct a mud and water kitchen, music walls, climbing logs, seesaws, chalkboards, table games, a theatre and seating areas for parents.

With the increasing amount of time children spend on screens in their schools and at home leading to diminished attention spans, increased depression, poor grades, higher levels of aggression, obesity and reduced vitamin D intake, the Prairiwoods Nature Playscape is a great structure to combat that epidemic. Former longtime teacher and Prairiwoods Foundress Nancy Hoffman, FSPA, is tickled about the new development on the land and the creative space it offers young children. Prairiwoods invites students, neighbors and the community to come visit and discover the beauty of letting your children explore as they get their hands dirty. The Prairiwoods Nature Playscape is located near the Four Winds Food Forest on the northwest edge of the land.



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



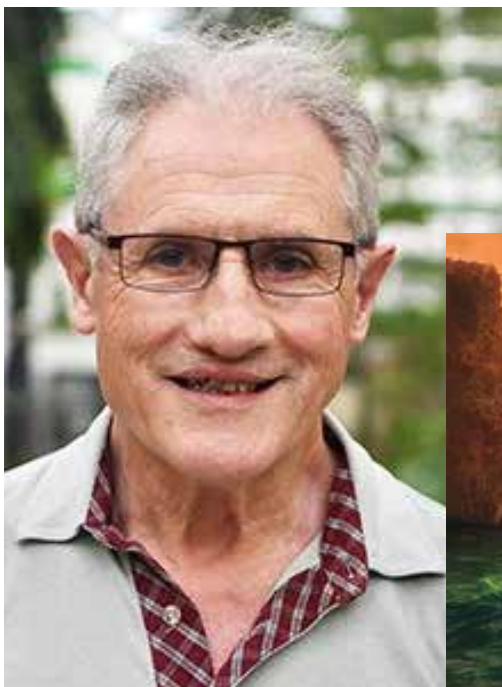
120 E Boyson Rd  
Hiawatha IA 52233

### Help Us Update Our Records

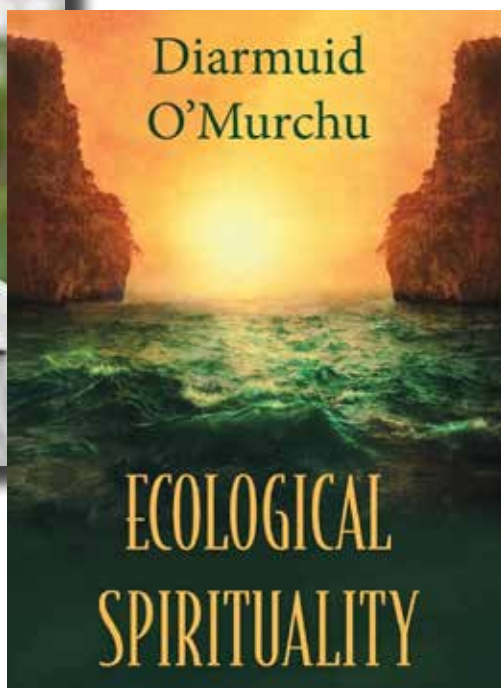
You may send this by mail, email [ecospirit@prairiewoods.org](mailto:ecospirit@prairiewoods.org) or call **319-395-6700**. If mailed, please include this address label.

- 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:



## Diarmuid O'Murchu returns!



Popular Spirituality in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century facilitator Diarmuid O'Murchu will offer a hybrid retreat Sept. 25–27, 9 a.m.–1 p.m. daily.

Together we'll explore ecological spirituality and how our current worldview impacts all of our experiences. Learn about how you can join him on page 7.