

Prairiewoods

January/February 2025

A FRANCISCAN ECOSPIRITUALITY RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER

The Wisdom of Many



An essential principle of ecological spirituality is *multi-disciplinary wisdom*. It is a phrase that sounds academic and not particularly spiritual. Other words we might use for the same idea are *interconnection* and *interdependence*. *It means that the path to flourishing for people and the planet has been named by many voices over thousands of years.* It is not just the product of many scientific disciplines but also many traditions and many generations. It means that everything is our teacher—our elders past and present, plants and animals, and each other.

We have entered a time when we are uncovering the many intersections of wisdom we may have thought were mutually exclusive and impermeable. Each new connection contributes to an ongoing evolutionary becoming—in our physical world but also in our consciousness. And contrary to what you may have been taught, new knowledge does not necessarily make older knowledge irrelevant, instead reinforcing and reaffirming ancient wisdom. I experience this as a beautiful kaleidoscope of perspectives that enliven our understanding of creation, ourselves and Creator.

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I write to you shortly after we have turned our clocks back and the daylight hours are becoming ever shorter. This can be a challenging time for me as daylight shrinks. But I also know that every day brings me closer to the winter solstice, and then each day becomes a journey towards more light. I love that day! And some of my most mystical experiences have involved light in the darkness—a sliver of moon in a darkened sky, a candle shining valiantly in a darkened sanctuary, the white lights on the Christmas tree in my living room when all other lights have been extinguished.

Prairiewoods has taught me to find the light and the promise in this season. Though on the surface it may appear lifeless, dark and bare, now I know that it is an important time of rest and preparation for new life. The joyous burst of spring green is not possible without this transition time. I find beauty in the shape of the tree against the gray winter sky, in the unexpected passage of a deer and in the frosty breath of wind in the woods and prairie.

I must also awaken to the necessity and the hidden potential in the transitions happening personally and communally. These times are dark and full of grief, but I know if I get quiet, rest and listen, I will see the light calling me into the next season. With each step it will grow brighter.

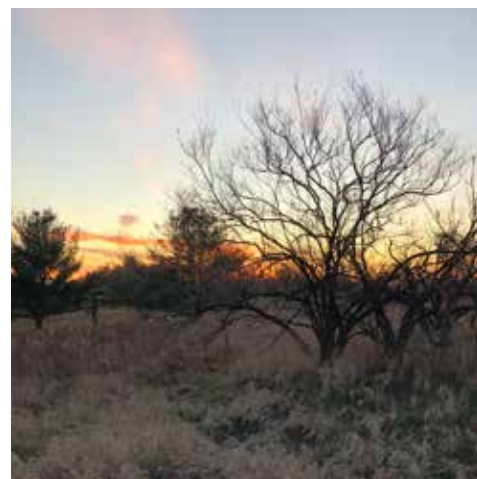
A Hebrew-English Bible translates Proverbs 20:27 as “the human spirit is the lamp of God.” It is at times like these that I must carry my hope like a lamp. Rebecca Solnit says, “Hope locates itself in the premise that we don’t know what will happen and that in the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to act” (*Grounds for Hope*, p. xiv).

So I ask myself (and all of us) what is that spaciousness offering us? We are with God, weaving the fabric of the future in every moment.

What bright color of hope and anticipation shall we add? How shall we cultivate the light in ourselves and others? I am reminded of the Carthage College Christmas concert I attended several years ago. At the end as we sang a final hymn together, voices raised in the darkness of the sanctuary, one by one we passed the light with our candles. A light that began as one small flame became a holy glow, enough to see our way and each other's illumined faces.

Peace and all good,

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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A multi-disciplinary approach is the natural response to our growing awareness of our interconnected and increasingly complex world. This approach sets the stage for creativity and adaptability. It invites us to collaborate just like healthy natural systems.

What have we learned?

Silos, fragmentation and disconnection are not desirable and often harmful. When we view the world in discrete categories, we miss the beauty and the interactions of the whole and we often miss important insights. When we view our world in a binary way and spend our time looking for the one right answer, we often miss important truths. This requires us to unlearn the lessons of the old scientific method that suggests that all of life can be disassembled into individual and self-sufficient parts. It forces us to let go of this notion of the self-sufficient, independent and individual life and lean into the beautiful complexities of relationship. The research of people like Suzanne Simard and Robin Wall Kimmerer have shown us the power of networked living systems that thrive on mutuality and reciprocity. They invite us to reconsider how we might live.

How shall we cultivate healthy systems that are reciprocal and not transactional?

Let us include and transcend as we savor the reemergence and affirmation of ages-old wisdom, particularly about our relationship to all of creation. As we awaken our understanding of kinship versus dominion—our concern and respect for all creation grows. It reveals unexpected paths forward to address the challenges of our time such as the climate crisis, isolation and polarization.

Nurturing our spiritual lives must be a priority. We have believed this, but now research affirms that there are many dimensions to human thriving, and one of them is spirituality. The work of Dr. Lisa Miller (see p. 5) and others has shown us what we have long intuited—a healthy spirit is essential to a healthy life. And in fact, a healthy spiritual life provides powerful protective factors against despair. The practices and community that are part of an intentional spiritual life can help us be more resilient, compassionate and hopeful in a challenging world.

The circles of wisdom close as we learn anew how nature heals us. Forest bathing and time in green spaces have measurable physical effects. Awe is an antidote to despair. Time in nature offers us the opportunity to connect with the ingredients that create the experience of awe and

wonder—vastness and mystery.

“Open our eyes of wonder.” — Yuria Celidwen

Mystery is good. Let us recognize the limits of our human understanding and rational knowing. Let us use our curiosity to examine and reweave our stories about meaning, the nature of reality and our place in it. Let us use eyes of wonder to navigate a non-binary world, where certainty is not our goal.

“In contradiction and paradox you can find truth.”
—Denis Villeneuve

Recognizing the wisdom of many offers all of us the opportunity to reawaken our childlike curiosity. And then let us ask ourselves: What are we called to do? How shall we engage in this life when we recognize our place, as Richard Rohr says, as a beloved one and also part of the many? We are more than passengers in this life.



We do not need to discard what has gone before, but instead weave it forward in a more complex and luminous garment. Ecologically we all belong—the person, the plant, the place. We are woven into the very threads of existence. Wisdom speaks to and within all of us—not just sages in a cave. Follow the questions, not the certainties. This is where the greatest possibilities lie. Live with and explore the mystery. Trust in the evolutionary becoming that reflects God’s ongoing presence and abiding love.

—Leslie Wright

Canticle of the Creatures

Celebrate 800 Years of St. Francis' Canticle of the Creatures

Franciscans worldwide this year are commemorating an 800-year-old prayer that, even in 1225, was a clarion call to protect our common home and live in solidarity with all creation.

Written during a time of personal suffering and illness, the Canticle of the Creatures, one of St. Francis of Assisi's most profound and enduring works, expresses St. Francis' deep connection to God through the natural world. Praising Brother Sun, Sister Moon and all living things, the Canticle radiates humility, gratitude and interconnectedness—values that remain at the heart of Franciscan spirituality.

For the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and their spirituality centers, including Prairiewoods, this anniversary is an opportunity to celebrate and reflect. Throughout 2025, we will host special programs and activities inspired by the Canticle's themes of reverence for creation, care for Earth and living in harmony with one another.

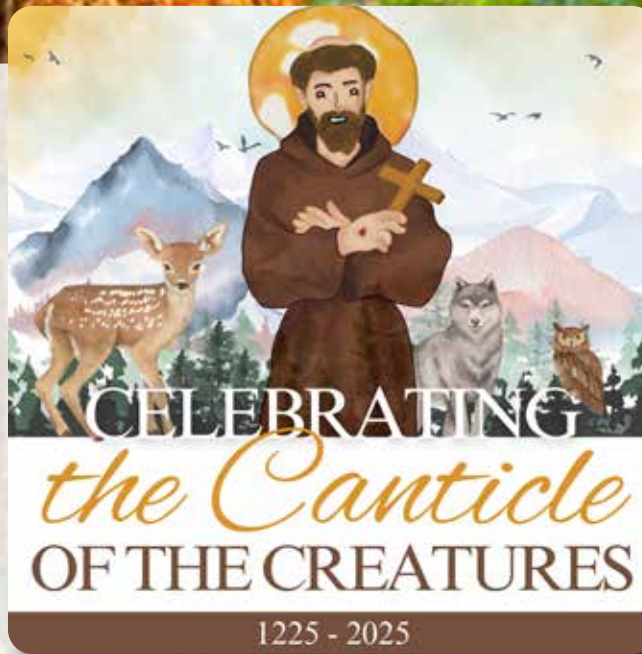
Details about upcoming events and activities will be added throughout the year at fspa.org/centenary. We invite all to join us in this year of remembrance and renewal as we honor St. Francis' timeless message of love and respect for all God's creatures.

Celebrate the Canticle at an Open Mic Night!

Sunday, March 16, 4:30–6 p.m.

Join Prairiewoods in song, dance, art and poetry to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the Canticle of the Creatures. The Canticle has influenced many fields—including art, music, literature, science, math, medicine and geography—which emphasizes Francis' enduring legacy in spirituality and science. Join us for an incredible interdisciplinary afternoon of song, poetry, art and dance to enliven our deepening relationship with and protection of all of Creation. Feel free to bring a piece of your art to share!

Fee: Suggested donation of \$10



Canticle of the Creatures

by St. Francis of Assisi, 1225

Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord,
All praise is Yours, all glory, all honour and all blessings.
To you alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your Name.

Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,

Of You Most High, he bears the likeness.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
In the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.

Praised be You, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
And fair and stormy, all weather's moods,
by which You cherish all that You have made.

Praised be You my Lord through Sister Water,
So useful, humble, precious and pure.

Praised be You my Lord through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.

Praised be You my Lord through our Sister,
Mother Earth
who sustains and governs us,
producing varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.

Praise be You my Lord through those who grant pardon for love of You and bear sickness and trial.
Blessed are those who endure in peace,
By You Most High, they will be crowned.

Praised be You, my Lord through Sister Death,
from whom no-one living can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin!
Blessed are they She finds doing Your Will.
No second death can do them harm.
Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks,
And serve Him with great humility.





SPIRITUALITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY

*The Awakened Brain:
The New Science of Spirituality &
Our Quest for an Inspired Life*

with researcher & author *Lisa Miller, PhD*

Monday, May 5, & Tuesday, May 6

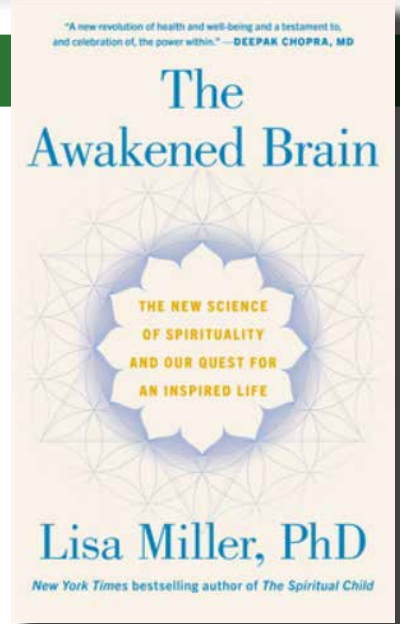
*at First Lutheran Church
(1000 Third Avenue SE in Cedar Rapids)*

Save the Date!

With the continued awareness that mental health can be supported through many different modalities, the work of Lisa Miller, PhD, has captured our attention. You are invited to learn from one of the nation's leading neuroscience researchers about the impact that spirituality can have on our mental wellbeing. This year's *Spirituality in the 21st Century* event will combine cutting-edge science with direct tools for application for people from all walks of life.

Dr. Lisa Miller is a professor of clinical psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University. She is the founder and director of the Spirituality Mind Body Institute, the first Ivy League graduate program in spirituality and psychology. For more than a decade, she has held joint appointments in the Department of Psychiatry at Columbia University Medical School. Dr. Miller has worked closely with the United States Army, assisting them in educating soldiers about the importance of spiritual fitness. Author of the New York Times best-selling book *The Spiritual Child*, Dr. Miller released a second evidence-based book based on her research in 2021 called *The Awakened Brain: The New Science of Spirituality and Our Quest for an Inspired Life*.

Registration for this event will open soon at
www.Prairiewoods.org/Spirituality-in-the-21st-Century



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For more information or to register, visit www.Prairiewoods.org or call 319-395-6700.

Living with Intention Retreat (in person) Friday, Jan. 3, 6 p.m.–Sunday, Jan. 5, 1 p.m. (Choose the length of retreat that works best for you!)

Facilitator: Leslie Schwarting

Oscar Wilde wrote, "To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all." How are you showing up in this life? Are you existing, or are you really living? Join us as



your schedule allows. We will discuss living with intention on Friday evening and participate in a mindfulness group practice. After breakfast on Saturday, a body movement activity will lead us into a short exploration of our mindset and heart's calling in the new year. Rest and quiet will be plentiful on Saturday afternoon, with an optional centering prayer activity. On Saturday evening, we will walk the indoor labyrinth while contemplating our intentions for 2025. Sunday morning will greet us with a beading practice in which we will create an intention catcher as a keepsake of our intentions for the year ahead. We intend for this retreat to give you dedicated time to prepare for and enter into 2025 with clarity and peace.

Friday–Sunday Fee: \$265 includes sessions, Friday and Saturday lodging, and Saturday breakfast through Sunday lunch

Friday–Sunday Commuter Fee: \$195 includes sessions, Saturday lunch and dinner, and Sunday lunch

Friday–Saturday Fee: \$225 includes Friday and Saturday sessions, Friday lodging, and Saturday breakfast and lunch

Friday–Saturday Commuter Fee: \$175 includes Friday and Saturday sessions and Saturday lunch

Clear is Kind: A Retreat for End of Life Planning (in person)

Friday, Jan. 17, 6:30 p.m.–Saturday, Jan. 18, 3 p.m.

Facilitators: Gerontologist & end-of-life guide Mary McCall, PhD, & death doula Annie Brownsberger & Sarah Van Cleve

Come for a weekend of honest, open-hearted conversation on preparing for the end of life. This retreat will cover multiple facets of the death and dying process including:

- Practical advanced-care planning tools for medical and end-of-life choices
- Strategies for dealing with Anticipatory Grief in healthy ways

- Opportunities to explore one's wishes, values and vision of end-of-life to include the creation of a Vigil Plan
- Communication tools for discussing values around medical choices, illness and death
- Dedicated time for reflections through meditation and sound healing, as well as open, honest conversations about our mortality or the mortality of someone we love



This retreat will be helpful to those supporting elderly family members or friends or those seeking guidance in their own journey. Families are welcome!

Fee: \$195 includes sessions, Friday lodging, and Saturday breakfast and lunch

Commuter Fee: \$95 includes sessions and Saturday lunch

Pathways of Peace: Food as Relationship Retreat (in person)

Friday, Jan. 24, 6:30 p.m.–Sunday, Jan. 26, 1 p.m.

Facilitators: Christina Campbell & Ann Jackson, PBVM

Explore an innovative approach to deepening your relationship with food, your connection with the land, and co-creating a learning community to promote health and wellbeing for all!

Michael Pollan asks, "What would happen ... if we were to start thinking about food as less of a thing and more of a relationship?" Peace with food will be the center of our table. Join a learning community to deepen our connection to food and to the land through our food choices. We'll engage the Wheel of Food Peace Transformation, a creative approach developed to foster new ways of relating to food and land. Drawing from meditative practices, spiritual and ecological resources, physiology, and nutrition, we'll consider how the food we choose to eat connects us to all life forms. We will create a personal Food Peace action plan to cultivate peace for self, others and all of creation. We are invited to reconvene at seasonal tables in 2025



The Awakened Brain



Book Review for "The Awakened Brain: The New Science of Spirituality & Our Quest for an Inspired Life" by Lisa Miller, PhD

Thanks in part to Prairiewoods' annual Spirituality in the 21st Century events, many of us are accustomed to turning our gaze outward to understand the developing relationship between science and spirituality through the lens of the new cosmology. In her book *The Awakened Brain: The New Science of Spirituality & Our Quest for an Inspired Life*, Dr. Lisa Miller invites us to turn that gaze around, to turn it inward,

through consideration of our very human neurophysiology. We are each born with the capacity to be spiritual beings. Dr.

Miller shows us how that spiritual capacity interacts with and has the potential to improve our ability to cope, to think things through, to engage more deeply with the world around us. As we walk with her on her own personal journey of discovery throughout the book, we come to understand the impact spiritual experiences and practices have on our brains. We—who have long experience with spirituality—come away with an understanding of why and how "things just go better" when we attend to and nurture that essential part of our daily lives.

We look forward to seeing you at Spirituality in the 21st Century May 5 and 6! Registration details will be available soon.

to learn to access a variety of foods, noting how our choices reconnect and ground us to others and to the land.

Continue the Pathways to Peace: Food as Relationship journey throughout 2025 in spring (March 21–22), summer (June 27–28), fall (Sept. 5–6) and winter (Dec. 13).

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

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

Pause. Rest. Be. Mid-Winter Silent Directed Retreat (in person)

Friday, Jan. 31, 5 p.m.–Sunday, Feb. 2, 1 p.m.

Facilitator: Ann Jackson, PBVM

Winter offers a grand invitation to pause, rest and be with all that's stirring within us. Pausing to sense stillness and silence often surfaces the wisdom of the body. We will gather a few times to listen to the wisdom of silence together and to learn mindful embodiment practices to incorporate into our daily rhythms. Between those few brief group opportunities will be time for us to individually practice pausing, resting and being. You may choose to participate in one or two sessions of spiritual direction and can also receive massage, healing touch or reflexology. This retreat is inspired by Octavia F. Raheem's brilliant offering *Pause Rest Be: Stillness Practices for Courage in Times of Change*.

Fee: \$255 includes mindfulness meditation sessions, Friday and Saturday lodging, and Saturday breakfast through Sunday lunch

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



Earth, Body, Mind & Spirit Retreat (in person)

Saturday, Feb. 15, 9 a.m.–Sunday, Feb. 16, 5 p.m.

Facilitator: Shawn Westbrook

Engage in energizing and restorative yoga sessions, find our anchor through guided mindfulness and silent meditation, and savor immersive nature walks with other like-minded individuals. We will explore how we express our individuation within a community and become aware of where our shadow side is present and how to integrate it. This retreat offers a unique blend of movement, mindfulness, integration work and a profound connection to the natural world. Whether you're seeking physical strength, emotional balance or spiritual insight, this retreat will



offer an opportunity to reconnect with the body, mind and spirit to reveal our own unique inner and outer vibrance.

Fee: \$195 includes sessions, Saturday lodging, and Saturday breakfast through Sunday lunch

Commuter Fee: \$120 includes sessions and Saturday and Sunday lunch

Awakening Awareness of Energy Retreat (in person)

Friday, Feb. 21, 6:30 p.m.–Sunday, Feb. 23, 1 p.m.

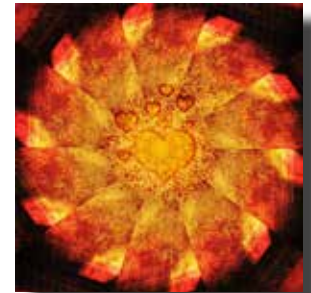
Facilitators: Tammy Bayer & Ann Jackson, PBVM

We host seven different energy centers in our bodies. Scientific research and some spiritual traditions cite that each energy center corresponds to a stage of life. This experiential retreat will invite women of all ages to deeper understanding of the body's energies and engage a variety of meditative practices to integrate the mind, body and spirit for healing and wholeness.

Utilizing wisdom from many resources, including *The 7 Healing Chakras: Unlocking Your Body's Energy Centers* by Brenda Davies, MD, we hope to move through past experiences to rest in the present and animate possibility.

Fee: \$255 includes sessions, lodging, and Saturday breakfast through Sunday lunch

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



Japanese Art of Kintsugi: Embracing Our Imperfections with Grace & Courage Retreat (in person)

Friday, Feb. 28, 7 p.m.–Saturday, March 1, 4 p.m.

Facilitators: Jean Pagliaro & Julie Connelly

The Japanese art of Kintsugi takes broken pottery and repairs the cracks with gold. These restored bowls, formerly considered worthless, become treasured items of great worth and beauty. We will use this art as a symbol of our spiritual life. Our wounds and failures can easily harden into shame and regret. Yet, if we look at our lives through the eyes of grace and compassion, our painful experiences can be transformed into great sources of inspiration, beauty and wisdom. This retreat will include time for creative expression, presentation, individual reflection and small-group processing.

Fee: \$225 includes sessions, art supplies, Friday lodging, and Saturday breakfast and lunch

Commuter Fee: \$205 includes sessions, art supplies and Saturday lunch



January–June 2025 Retreat Brochure Available!

To help you prepare for the year ahead, Prairiewoods has created a six-month Retreat Brochure with details on retreats we will host January–June 2025. To download a printable copy, visit www.Prairiewoods.org/Group-Retreats. If you would like us to mail you a copy, please send your address to alewis@prairiewoods.org.

Save the Date!

The Nature of Real Connection: Five Lessons from the Woods Retreat (in person) with Sam Rahberg, March 14–16

Pathways of Peace: Food as Relationship Spring Table Retreat (in person) with Christina Campbell & Ann Jackson, PBVM, March 21–22

Discovering the Spiritual Wisdom of Trees Retreat (in person) with Leah Rampy, PhD, March 28–30

Day of Self Renewal (in person)
Thursdays, Jan. 2 & Feb. 6; &
Mondays, Jan. 13 & Feb. 10;
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.) 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)

Terra Divina: A Spiritual Practice of Engaging with Earth (in person)
Sundays, Jan. 5 & Feb. 9, 3–4:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Stephanie Heifner

Join us for a new monthly gathering to practice terra divina and tune into the seasons. Like lectio divina is a sacred reading of text, terra divina is a sacred reading of the earth—the “Book of Creation.” With an attitude of wonder and with all of our senses, we’ll engage in conversation with nature. We begin with a brief conversation, sharing in learning about the season we are in. We’ll learn the steps of terra divina and then wander independently as we practice for about 40 minutes. We conclude by gathering as a group, sharing bread and herbal tea, and talking about our experiences.

Fee: \$15

Sacred Earth Sacred Soul (Zoom)
Mondays; Jan. 6, Jan. 20, Feb. 3, Feb. 17, March 3 & March 17; 3–4:30 p.m.
Facilitator: Ellen Bruckner

Journey with John Phillip Newell and a small group of spiritual travelers through centuries of Celtic wisdom. In the book *Sacred Earth Sacred Soul*, Newell opens the lives and spiritual teachings of great prophetic figures including Brigid of Kildare, Pelagius, John Muir and Teilhard de Chardin for us as companions on our own spiritual quest. Each life explored expands our own soul’s relationship with Spirit and continues to deepen our relationships with each other and with this world today. The book is required for the series.

Fee: \$40 for six-part series

Thelen-Benson Christophany Group (Zoom)
Wednesdays, Jan. 8 & Feb. 12, 6–7:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Steve Sovern

What is the future of our planetary spirit? What is our role in the religion of the future? This Christophany Group engages in communal reflection on the insights of Teilhard de Chardin, Ilia Delio, and like-minded scientists and theologians. It meets virtually to discuss challenging books, articles, podcasts, and webinars offered by the Center for Christogenesis and other resources. It is said that an evolving faith is simply faith that is adapting in order to survive.

Fee: Free-will offering

Nature & Forest Therapy Experiences (in person)
Forest Bathing with the Wolf Moon:
 Sunday, Jan. 12, 4–6 p.m.

Nature & Forest Therapy Experience: Mondays, Jan. 13 & Feb. 10, 2:30–3:45 p.m.

Forest Bathing with the Snow Moon: Wednesday, Feb. 12, 4–6 p.m.

Facilitator: Emelia Sautter

Join 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, this 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: \$25 for longer moon walks, \$20 for shorter experiences

Awaken Your Creativity through Watercolor (in person)
Tuesdays, Jan. 14 & Feb. 18,
9:30–11:30 a.m.

Facilitator: Barb Thompson

Join hands-on, beginner’s painting workshops that include a tracing sheet, step-by-step instructions and an example to reference as we paint, making them perfect for beginners. Classes start with a few watercolor exercises and a demonstration of the project. Then we will be invited to work at our own pace. In January, we’ll paint a pine bough and some pinecones. In February, we’ll focus on violets, the birth flower of the

month. This is recommended for ages 8–100. Simply bring a positive attitude, ready to learn a new skill!

Fee: \$50 per session includes all art supplies



YOLO (Your Other Lunch Option) (in person)

Wednesdays, Jan. 15 & Feb. 19,
11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

Facilitators: Ali Yoka, Derek Doan & Brenda Horn

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. We dine in a community setting with friends we bring with us or new friends we meet over a delicious themed lunch. Registration is required by the previous Friday.

Fee: \$15 per lunch

Native-Style Flute Circle (in person)

Thursdays, Jan. 16 & Feb. 13, 6–8 p.m.
Facilitators: Horizons Flute Store & School (Jonny Lipford & Friends)

Join a friendly Native American-style flute circle that’s open to all. Whether you’re a seasoned player or just curious, this is a great chance to learn and share in a relaxed setting. Bring your own flute or borrow one of ours—we’ll even have some for sale if you’d like to keep the experience going. Spectators are welcome, and you’ll join the music-making before you know it. No need to sign up—just drop by and enjoy the music and community spirit!

Fee: Suggested donation of \$10 per session

Write Home: Connecting with Source, Self & Place on the Open Page (in person)

Saturdays; Jan. 18, Feb. 15, March 8,
April 12 & May 17; 9:30 a.m.–1 p.m.
Facilitator: Cheryl Conklin

When we settle in and open to personal writing, we invite what Christina Baldwin calls “an available intelligence that is greater than we think we have.” Some might say we hear the voice of our soul or a whisper from the Source of All Being. In this five-part series, we’ll discover that conscious breath, open pages and ready hands are tangible, accessible ways into spiritual practice. Connecting silence to

writing and writing to listening, we can become scribes and witnesses to the divine unfolding in, with and around us.
Fee: \$175 for five-part series includes lunch

Grief Circle Series (in person)
Wednesdays; Jan. 22, Feb. 26, March 26, April 23 & May 28; 10 a.m.–12 p.m., plus lunch
Facilitators: Leslie Schwarting & Ian Montgomery

Often, we feel alone in our grieving process, as our culture encourages us to simply move on. In this series, we will be invited to talk about our thoughts, feelings and loss with others. Sometimes those closest to us, while well-intentioned, may not fully understand our grief. The support of others can bring a great deal of comfort and healing. To build trust in our work together, please commit to attending the majority of sessions; the first session is required.
Fee: \$75 for five-part series includes lunch (or free-will offering without lunch)

An Unplugged Evening at Prairiewoods (in person)
Thursdays, Jan. 23 & Feb. 20, 4–8 p.m.
Facilitator: Leslie Schwarting

Leave your devices behind and swap screen time for real-time connection with others. This is an unstructured time for you to unwind, meet like-minded people, catch up on hobbies like knitting or needlework, and be in community with others. Games, books, mandala coloring and other fun things to do together will be available. Or bring a book and simply be in the presence of others! Come and go as you please, as there will not be a formal program.
Fee: \$5 (à la carte dinner and snack options will be available for purchase)

Stories from the Border: One Traveler's Tales from a Place of Migration (hybrid)
Tuesday, Jan. 28, 6–7 p.m.
Facilitator: Andi Lewis

Pope Francis recently said, "Every encounter with people on the move as migrants or refugees is an encounter with Christ." He calls on us to encounter migrants with a welcoming presence and a spirit of solidarity. If you feel called to learn more about the experiences of people migrating into the United States and how you can stand with them, we invite you to a brief presentation. Prairiewoods Marketing Coordinator Andi Lewis and five other women recently spent nine days at the US/

Mexico border to better understand the experiences of migrants coming into the United States. They spoke with migrants, aid workers, border patrol agents, ranchers and environmentalists—all with different and very nuanced views on immigration. Come to Prairiewoods or join us via Zoom as we talk about immigration and learn more from Andi's experiences.
Fee: Instead of a fee, we invite you to donate to the Kino Border Initiative

Labyrinth Walk (in person)
Sunday, Feb. 2, 2–4 p.m.
Facilitator: Leslie Wright

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, we travel 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. Come walk the indoor labyrinth with us to center yourself. 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.
Fee: Free-will offering



Enneagram Workshop Series: Explore Your True Self & Notice Today (in person)
Tuesdays, Feb. 11–March 11, 6–8 p.m.
Facilitator: Michael Beckmann

Discover the profound insights of the Enneagram, a tool for self-discovery and personal growth. Throughout the five-week workshop, prepare to better understand your unique personality, motivations and growth opportunities. Whether you are new to the Enneagram or have some experience with it, our workshop will enhance your understanding and provide practical

applications in your daily life. We will explore the nine core types, their wings and how they interconnect, equipping you to navigate your own personality with greater insight. By the end of this series, you will be better prepared to embrace your strengths, address your challenges and lead a more fulfilling life. Join us on this journey of self-awareness and transformation.
Fee: \$100 for five-week series

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) (in person)
Information Sessions: Tuesday, Feb. 11, or Thursday, Feb. 20, 7–8 p.m. (Zoom)
Eight-Week Series: Mondays, March 3–April 21, 5:30–8 p.m.
Retreat Day: Sunday, April 13, 9 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
Facilitator: Chris Klug

Mindfulness is the power of mind to be deeply aware of what's happening—without commentary or interference. Research reveals numerous benefits to the nervous system, emotions and general wellbeing. This series cultivates the skill of mindfulness through formal meditation practices and informal integrative practices. This series consists of a two-and-a-half-hour class each week for eight weeks with one extended six-and-a-half-hour class. To participate, please attend a free information session.
Fee: \$400 for the eight-week series (*Those working in the human service field may register for just \$100!*)

Micro-Retreat: Intention & Purpose—Let's Get Clear in the New Year! (in person)
Tuesday, Feb. 18, 5:30–8 p.m.
Facilitator: Leslie Schwarting

Questions of purpose and meaning percolate in different seasons of life. Feelings of longing exist. Why are we still determining or longing for something? Join other seekers for an evening of prayer, mindfulness exercises and creativity to take a step closer to answering the question: "What is my purpose?" or "Why am I here?" Let's gather to explore how nurturing our spirituality is an imperative component to answering these questions.
Fee: \$35 includes dinner

LovingKindness Meditation Practice (in person)
Fridays, Feb. 21 & March 8, 10–11:30 a.m.
Facilitator: Suzanne Rubenbauer, FSPA
 LovingKindness meditation offers a

daily practice to assist us in being compassionate to ourselves, others and all of creation. Fostering compassion and kindness instead of judgment, anxiety and fearful reaction, this short daily practice can assist us in creating a world environment

that brings forth compassion and creative life-giving choices. This program, offered in February and again in March, includes presentation, practice and discussion.
Fee: \$10

Ongoing Programs

Metta Yoga (in person)

Mondays & Thursdays; Jan. 2–Feb. 27; 9:30–10:30 a.m. (gentle yoga) & 10:45–11:45 a.m. (chair yoga)

Facilitator: Heather English

Experience the healing powers of meditative yoga from the spiritual environment of Prairiewoods.

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

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

Thursdays, Jan. 2 & Feb. 6, 12:45–1:35 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

This gentle class involves healing energy and movement, breath work, visualization, acupressure and seated practice.

Fee: \$12

Healing Sound Bath & Yogic Sleep (in person)

Thursdays, Jan. 2 & Feb. 6, 1:45–2:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

Rebalance mind, body and spirit through the soothing power of healing sound and vibration via singing bowls.

Fee: \$10

Go Deeper Thursdays (Zoom)

Thursdays, Jan. 2–Feb. 27, 4–5 p.m.

Facilitator: Ellen Bruckner

Join this online community exploration and deepening of spiritual topics.

Fee: Free-will offering

Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton (Zoom) first & third Thursdays; Jan. 2, Jan. 16, Feb. 6 & Feb. 20; 7–8:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Carole Butz

Slowly explore *New Seeds of Contemplation*, a beloved book by Thomas Merton, one of the great spiritual leaders of our time.

Fee: Free-will offering

Mindfulness at Prairiewoods (MAP) (in person)

Mondays, Jan. 6–Feb. 24, 6:30–7:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Ian Montgomery

Join a weekly gathering of meditators who share the simple goal of sitting together to meditate in silence.

Fee: Suggested donation of \$5

Going Inward with Sounds & Vibrations (in person) first & third Mondays; Jan. 6, Jan. 20, Feb. 3 & Feb. 17; 6:30–7:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

Experience sound, stillness, playfulness and relaxation through the vibrations of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls.

Fee: \$12 per session

Men Exploring Faith (in person)

second & fourth Thursdays; Jan. 9, Jan. 23, Feb. 13 & Feb. 27; 4–5:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Linzy Martin

Join with a group of reflective men in honest conversation about life changes.

Fee: Free-will offering

Sweat Lodge (Inipi) Ceremony (in person)

Saturdays, Jan. 11 & Feb. 8, 4–7 p.m. (setup begins at 2:30, ceremony starts at 4)

Facilitator: Kerry Batteau

Join us for a traditional ceremony focused on prayer, purification, recognition and healing in which we sit in a lodge around heated stones.

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

Singing Bowl Prayer (in person)

second Mondays, Jan. 13 & Feb. 10, 12:45–1:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

Let the resonant sounds of singing bowls relax the body and create a pathway for clearer connection with the divine.

Fee: \$10

Prairiewoods Knitters & Stitchers (in person)

second Tuesdays, Jan. 14 & Feb. 11, 9:30–11:30 a.m.; & fourth Wednesdays, Jan. 22 & Feb. 26, 6–8 p.m.

Facilitators: participants

Practice knitting and stitching as we create items for charity.

Fee: Free

Evening Centering Prayer (in person)

second & fourth Tuesdays; Jan. 14, Jan. 28, Feb. 11 & Feb. 25; 5:30–7 p.m.

Facilitator: Judith Smith

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

Fee: Free-will offering

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

For Adults: Wednesdays, Jan. 15 & Feb. 19, 5:30–7 p.m.

For Children and the Adults Who Support Them:

Wednesdays, Jan. 22 & Feb. 12, 5:30–7 p.m.

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

Take time to connect with others in grief and engage the creative spark in monthly grief groups.

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

Drum Circle (in person)

Sundays, Jan. 19 & Feb. 16, 2–4 p.m.

Facilitator: Drum Iowa

Come for a lively drum circle—we'll have you drumming in no time!

Fee: Suggested donation of \$10 (but this is free for all to enjoy)

Lessons from the Land

When the temperatures drop, the number of hours of daylight shortens and a tree's sugar intake is reduced, the leaves shine the most. We all marvel in the beauty of brilliant oranges, deep reds and bright yellow hues that the trees have been hiding under shades of green the entire season. Something about the changing of nature is awe-inspiring, filling us with peace, wonder and hope. Some of us even travel across state lines to experience it! Now our deciduous tree friends stand naked with only twigs and buds to show. That is if they're not the oaks that have adapted to hold their leaves longer to protect their buds from frost and foraging—a process known in botany terms as *marcescence*. Inevitably they will fall and decay and give back to the soil in which their roots grow, living out their regenerative cycle. As poet Robert Frost beautifully wrote, "Nothing gold can stay."

The leaves may have fallen, but the sacred land appears rejuvenated and alive after taking in the much-needed fall rain, giving roots a good drink before winter. Tree roots will continue to absorb water in the winter months, while conifers lose water through transpiration from their needles, so it is important for them to stock up going into winter. Dry Creek is once again as high as it was in the spring months, and the ducks are paying short visits as they migrate through, proving that animals will always go where there is water. We take notice of more hawks soaring above in the breezing fall updrafts, deer rubbing on young trees and invasive species still holding their leaves. The birds and butterflies have migrated south, the squirrels are well fed and stocked with their winter rations. Bees and snakes (yes,



they are abundant!) are in their underground nests, and you yourself may be taking time to rest and recuperate from the long (or short) year past.

The gifts of energy and healing that our land provides are plentiful. What did you receive from Mother Earth this year? Perhaps fertile soil to grow your garden. Maybe you relaxed in the shade or stood in a cleansing spring rain. Perhaps you planted a tree to remember a loved one or removed that pesky invasive plant to make room for a native. As you take time to rest and practice dormancy with the trees, please be reminded to take in the beauty of a snow-covered pine and breathe in the crisp cold air. Winter can be a wonderful time to study trees—from their bark and buds to their structure and the nature in which they thrive. We can all find growth from what the land teaches us. Use this winter season to reflect on your time spent in nature. Is there more you want to do next year? Grow something from seed, plant that pocket prairie, collect seeds, journal, make the jam from berries or pie from the apple tree? Make those plans!

With the help of our foundresses, staff and volunteers, we have cultivated a strong relationship with the land around us this year. In planting over 500 native trees and plants to set root, burning prairies that thrive in the spring rain, growing produce to feed the hungry, and building community through friendship and sustainable practices—the land has enriched our spirits. We are thankful for your partnership and hopeful for a new year's growth ahead. We hope to see you on the trails, deepening your spirituality by way of ecology. Finding peace in nature.

Our Guests Say It Best!

Here are a few comments from recent Prairiewoods guests about their time with the land:

"These grounds pulse with Indigenous spirituality. We are all One. Everything is Sacred."

—Diane F., Silent Directed Retreat participant

"Thank you! This is absolutely heaven on earth. The stewardship, love and care for the grounds and overall

space is truly a blessing. This is my second time at this retreat. Each time has been full of clarity—for me and my purpose here in this physical world. I absolutely LOVE the outdoor space. I love being in nature, being warmed in the sun—being one with it all."

—Jodi I., Silent Directed Retreat participant

"I love walking the grounds especially the woods. I feel an immediate sense of peace the minute I turn into Prairiewoods."

—private retreatant

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.



Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center
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- Please send your mailings electronically to _____.
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Are you on social media? Find "Prairiewoods FSC" on:



In a poem sometimes attributed to St. Francis, we are called to find hope in the midst of despair:

"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy."

*May you find deep, abiding peace
in your soul and in our world
in the coming year.*