

May/June 2025

# Prairiewoods

A FRANCISCAN ECOSPIRITUALITY RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER



*Building Bridges to Unity in Diversity*

For the last year, we have been exploring six important principles that are central to an ecological spirituality. Principles that are supported by science as well as our own experience. We have talked about the Universe Story, transcending dualism, revisiting a sense of oneness, multi-disciplinary wisdom and moving from dominion to kinship. The sixth principle is this: *diversity is the very heart of wholeness and wellbeing.* Just as a rainbow of food creates a healthy body and an orchestra with many instruments creates beautiful music, a woodland full of diverse plant and animal life creates a thriving eco-system. Diversity is desirable, and diversity can create challenges. It is not optional; it simply exists. The goal is not simply to acknowledge diversity but instead to celebrate it, cultivate it and find solidarity in it.

*"Unity in diversity' describes a state of togetherness or harmony achieved while acknowledging and valuing individual differences, encompassing a range of cultures, beliefs and backgrounds."*

—Wikipedia

We are part of one whole, connected to each other and to all the rest of creation. We can find this place of grace called *unity in diversity* when we remember what Thomas Berry has written:

*"The deep Mystery of the Divine is revealed in every being, but in a supreme manner within the comprehensive unity of the whole."*

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It seems as though we humans have forgotten how to be in healthy relationship with one other. And yet it is in relationship that we thrive. Seeking inspiration I happened upon this definition of spirituality from physicians studying the role of spirituality in human wellbeing:

*"Spirituality is the aspect of humanity that refers to the way individuals seek and express meaning and purpose and the way they experience their connectedness to the moment, to self, to others, to nature, and to the significant or sacred."*

—David Addiss, MD, MPH,  
in *Journal of Medical Humanities*, 2018

Once again I am reminded that our healthy spirituality heals, unites and helps us to be resilient. So in times like these what is needed from a spirituality center like Prairiewoods?

First, help create new stories. Spirituality is about our stories and our experience. One story that is essential is the story of our interconnectedness. There is a myth of the heroic individual life that is harming all of us. Here we offer innumerable opportunities to experience the truth of our interdependence and our deep desire for connection. We must come together to examine our stories and create new ones together.

We will need to build our resilience to live in a world of complex truths and hold conflict that is generative. Complexity, paradox, tension are sisters. Tension can be and often is the doorway to transformation. Transformation happens in the turbulent space between what is and what could be. But we must stay in it.

Second, be relentless in building healing bridges to belonging. John A. Powell describes the difference between breaking and bridging:

*"Across our communities, regions, states, we are witnessing increased anxiety, much of it related to an increase in a perceived 'Other.' ... Tapping into it can take us in two directions: towards breaking where we turn inward, only to what we know and who we know. This path leads ultimately to a politics of isolation. The other direction is bridging, where we turn outwardly to connect and explicitly work with other groups and seek ways to build common ground. This path ultimately takes us towards belonging and empathy."*

At Prairiewoods, we believe in a world where all belong. We honor everyone as part of the rich fabric of life and work towards a future that fosters empathy, mutuality and reciprocity. This is the heart of our ecological spirituality. 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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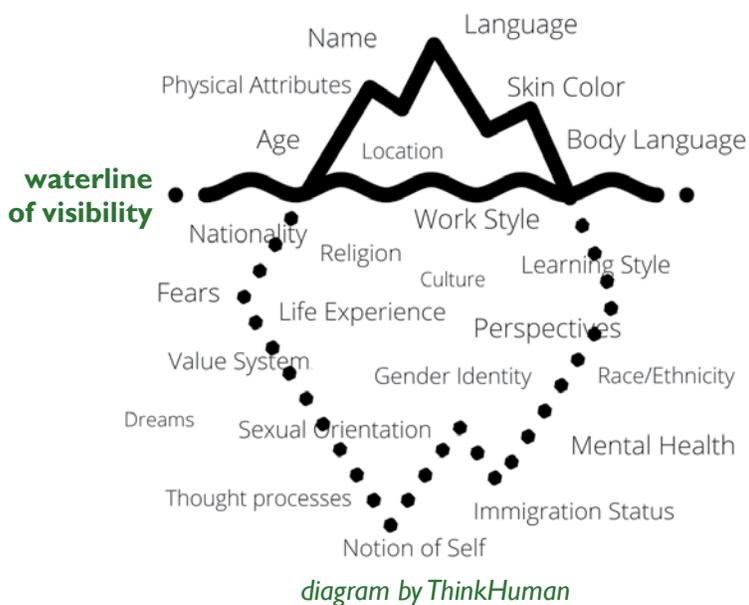


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## How shall we live into this truth?

First, let's widen our lens. Often when we speak about diversity we are really speaking about race or gender identity. But let's consider all the ways that we experience diversity. Each of us brings a unique constellation of characteristics and identities. This creates innumerable opportunities to connect and build relationships. Yet the data shows that we are increasingly isolated into one-dimensional bubbles. Couple that with our American myth of the heroic individual and we have created the recipe for isolation and fear.

## IDENTITY ICEBERG



## How do we contribute to disunity?

When we experience the unknown and the uncertain, we often experience fear. When we are afraid, we seek safety—in the known and predictable. In times like these when so much seems unpredictable, it is easy to stay with the comfortable—the people we know, the places we know, the stories we have always heard.

When we reject the value of diversity we begin to identify those who are "other than us" as separate, often less valuable or important than we are. We create the binary universe of us and them. As my new friend Rector John Greve stated so clearly the other day— "When it is 'them,' we make laws and rules. When it is 'us,' we find solutions."

## How shall we foster unity?

First, let's grow our capacity for the binding agents of love and compassion. Let us actively see points of connection through shared experience and shared concerns. Then build our resilience so that we are able to live into the tension that is inherent in diverse communities.

Be curious and seek to explore. Recognize that all identities and how we view them are socially constructed. They are often built on stories, generalizations and stereotypes. We (and most often the dominant group) define the value of an identity. Is it desirable or do we attach a stigma? Do we use it to create boundaries and walls? Instead, recognize the value of mutuality and reciprocity as an antidote to fear.

Do this ... choose to wonder, listen to a story, build a bridge, practice loving kindness.

## Here are four possibilities to consider:

1. John A. Powell encourages us to:

"Extend our attention and build connections across boundaries of difference. The heart of bridging is to listen to and learn from and about the person perceived as different or even as 'the other.' Hear their story not to confirm their facts or perspective but to affirm their humanity. Centering stories and narratives and widening our circle of concern. You don't need to give up your identity. Increasing empathy, compassion and common ground erases lines drawn between groups on the basis of fear."

2. Valerie Kaur, a Sikh civil right activist, encourages us:

"Seeing no stranger begins in wonder. It is to look upon the face of anyone and choose to say: You are a part of me I do not yet know. Wonder is the wellspring for love. Who we wonder about determines whose stories we hear and whose joy and pain we share ... When a critical mass of people come together to wonder about one another, grieve with one another, and fight with and for one another, we begin to build the solidarity needed for collective liberation and transformation—a solidarity rooted in love."

## Engage in deep listening

3. David Brooks, in his book *How to Know a Person*, encourages us to "have persistent curiosity about others ... and have an explorer's heart." This practice of deep listening, including asking better questions will lead to deeper, richer relationship possibilities. If you are stuck when it comes to thinking up questions, try some of the questions the National Public Housing Museum included in their 36 Questions for Civic Love project ([nphm.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CivicLove\\_Toolkit\\_English.pdf](https://nphm.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/CivicLove_Toolkit_English.pdf)).

4. Engage in a LovingKindness Meditation, and each day widen the circle of those you include. (Practice this beautiful ancient meditation at [youtu.be/sz7cpV7ERsM?si=65gJNYOqDTBIhyhA](https://youtu.be/sz7cpV7ERsM?si=65gJNYOqDTBIhyhA))

It can be easy to feel overwhelmed. To feel that the space between us is too wide to cross. Begin with one action, collaborate with others. You are not alone and you need not struggle alone. Perhaps you are one question away from a greater unity in diversity.

—Leslie Wright

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

## A Spring Day in the Garden & Woods Retreat (in person)

Friday, May 16, 6:30 p.m.–Saturday, May 17, 4 p.m.

**Facilitators:** Scott Koepke & Aaron Brewer

Research affirms that the act of gardening is therapeutic. In addition to producing food and beauty, gardens grow healthier minds and social networks. From soil to soul, this inspirational, fun workshop offers food for thought on how nurturing botanical life can heal our mental and physical challenges. We learn to build from the ground up to harvest nutrition and cultivate hope, peace and strength for the next generation. Enjoy a beautiful overnight retreat in the garden with reflective, hands-on learning. We'll experience a variety of mindful ecological experiences, including:

- Garden Bridge Outreach, a 90-minute interactive garden life-skill education service that helps people develop a garden
- deepening our understanding of food as common ground in a polarized world
- the lessons of compost for transforming old life into new

We will also learn about establishing and caring for a pollinator garden and basic tree identification.

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

**Commuter Fee:** \$100 includes sessions and Saturday lunch (*Scholarships are available.*)



## Exploring Traditional Chinese Meditative, Healing & Martial Arts Retreat (in person)

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

**Facilitator:** Gerry Hopkins



Chinese culture has been influenced by Daoist philosophy, which emphasizes living in alignment with nature. To that end, Daoist practice encourages us to live simply, remain positive, nourish our body and mind, and not waste our energy. Retreatants will be introduced to basic Neidan, Qigong and Tai Chi practices. Neidan are Daoist meditation techniques.

Qigong are healthy practices involving movement, visualization and focus on breathing. Tai Chi is a martial art that emphasizes maintaining balance while neutralizing threat. Following an introduction into these methods, we will have the opportunity to practice them through various exercises and situations. Our goal will be to develop a sustainable practice for negotiating life's difficulties. We also will be introduced to and gifted with various types of tea that promote health and wellbeing.

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

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

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

June: Sunday, June 8, 5 p.m.–Saturday, June 14, 1 p.m.

July: Sunday, July 6, 5 p.m.–Saturday, July 12, 1 p.m.

**Facilitators:** Cindy Dunn (June only); Ann Jackson, PBVM; Leslie Schwarting; Lucille Winnike, FSPA; & Joann Gehling, FSPA

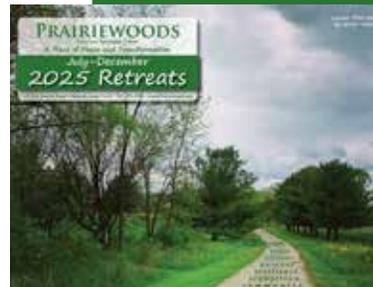
What's the deepest silence you've ever known? Enter into deep silence to sense what it feels like to awaken a quiet and palpable connection with the Source of All Being. Each day you will receive ongoing direction as you and a professionally-trained spiritual director intentionally listen to the movement 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 discern, notice and 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, and offer insight into that direction. 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. Come re-establish and remember the deep connection we share with all of Creation as we listen together to the great silence.

**Fee:** \$525 includes lodging, meals and daily spiritual direction (*Lodgers only, please.*)



## Retreat Brochure Available!

To help you prepare for the months ahead, Prairiewoods has created a

six-month Retreat Brochure for July through December 2025. It includes details on the retreats we will host in the next six months. To download a printable copy, visit [www.Prairiewoods.org/Group-Retreats](http://www.Prairiewoods.org/Group-Retreats). If you would like us to mail you a copy, please send your mailing address to [alewis@prairiewoods.org](mailto:alewis@prairiewoods.org).

## Cultivating Peace through Mindfulness & Social Emotional Behavioral Support Retreats (in person)

**Course 1:** Monday, June 16, 1 p.m.–Wednesday, June 18, 1 p.m.

**Course 2:** Wednesday, June 18, 1 p.m.–Friday, June 20, 1 p.m.

**Facilitators:** Sarah Montgomery & Ann Jackson, PBVM

Are you a peaceful teacher? Would you like to cultivate more peace in your daily life? In this one-hour credit course, learn practical, simple ways you can press pause, re-center, and intentionally promote a peaceful presence that will have ripple effects for your family, students and the world.



Through practices of mindfulness, social emotional behavioral support, self-compassion and neuroscience, we'll begin to explore peaceful applications in our own lives to build resiliency, hope, and curiosity leading to health and wellbeing. These courses provide educators and any school or university staff or administrator with research-based theory, collaborative design and opportunities to practice. The retreat-like courses will occur indoors and outdoors on the beautifully supportive and restorative 67 acres of Prairiewoods. Optional opportunities such as massage, yoga, tai chi and sounding will also be available. Overnight lodging is strongly encouraged. A text, *Practicing Presence*, will be used to support course aims. Register for these courses through both Grant Wood AEA and Prairiewoods. Course 1 is a prerequisite for Course 2.

**Fee:** \$100 per credit hour (plus \$35 paid to Grant Wood AEA) includes sessions, lodging, and daily breakfast and lunch (*Lodging is strongly encouraged.*)

**Commuter Fee:** \$75 per credit hour (plus \$35 paid to Grant Wood AEA) includes sessions and daily lunch

## Cultivating an Awakened Brain Retreat (in person)

**Follow-up to Spirituality in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**  
Friday, June 20, 6 p.m.–Saturday, June 21, 4 p.m. (or stay through Sunday morning with optional Saturday evening mindfulness practices)

**Facilitators:** Ann Jackson, PBVM, & Leslie Schwarting

How do you cultivate an awakened brain? Let's practice relinquishing our achievement-focused activities, being mindful and tuning into the world to turn down the noise, readying our awareness for fresh insights. Through chanting, prayer, creative expression, movement, walks in nature, meditation and many other modalities, we will learn how easy it is to step away from the daily buzz of life to re-center and reconnect with each other, our minds, our hearts and Earth. Why does this matter? Because life is beckoning us forward with an invitation to experience it fully. We will spend time with content from the book *The*



*Awakened Brain: The New Science of Spirituality and our Quest for an Inspired Life* by Spirituality in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century speaker Dr. Lisa Miller. With ample time for reflection, tranquility and practice, this retreat will be especially powerful if you attend Spirituality in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (May 5 or 6), however, attendance is not required to participate in this retreat.

**Friday–Saturday Fee:** \$205 includes sessions, Friday lodging, and Saturday breakfast and lunch

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

**Commuter Fee:** \$175 includes sessions and Saturday lunch

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

Friday, June 27, 6:30 p.m.–Saturday, June 28, 4 p.m.

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

Join a wonderful learning community dedicated to embracing food as a pathway to peace. Summer takes us out to farmer's markets, to garden plots, to potted veggies on the deck. Sense summer's call to transform our relationship with self, others and Earth through our personal food choices. Guided by environmentalists, mystics, poets and contemporary sages, we'll tend resources for summer produce near and dear to us. We'll deepen our relationships with nature through our food choices, engaging in creative acts such as writing and walking in the Prairiewoods gardens. Bring your favorite healthy recipes of locally grown foods to share as we gather around the summer table in peace and relationship.



**Fee:** \$150 includes sessions, Friday lodging, and Friday dinner through Saturday lunch

**Commuter Fee:** \$100 includes sessions, Friday dinner and Saturday lunch

## Save the Date!

for these retreats in July and August:

**Navigating Transitions Retreat (in person)** with Jill Saunders & Leslie Schwarting, Friday, July 25–Sunday, July 27 (*Choose the length of retreat that works for you!*)

**Active Hope for Troubling Times Retreat (in person)** with Kathleen Rude, Friday, Aug. 1–Sunday, Aug. 3

**Becoming the Elder Tree: Purpose in the Second Half of Life Retreat (in person)** with Dr. Thomas Dean & Dr. Chris Johnson, Friday, Aug. 15–Sunday, Aug. 17

**Vocal Empowerment Retreat (in person)** with Mary Jane Knight, Saturday, Aug. 23 (*or come early and add optional Friday night lodging*)

# Garden Party: Growing Our Roots



## PRAIRIEWOODS garden party GROWING OUR ROOTS

Saturday, June 7, 5–8 p.m., at Prairiewoods

Join us at our annual *Garden Party fundraiser* on *Saturday, June 7*, for a night of music, food, and nature!

### *You Can Make A Difference*

All of the proceeds from this event go toward supporting and expanding our beautiful outdoor spaces as well as our gardens that produce thousands of pounds of fresh, organic produce each year.

Once the produce is harvested from the gardens, it's donated to local food pantries that serve those facing food insecurity in our community. This past year we were thrilled to be able to partner with the Hiawatha Public Library to launch a new food pantry that is open seven days a week. Help us to continue our support of local food pantries through this fun event!

### *We Have Lots of Fun Things Planned for Our Event*

New this year! A Flower Bar where you can make a beautiful bouquet to take home for \$30!

Don't miss our silent auction with some fantastic items that you'll want to bid on.

You'll be serenaded with music by the smooth and classy jazz standards of the Anji Kat Trio.

### *Take a Tour of our Beautiful Grounds*

We encourage you to take a tour of the grounds to see everything that Prairiewoods has to offer. From 5–6 p.m., you can meander our trails, where you'll find our labyrinth, Grandmother Oak, our Nature Playscape and Four Winds Food Forest, our food pantry gardens and more. If walking isn't your thing, we'll also offer rides on our ATV. If you visit all of the ecological and spiritual features, we'll put your name in for a fantastic drawing!

To register for our Garden Party or to donate, visit [Prairiewoods.org/Garden-Party](http://Prairiewoods.org/Garden-Party). The cost is \$60 per ticket and includes wine, beer or non-alcoholic beverages, as well as a delicious hors d'oeuvres buffet beginning at 6 p.m. We hope you'll join us!



**Prairiewoods Nature Arrangements (in person)**  
**Thursdays, beginning May 1,**  
**8 a.m.–5 p.m.**

**Facilitators:** Prairiewoods outdoors team

Each month May–December the Prairiewoods outdoors team will handcraft an arrangement of natural items from the land that represents the beauty of the season, similar to a flower CSA.

Whether you're someone who wants to develop a deeper connection

with nature or simply experience the beauty of the season, this program is a great way to do both and help Prairiewoods in its mission of stewarding our beautiful 67 acres of woods and prairie. Arrangements will be available for pickup on the first Thursday of each month (May–December) during business hours.

**Fee:** \$160 for 8 monthly bouquets



**Day of Self Renewal (in person)**  
*Now offered on Fridays, too!*  
**Thursdays, May 1 & June 5;**  
**Monday, May 12; &**  
**Fridays, May 23 & June 27;**  
**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 meditation practices, a private guest room for the day, 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, spiritual arts, mindfulness, 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, group meditation practices, private guest room for the day and lunch (or \$95 without a private guest room)

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

**Thursdays, May 1 & June 5,**  
**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 open, rebalance and cultivate Qi (universal life force energy-Spirit) throughout the body's energy pathways, centers and organs to assist with mental, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing. We send healing intention to others and the planet.

**Fee:** \$12

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

**Thursdays, May 1 & June 5,**  
**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 close with prayerful sound healing, including a lower-octave bowl played on or near (your choice) the shrine of your heart.

**Fee:** \$10

**Healthy Snacking for Kids: A Hands-On Workshop for Parents (in person)**

**Saturday, May 3, 10–11:30 a.m.**

**Facilitator:** Sarah Waldorf

Join us for a fun and interactive workshop that simplifies healthy eating for kids! Connect with like-minded parents, gain practical nutrition tips, and discover kid-approved snack ideas that are both nutritious and delicious. Learn the essentials of childhood nutrition, hear about stress-free strategies for picky eaters and watch a live snack-making demo. Participate in hands-on snack prep

and take home kid-friendly snacks you create. Plus, receive an exclusive Healthy Lunch Box Prep Guide to make mealtime even easier!

**Fee:** \$25

**LovingKindness Meditation Practice (in person)**

**Saturdays, May 3 & June 28,**  
**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 includes presentation, practice and discussion.

**Fee:** \$10

**World Labyrinth Day: Walk as One at 1 (in person)**

**Saturday, May 3, 1 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Self-guided

Join thousands of people participating in the annual World Labyrinth Day as a moving meditation



for peace and celebration of the labyrinth experience. Many participants will “Walk as One at 1” by walking a labyrinth at 1 p.m. local time to create a rolling wave of peaceful energy passing from one time zone to the next around the globe. Whether you are familiar with labyrinths or new to the idea of non-maze labyrinth paths, all are welcome to take part. If you are new to walking, simple instructions will be available near our outdoor labyrinth to guide you. World Labyrinth Day is an international event held on the first Saturday each May, sponsored by The Labyrinth Society in collaboration with partner organizations including the Australian Labyrinth Network, Legacy Labyrinth Project and Veriditas. The labyrinth is always open

sunup to sundown. All are welcome, and registration is not required.

**Fee:** Free

**Morning Hatha Yoga (in person)**  
**Sundays, May 4–18 & June 1–29,**  
**9–10 a.m.**

**Facilitator:** Sarah Cram Driscoll

Join us on the land for outdoor Morning Hatha Yoga on Sunday mornings! Start your day with gentle movement and deep breathing in nature. Together we will bring energy and balance to our bodies and minds. This is a beginner-friendly practice to awaken and restore. Please bring a yoga mat, a water bottle and an open heart. No experience is needed—just come as you are! Let's stretch, breathe and move together in the fresh morning air. Registration is appreciated.

**Fee:** Suggested donation of \$10 per class

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

**Monday, May 5, 6–8:15 p.m.;**

**Tuesday, May 6, 9:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.;**

**or Tuesday, May 6, 6–8:15 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Lisa Miller, PhD

**Location:** First Lutheran Church

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) within the Department of Health and Human Services has identified



spirituality as one of the eight key components of overall wellness. Author and researcher Lisa Miller, PhD, is one of the nation's leading neuroscience researchers about the impact that spirituality can have on our mental wellbeing. Join Prairiewoods for our annual Spirituality in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century event, which will combine cutting-edge science with direct tools for application for people from all walks of life as we connect spirituality to mental health. **Fee:** \$25 for evening sessions, \$40 for Tuesday morning session (includes lunch), \$10 for students

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

**Mondays, May 5, May 19, June 2 & June 16; 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

**Zumba with Julio (in person)**

**Wednesdays, May 7–June 4 & June 18–25, 5:30–6:30 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Julio Vera

Zumba is a high-energy fitness class that combines dance and aerobic exercises set to upbeat Latin and international music. It's a fun, full-body workout suitable for all fitness levels, blending easy-to-follow choreography with cardio, muscle conditioning and balance. It's perfect for anyone looking to stay active while having a great time!

**Fee:** \$10 per session

**Terra Divina: A Spiritual Practice of Engaging with Earth (in person)**

**Sundays, May 11 & June 22,**  
**3–4:30 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Stephanie Heifner

Like lectio divina is a sacred reading of text, terra divina is a sacred reading of Earth—the “Book of Creation.” With an attitude of wonder and with all of our senses, we engage in conversation with nature. We begin with a brief conversation, sharing in learning about the season we are in. We 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

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

*Forest Bathing with the Full Moon:* **Sunday, May 11, 6:30–8:30 p.m.;** **& Wednesday, June 11, 7–9 p.m.**

*Nature & Forest Therapy Experience:* **Monday, May 12, 2:30–3:45 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Emelia Sautter

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.

**Fee:** \$25 for longer moon walks, \$20 for shorter afternoon experience

**Singing Bowl Prayer (in person)**

**Mondays, May 12 & June 9,**  
**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

**Awaken Your Creativity through Watercolor (in person)**

**Tuesdays, May 13 & June 17, 9:30–11:30 a.m.**

**Facilitator:** Barb Thompson

Join a hands-on, beginner's painting workshop that includes a tracing sheet, step-by-step instructions and an example to reference as we paint, making it perfect for beginners. Class starts with a few watercolor exercises and a demonstration of the project. Then we will work at our own pace to paint an iris in May and a bumblebee in June. This is recommended for ages 8–100. Simply bring a positive attitude, ready to learn a new skill!

**Fee:** \$50 includes all art supplies



## Spring into Action: Preparing Your Garden for Permaculture (in person)

**Tuesday, May 13, 1–2:30 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Christine Kirpes

Discover how to prepare your spring garden using sustainable and regenerative permaculture techniques! This hands-on workshop is perfect for gardeners of all levels who want to create thriving, lower-maintenance, eco-friendly planting beds. You'll learn how to assess and improve soil health, plan your garden layout for maximum yield and biodiversity, and implement water-saving strategies. Immerse yourself in the Green Prairie Garden, where we have been practicing permaculture for over six years and have several types of beds. Topics will include composting, mulching and using organic fertilizers to nourish your soil naturally; choosing the right plants for your space, climate and microclimates; companion planting and other strategies for pest control and enhanced growth; and simple methods for creating a self-sustaining ecosystem. Join us to learn ideas for cultivating a garden that works with nature—not against it—setting the stage for a productive and beautiful growing season. Bring your questions, creativity and a love for Earth!

**Fee:** Free-will offering

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

**Wednesdays, May 14 & June 18, 11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.**

**Facilitators:** Ali Yoka & 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

## Earth-Friendly Lawn Care (in person)

**Monday, May 19, 6:30–7:30 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Phil Pfister

Can you have a great looking, neighbor-pleasing lawn and still be Earth-friendly? Yes! Join Linn County Master Gardener Phil Pfister as we explore various techniques used to maintain an Earth-friendly lawn, including organic options and the responsible use of chemicals.

**Fee:** Free-will offering

## An Unplugged Evening at Prairiewoods (in person)

**Thursdays, May 22 & June 19, 5–7:30 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 includes soup and salad

## Glycerin Soap & Lotion Workshop (in person)

**Fridays, May 23 & June 27, 9:30–10:30 a.m.**

**Facilitator:** Sandy Rosenberger

In this fun-filled workshop, we'll learn the basics of melt-and-pour soapmaking with a glycerin soap base made without hard detergents. We'll also make a beautiful moisturizing glycerin lotion. Both the soap and lotion can be

scented with either fragrance oils or essential oils that will be provided. **Fee:** \$10 includes all materials



## It's All About the Watering! (in person)

**Tuesday, June 3, 6:30–7:30 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Phil Pfister

It's been said that more plants are killed by overwatering than underwatering. Join Linn County Master Gardener Phil Pfister as we discuss when and how to water seedlings, transplants, containers, yards and gardens. We'll discuss watering under a variety of conditions that most gardeners will encounter. The techniques will include indoor and outdoor conditions.

**Fee:** Free-will offering

## Creek Cleanup in Honor of Sister Water & The Canticle of the Creatures (in person)

**Friday, June 13, 9–11 a.m.**

**Facilitator:** Aaron Brewer

Celebrate the life-giving force of water as depicted in St. Francis of Assisi's *The Canticle of the Creatures*, in which Sister Water is praised for her clarity, humility and preciousness. Together, we will care for creation by cleaning up our local creek, reflecting on our connection to nature and giving thanks for the gift of water. All are welcome, so feel free to bring your family, friends or community group for this fun morning of service! Please wear comfortable clothes and sturdy shoes and bring a reusable water bottle, hat and sunscreen. Gloves and garbage bags will be provided. Registration is not required.

**Fee:** Free

## Our Guests Say It Best!

“In a world filled with uncertainty and division, it is refreshing to know there is a place like Prairiewoods. The entire facility and staff offer a ray of hope to all who visit.”

—Mark & Pat M.

“It's hard to find the words. I do not currently practice a religion, but I am very spiritual and I felt at home. The way the spiritual message is blended into the materials, presentation and décor was comforting, reassuring and helped me realize my day-to-day life could benefit from more spiritual presence.”

—Ecological Spirituality Retreat participant

## Visual Storytelling: Nature through Your Lens (in person)

**Saturday, June 28, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Donald Quintana

Join Donald Quintana, professional conservation visual storyteller, for this one-day immersive workshop on visual storytelling! Learn the seven essential images that transform photos into compelling narratives. With hands-on instruction, group discussions and in-the-field practice, we'll develop skills to craft powerful stories. Perfect for journalists, social media creators or anyone wanting to elevate their storytelling. Capture more than just images—capture memories!

**Fee:** \$135 (or \$205 with Friday lodging)



## Save the Date!

for this upcoming program:

## Write So Far: Giving Voice to Your Spiritual Journey (in person)

with Cheryl Conklin; Saturdays; Aug. 16, Aug. 23, Sept. 6, Sept. 13 & Sept. 27; 9:30 a.m.–1 p.m.

## Ongoing Programs

### Metta Yoga (in person)

**Mondays & Thursdays; May 1–22, May 29–June 30; 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 classes, \$72 for six classes, \$15 for single class



### Go Deeper Thursdays (Zoom)

**Thursdays, May 1–June 26, 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; May 1, May 15, June 5 & June 19; 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, May 5–19 & June 2–30, 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

### Thelen-Benson Christophany Group (Zoom)

**first Wednesdays, May 7 & June 4, 6–7:30 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Steve Sovern

Engage in communal reflection on the insights of Teilhard de Chardin, Ilia Delio and similar deep thinkers.

**Fee:** Free-will offering

### Men Exploring Faith (hybrid)

**second & fourth Thursdays; May 8, May 22, June 12 (at an alternate location) & June 26; 4–5:30 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Linzy Martin

Join reflective men in honest conversation about life changes.

**Fee:** Free-will offering

### Prairiewoods Knitters & Stitchers (in person)

**second Tuesdays, May 13 & June 10, 9:30–11:30 a.m.; & fourth Wednesdays, May 28 & June 25, 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; May 13, May 27, June 10 & June 24; 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 Children:** second Wednesdays, May 14 & June 11, 5:30–7 p.m.

**For Adults:** third Wednesdays, May 21 & June 18, 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 children's group)

### Drum Circle & Guided Imagery (in person)

**Saturday, May 31, & Sunday, June 29, 6–8 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Drum Iowa

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

**Fee:** Suggested donation of \$15 (but this is free for all to enjoy)

## News From the Land

**P**rairiewoods is preparing for the upcoming growing season in many ways.

### *Seeding new growth.*

In an effort to increase plant and animal biodiversity, volunteers joined Nancy Hoffman, FSPA, this February in overseeding the southwest prairie. We will manage this area with occasional mowing to give the new seeds a chance to germinate and outcompete the brome grass that is present, creating beautiful tallgrass prairies for visitors and passersby to enjoy.



### *Growing good food in a sustainable way.*

Prairiewoods volunteers will be working on a new project this year: agrivoltaics, the process of growing flowers and vegetables under and around solar panels. This practice benefits food production and renewable energy generation. This project will start with one solar array growing shade-tolerant plants to utilize this empty space and improve the productivity of the arrays, providing a cooling effect. We are excited to use this practice, which is growing in popularity, to work toward sustainable land utilization and set an example of what is possible.



### *Restoring the woodlands.*

Since losing 1,200 trees in the 2020 derecho, Prairiewoods has planted more than 700 tree seedlings. In April Prairiewoods partnered with the Trees Forever Campus Canopy program. With the help of volunteers, we planted 35 new trees in the riparian woodlands.

We continue to work on raising the tree canopy to provide a thriving wildlife sanctuary with diverse plant material. Work has continued on controlling woody invasive species in our woods. With the canopy opened up, honeysuckle, multiflora rose and autumn olive have begun to thrive in our wooded areas, making for unbalanced habitats. By hand cutting and forestry mowing, we have been able to reduce these heavy seed-producing, low-nutrient ecosystem killers to make room for native bare-root trees and native flowers and grasses.

### *You can help!*

Volunteers are always welcome to lend a hand and learn and share their talents in the garden on Tuesday and Friday mornings or on the land on Wednesdays. We hope you'll join us!



## Volunteer Opportunities

**W**e are always looking for volunteers to serve at Prairiewoods. Some of our opportunities include:

**Office & Hospitality:** If you are personable and friendly, we could use your help in our front office! You would work on weekends or weeknight evenings to greet guests, answer phone calls, field guest questions, collect program fees, process Gift Shop purchases and help with other office duties as needed. This is a great opportunity to interact with people and extend hospitality at Prairiewoods!

**Outdoors:** If you're passionate about the environment or love to spend time in nature, you would feel right at home as an outdoor volunteer. At Prairiewoods, we take land care to heart. As an outdoor volunteer, you would help keep our 67 acres of woods and prairie beautiful, ecologically healthy and productive. You can help with trail maintenance, prairie or woodland restoration, lawn mowing and general maintenance.

**Garden:** Do you love to get your hands in the soil? Our extensive gardens include a huge vegetable garden, the Four Winds Food Forest, an herb garden and multiple flower beds. You would help plant, weed or harvest.

**Finance Committee:** The Prairiewoods Finance Committee oversees funding and spending. Specifically, the committee is responsible for approving the annual budget and recommending it to the full board for adoption, monitoring monthly financial statements, and overseeing financial reporting. Time required would be a one-hour virtual meeting each month.

If you're interested in any of these opportunities, please contact Sandy Rosenberger at 319-395-6700, ext. 216, or [srosenberger@prairiewoods.org](mailto:srosenberger@prairiewoods.org).

## Saying Goodbye & Thanks to Our Marketing Intern

**T**his semester, we've had the extreme pleasure of working with a hard-working senior in the marketing department at Mount Mercy University. Grace Conway has served as our marketing intern, helping with projects like market trend research, photography and videography, graphic design and event planning. She has been inquisitive and ready to jump in to any project at a moment's notice. We're so grateful for Grace's time here and can't wait to see what she does next!

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](http://www.Prairiewoods.org/Donate).



Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center  
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.
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Support  
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PRAIRIEWOODS  
*garden party*  
GROWING OUR ROOTS



**Saturday, June 7,**  
**5–8 p.m.**  
See page 6 for details.