



Prairiewoods

July 2026 - January 2027

Retreats Brochure

Welcome to Retreat at Prairiewoods

At Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center, retreat is a return—to your body, breath, spirit, relationships and the living Earth that sustains us all. Here, retreat is not one-size-fits-all; it is a sacred rhythm shaped around you. Whether you long for deep silence, spiritual direction, contemplative space for meditation, massage, healing touch, reflexology, quiet journaling time or meaningful community, Prairiewoods offers a place to root, restore and renew.

Cradled by woods and prairie, each retreat experience invites integration of body, mind, spirit and Earth:

Directed Retreats offer spacious quiet and optional daily spiritual direction and holistic modalities (massage, healing touch, reflexology); along with nourishing farm-to-table meals and restful guest rooms or hermitages. In stillness and accompaniment, you are invited to listen deeply—to your own heart and to the wisdom of creation.

Private Retreats provide unstructured time for prayer and reflection using your own spiritual practices. Surrounded by prairie grasses and birdsong, you can reconnect with the sacred pulse moving through you, your life and the land.

Group Retreats gather communities for themed Days of Prayer and Renewal or weekend immersions that weave teaching, reflection and dialogue with the healing presence of nature. Together, we explore what it means to live gently and gratefully upon the Earth.

Day Stays/Days of Prayer offer a simple yet profound pause—an oasis for contemplative rest. Optional spiritual direction or holistic health services support an integrated approach to well-being of body, mind and spirit. Pick a theme, we'll help you co-create a retreat.

Hermitage Retreats invite deeper solitude in solar-powered, straw-bale constructed cabins. In these simple spaces—warmed by radiant floor heat and powered by the sun—you experience firsthand a lifestyle of reverence, sustainability and sacred simplicity.

However you choose to retreat, **ecological spirituality** is not just a theme—it's a lived experience. You will taste it in the food, feel it in the soil beneath your feet, hear it in the wind through the trees,... and carry it home in your heart.

If you would like to attend a retreat but cannot manage the entire investment, please call Ann Jackson at 319-395-6700 Ext. 203. We are committed to serving all on their spiritual journey and will hold you request in confidence.

To begin planning your retreat, contact Ann Jackson, PBVM (ajackson@prairiewoods.org) or Leslie Schwarting (lschwarting@prairiewoods.org), call 319-395-6700 or visit prairiewoods.org/retreats-programs/



Prairiewoods' 30th Anniversary Retreat: We Are Each Other's Light



Sunday, July 5, 4:00 p.m. – Friday, July 10, 1:00 p.m.

Facilitators: Sara Thomsen & Paula Pedersen

During this special anniversary retreat, we gather in gratitude to celebrate this sacred journey together.

Guided by musician and retreat facilitator Sara Thomsen and educator and retreat facilitator Paula Pedersen, this five-day retreat invites participants into a rhythm of song, reflection, silence and community. Sara's music—rooted in justice, compassion and ecological awareness—will help us give voice to both the wonder and the sorrow of our time.

Together, through singing together, storytelling and shared reflection, we create a space where beauty and heartbreak can both be held with honesty and hope.

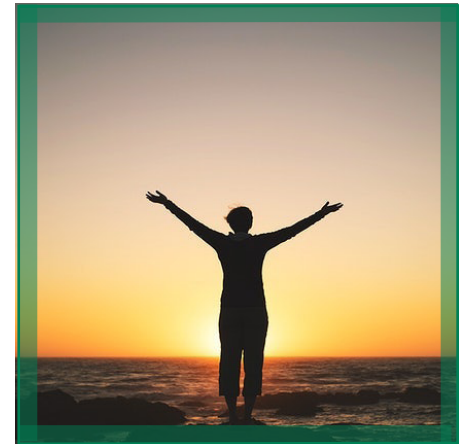
Across the land at Prairiewoods—among prairie grasses, oak trees, butterflies, foxes and birds—we will pause to remember the countless lives that have been touched here. We will celebrate the deep relationships that have grown between people and place. And we will listen together for what the next thirty years might ask of us.

Throughout the retreat, participants will gather for communal sessions filled with music, reflection and dialogue, while also enjoying spacious time for contemplative practices, walking the sacred grounds, journaling, resting and simply being present with the living Earth.

Whether you have been part of Prairiewoods' story since the beginning or are arriving for the first time, you are warmly welcomed into this circle of gratitude and vision. Together—with the human and more-than-human community—we will honor the past, tend the present moment and dream forward. Through song and stillness, laughter and tears, we will remember this simple truth: we are each other's light.

Fee: \$575 (Includes retreat sessions, Sunday through Friday lodging; and all meals)

Commuter Fee: \$400 (Includes retreat sessions and daily lunch)



Paula Pedersen retired in 2020 from a 30 year career at UMD, as psychology faculty and Director of Education for Inclusive Excellence. Paula is also an interculturalist and consultant to educational and leadership groups

seeking self-awareness and strategies toward intercultural effectiveness. Paula strives to facilitate understanding of the complexity of multiple perspectives, whether singing, teaching, training or tending her garden.



Sara Thomsen is a singer-songwriter and recording artist from the Duluth/Superior area. Increasing wonder and awareness, deepening connection, and widening

engagement through song is at the heart of her work. Sara's ability to get people singing magically transforms gatherings into communities empowered with possibility.

Register Online: bit.ly/PW30thRetreat or call 319-395-6700

Power of Silence: Silent Directed Retreats

Sunday, May 31, 4:00 p.m. – Saturday, Jun. 6, 1:00 p.m.

Sunday, Jul. 19, 4:00 p.m. – Saturday, Jul. 25, 1:00 p.m.

Sunday, Oct. 4, 4:00 p.m. – Saturday, Oct. 10, 1:00 p.m.

Facilitators: Ann Jackson, PBVM, Leslie Schwarting, Lucille Winnike, FSPA, Cindy Dunn (Jun/Oct)

In a world filled with constant noise and urgency, silence can feel both unfamiliar and deeply inviting. During this week-long silent, directed retreat, retreatants rest in nature, meet daily with a spiritual director, and engage prayer, reflection and gentle, spiritual practices. Come listen deeply, reconnect with the Source of All Being and renew your spirit.

Retreatants may:

- Experience contemplative silence as a spiritual practice, nurturing clarity, inner peace and connection with the Source of All Being.
- Deepen awareness of movements of the Divine through reflection, prayer and spiritual direction.
- Deepen discernment by listening attentively to inner wisdom, emotions and life experiences through spiritual practices, such as singing bowls and Qigong/Tai Chi.
- Renew a sense of interconnectedness with Earth, self and the wider community of life.

Fee: \$625 (Includes lodging, meals and six sessions of spiritual direction. Partial scholarship funds are available. Massage available upon request for an additional fee)



Leslie Schwarting is a full time spiritual director and retreat facilitator at Prairiewoods. She finds great fulfillment in supporting others as they seek to deepen their connection to the Divine, themselves and others, and is deeply empathetic to their personal and spiritual growth.



Lucille Winnike, FSPA ministers as a retreat director and spiritual director. Earlier ministries include teaching and administration in Catholic schools, as well as administration within her community. Lucille has a master's degree in mathematics from Notre Dame University, where she later did further studies in spirituality and interned as a spiritual director.



Cindy Dunn is a spiritual director trained at the Franciscan Spirituality Center and a retreat leader. She is a lifelong learner and compassionate listener. Cindy volunteers as a chaplain at St. Luke's Hospital.



Ann Jackson, PBVM is Prairiewoods' coordinator of spiritual services. Blending love of nature, literature, leadership and spirituality, Ann delights in listening with others to the energy of Spirit stirring creativity, passion, discernment and service.

Register Online or call 319-395-6700:

bit.ly/PowerSilenceJune; bit.ly/PowerSilenceJuly

bit.ly/PowerSilenceOctober

Searching for Home: Thomas Merton and Thomas Berry in Conversation

Friday, Aug. 7, 6:30 p.m. – Sunday, Aug. 9, 1:00 p.m.

Facilitators: Judith Valente & Carol Lenox

Thomas Merton spent a lifetime searching for a physical and spiritual home. While he found some sense of it at Gethsemani, his searching continued even to the abrupt end of his life. Still, Merton had an uncanny ability to sense the Divine in whatever landscape or environment he was in. This also related to his search for True self.

Thomas Berry spent his later years trying to lead us home, recognizing that our true home is found not in some spiritual realm, but grounded on Earth within the larger context of a Universe infused with the Divine.

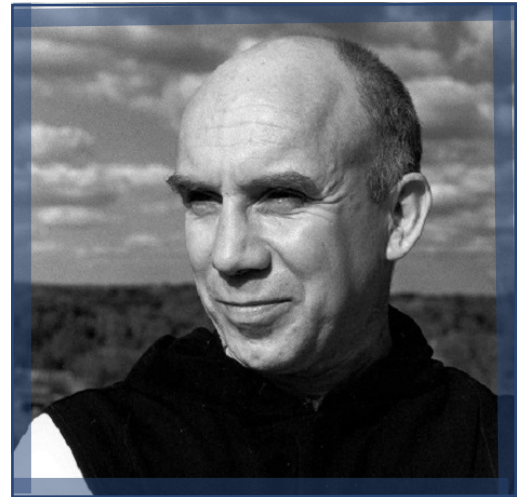
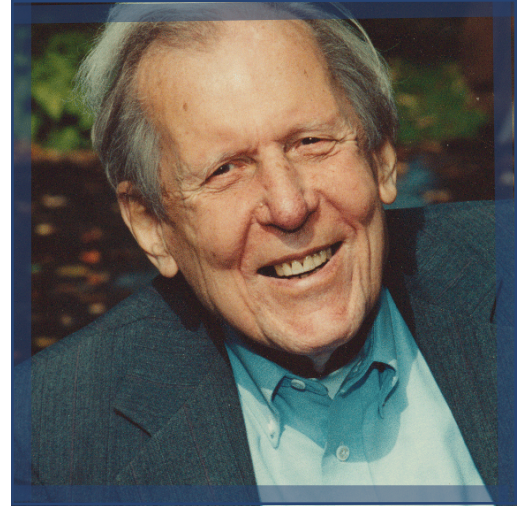
Where Merton spoke of discovering the True Self, Berry spoke of the “small self” (the individual ‘I’) and the “Great Self” interconnected with the unfolding Universe. Berry, like Merton, believed it is through the Earth community that we discover both our genuine self and the divine.

Retreatants will:

- Explore the writings of Merton and Berry in conversation
- Reflect on what it means to find home and how our own sense of home and place affects our lives
- Consider both the spiritual and physical aspects of home and how they necessarily co-exist

Fee: \$255 (Includes all sessions; Friday and Saturday lodging, Saturday breakfast, lunch, dinner; Sunday breakfast and lunch)

Commuter: \$195 (Includes all sessions; Saturday lunch, dinner; Sunday lunch)



Judith Valente is a journalist, the author of several spirituality titles and a poet. She guides frequent retreats for busy professionals and is the 2023-25 President of the ITMS (International Thomas Merton Society).



Carol Lenox works as an environmental researcher and scholar focused on the life, work and ecological spirituality of Thomas Berry. She holds a Masters of Pastoral Studies from Loyola University, New Orleans.

Register Online: bit.ly/MertonBerryRetreat or call 319-395-6700

Becoming the Elder Tree: Purpose in the Second Half of Life

Friday, Aug. 14, 6:30 p.m. – Sunday, Aug. 16, 1:00 p.m.

Facilitators: Thomas Dean & Chris Johnson

In forests, the oldest trees are not simply survivors—they are wisdom keepers. Ecologists call them “mother trees” or “elder trees,” rooted in deep time and quietly sustaining the life of the forest by sharing nutrients, resilience and connection through unseen networks beneath the soil.

This retreat offers opportunity to reflect on what it means to grow into the “second half of life” with authenticity, purpose, and deep connection. Together we’ll explore the sacred calling of an elder—not defined by age, but by the capacity to embody wisdom, vision, and wholeness in ways that nurture both self and community.

Drawing inspiration from ecologist Suzanne Simard’s work on the cooperative intelligence of forests, we will consider how we, too, can become like “elder trees”—sharing nourishment, guidance, and resilience for the flourishing of the whole. Prairiewoods’ own Grandmother Oak will serve as our living companion and symbol of strength throughout the weekend.

This retreat will provide safe, supportive space for reflection, listening, and authentic sharing. Participants will experience practices that encourage clarity of purpose, deeper connection with self and others, and renewed courage to live and give from the heart.

Fee: \$255 (Includes Friday and Saturday lodging, Saturday breakfast, lunch, dinner, and Sunday breakfast and lunch)

Commuter Fee: \$195 (Includes sessions, Saturday lunch and dinner, and Sunday lunch.)



Dr. Thomas Dean is a Circle of Trust® facilitator-in-preparation with the Center for Courage and Renewal and has taught numerous community programs, facilitated retreats and workshops, and is a trained Land Ethic Leader through the Aldo Leopold Foundation, bringing programs on Leopold and the land ethic to libraries and nature centers across Iowa.



Dr. Chris Johnson has nearly 30 years of experience in teaching, speaking, coaching, and facilitating retreats around issues of vocation, calling, and purpose; life transitions; leadership development; and spirituality in life and work. Chris is a Circle of Trust® facilitator in association with Parker J. Palmer and the Center for Courage and Renewal, and is founder and principal of The Milkweed Group, LLC.

Register Online: bit.ly/BecomingElderTree or call 319-395-6700

Active Hope for Troubling Times

Friday, Aug. 21, 6:30 p.m. – Sunday, Aug. 23, 3:00 p.m.

Facilitator: Kathleen Rude

In times when the suffering of our world and Earth can feel overwhelming, many of us carry quiet grief, uncertainty or a longing for renewed hope. Active Hope for Troubling Times invites you to step away from the noise of daily life and enter a sacred circle of reflection, compassion and reconnection with the living Earth.

Guided by Kathleen Rude, a senior facilitator of *The Work That Reconnects* and mentored by root teacher Joanna Macy, this retreat offers a transformative journey that helps participants move from despair toward grounded and active hope. Rooted in ecological spirituality, *The Work That Reconnects* invites us to remember that we are not separate from Earth but deeply woven into the web of life.

Over this nourishing weekend, retreatants will move through a gentle yet powerful spiral of practices: grounding ourselves in gratitude for the gifts of life, honoring our pain for the world, remembering our deep interconnectedness with all beings and discovering the unique light each person carries for healing and transformation.

Together we will gather in a compassionate community to listen deeply—to our own hearts, to one another and to the wisdom of the land. Through shared reflection, ritual, song, movement, quiet contemplation and time outdoors, participants will reconnect with the sacred rhythms of creation and with their own capacity for courage and compassionate action.

This retreat invites us to face these challenging times with open hearts, grounded presence and the resilient hope that arises when we remember that we belong to a larger living story.

If you long to reconnect with the Earth, with community and with a deeper sense of purpose in these times, this retreat offers a supportive and transformative path forward.

Fee: \$255 (Includes sessions, Friday and Saturday lodging, and Saturday breakfast through Sunday lunch)

Commuter Fee: \$195 (Includes sessions, Saturday lunch and dinner, and Sunday lunch)



Kathleen Rude is a senior *Work That Reconnects* facilitator who was mentored by Joanna Macy. Kathleen is also a shamanic practitioner, environmental activist and author. Kathleen fell in love with the natural world as a young child and found her voice for environmental activism at age 10. She holds a B.S. in Wildlife Ecology and an M.S. in Natural Resources.

Register Online: bit.ly/ActiveHopeRetreat or call 319-395-6700

Stitch, Cloth and Stone: A Peaceful Art Retreat

Friday, Sept. 25, 6:30 p.m. – Sunday, Sept. 27, 1:00 p.m.

Facilitator: Emma Freeman

Come, learn how to make hand stitched contemplative books out of beautiful textiles from around the world, gathered nature from the land at Prairiewoods, threads created with natural dyes and mindful marks made with inks from the Earth!

Join artist, Emma Freeman to learn how to make hand stitched contemplative books out of beautiful textiles from around the world, gathered nature from the land at Prairiewoods, threads created with natural dyes and mindful marks made with inks from the Earth. Together, we will explore how joy, simplicity, slowness, community, reverence, deep presence and creative curiosity can restore our spirits and encourage happiness, gratitude and peace to grow within ourselves and in the world. All supplies will be provided.



By the end of this retreat, participants may:

- Deepen their understanding of art as a contemplative and spiritual practice rooted in ecological awareness.
- Explore and embody creative processes that foster connection with self, community, and Earth.
- Engage practices that integrate artistic expression into faith communities and communal spaces.
- Discern ways their creative gifts may serve as pathways for healing, justice, and spiritual awakening.

Fee: \$290 (Includes supplies, retreat sessions, Friday/Saturday lodging, Saturday breakfast, lunch, dinner; Sunday breakfast, lunch)

Commuter Fee: \$230 (Includes supplies, retreat session; Saturday lunch, dinner; Sunday lunch)



Emma Freeman Emma Freeman is a contemplative, joyful mixed media artist, teaching artist and massage therapist living in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. At the heart of Emma's practice as both artist and massage therapist is the sacred power of human touch and how it can be an experience of care, compassion and connection. Emma teaches mindful art classes and restorative creative retreats around the United States and online.

Register Online: bit.ly/StitchClothStone or call 319-395-6700

Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life (S.E.E.L.)

Fridays, Oct 2, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Nov. 6, Dec. 11, Jan. 8, Feb. 5, Mar. 5, & Apr. 2 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

May 7, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Facilitators: Leslie Schwarting & Ann Jackson PBVM

Are you yearning for deeper spiritual connection and meaning in your daily life? We warmly invite you to participate in Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life (S.E.E.L.), a nine-month retreat rooted in the timeless wisdom of St. Ignatius of Loyola.

Designed for those seeking to listen more closely to the movement of the Sacred within, S.E.E.L. offers a gentle, transformative structure for prayer, meditation, and reflection—right in the rhythm of your own daily life.

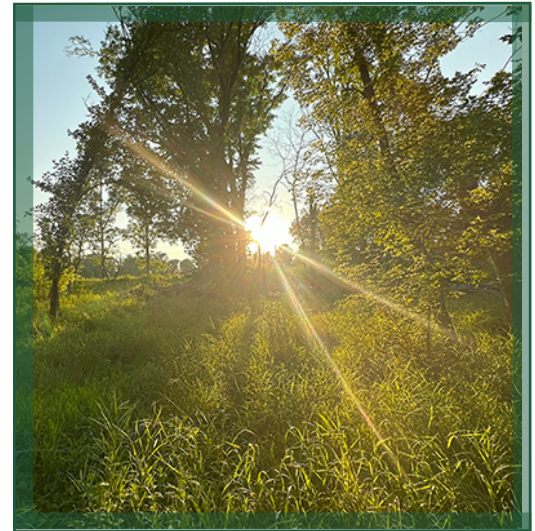
Through guided prayer practices, monthly gatherings, and one-on-one spiritual direction, participants will:

- Cultivate deeper awareness of the Divine in all things
- Explore new images and language for the Source of All Being, God, the Divine,...
- Learn to discern how Spirit moves within and around them
- Integrate contemplation and compassionate action into daily living

If you feel called to enrich your spiritual practice, reflect on your “heart’s desire,” and nurture a spirituality that transforms, S.E.E.L. may be your next step.

Come as you are—with openness, curiosity, and a willing heart. Let this be a sacred invitation to listen deeply and live more fully.

Fee: \$450 (Payable to Prairiewoods in October 2026, or on a monthly basis (\$50/month) if necessary, plus the cost of monthly spiritual direction.



Leslie Schwarting is a full-time spiritual director and retreat facilitator at Prairiewoods. She finds great fulfillment in supporting others as they seek to deepen their connection to the Divine, themselves and others, and is deeply empathetic to their personal and spiritual growth.



Ann Jackson, PBVM is Prairiewoods’ coordinator of spiritual services. Blending love of nature, literature, leadership and spirituality, Ann delights in listening with others to the energy of Spirit stirring creativity, passion, discernment and service.

Register Online: bit.ly/PrairiewoodsSEEL or call 319-395-6700

The Intersection of Art and Faith: Exploring Contemplative Art

Friday, Oct. 23, 6:30 p.m. – Sunday, Oct. 25, 1:00 p.m.

Facilitators: Rev. Paul Witmer & Ted Lyddon Hatten

What if your creativity is not separate from your spirituality—but a living expression of it?

In the quiet beauty of Prairiewoods, where prairie, sky, and stillness invite deeper listening, artists of all disciplines are welcomed into a contemplative space of renewal and discovery. This weekend retreat invites you to explore the sacred intersection of art and faith—where brushstroke, melody, movement, and word become vessels of the Spirit moving through you.

Guided by artists and facilitators Ted Lyddon Hatten and Paul Witmer (and collaborators), you will be invited into rhythms of contemplation and creation. Through gentle practices—silence, reflection, and shared inquiry—you will deepen awareness of how your creative work participates in the healing and transformation of both human and Earth communities.

Bring your materials and your questions. Spend time creating in solitude and in community. Experiment with new contemplative practices or deepen those already rooted in your life. Together, we will wonder: Where does art belong in the life of a faith community? How can creative expression open pathways to belonging, justice, and ecological connection?

The weekend may culminate in a shared offering—an informal, sacred expression of what has emerged—through music, poetry, visual art, or story. You may also be invited into the early imagining of an Artist in Residence network across Iowa, extending this sacred work into communities beyond Prairiewoods.

Come to listen. Come to create. Come to remember that your art is a doorway to the Divine—and a gift for the healing of the world.

Fee: \$255 (Includes retreat sessions; Friday and Saturday lodging; Saturday breakfast, lunch, dinner; Sunday breakfast, lunch)

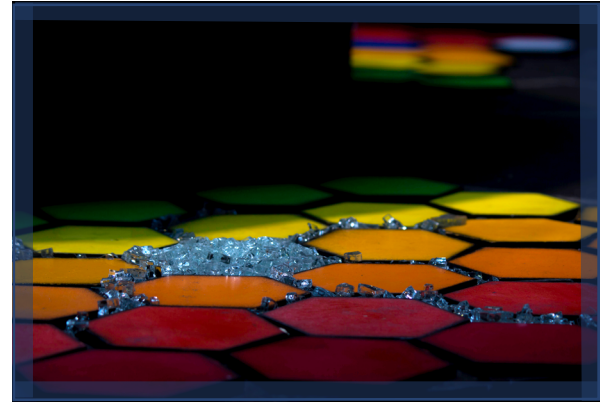
Commuter Fee: \$195 (Includes retreat sessions; Saturday and Sunday lunch)



Paul Witmer is a Lead Pastor at Women at the Well United Methodist Church in Des Moines. He studied philosophy at Southwestern University and attended Eden Theological Seminary.



Ted Lyddon Hatten is a theopoetic, multidisciplinary artist whose work explores beauty, brokenness, compassion, justice, and belonging. Using diverse materials—from beeswax to glass—he creates visual and ephemeral pieces. Based in Indianola, Iowa, his work spans art, theology, and science and has been exhibited internationally.



Register Online: bit.ly/IntersectionArtFaith or call 319-395-6700

Silent Mindfulness Meditation Retreat

Friday, Nov. 6, 6:30 p.m. – Sunday, Nov. 8, 1:00 p.m.

Facilitator: Chris Klug

In the gentle quiet of Prairiewoods, where prairie grasses sway and the land invites stillness, this silent mindfulness retreat offers a sacred pause from the busyness of everyday life. Rooted in the wisdom of mindfulness teachings from Jon Kabat-Zinn and Joseph Goldstein, the retreat invites participants to rediscover the healing power of presence—moment by moment.



Life unfolds in moments. Yet so often we rush past them. During this weekend of intentional silence, retreatants are invited to slow down and listen deeply—to their breath, their bodies, their inner landscape and the living Earth that surrounds them. Silence becomes not emptiness, but a fertile space where awareness, compassion and insight can grow.

Guided by experienced mindfulness teacher Chris Klug, participants will cultivate mindfulness through a rhythm of practices that includes sitting meditation, walking meditation on the land, mindful movement, and mindful eating. Each practice gently strengthens our ability to be present with what is—without judgment and without needing to change the moment.

Scientific research continues to affirm what contemplative traditions have long known: mindfulness supports resilience, emotional balance, physical and mental health, deeper attention and greater well-being. In the quiet sanctuary of Prairiewoods, these benefits unfold not as techniques to master, but as experiences to embody and to practice.

By the end of the retreat, participants will:

- Cultivate practical mindfulness meditation skills through sitting, walking and mindful movement practices.
- Develop greater awareness of thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations in the present moment
- Experience the restorative benefits of silence and contemplative connection with the natural world.
- Strengthen inner resilience, compassion and clarity for daily life.

Fee: \$255 (Includes sessions, Friday and Saturday lodging, Saturday breakfast, lunch, dinner; and Sunday breakfast and lunch)

Commuter Fee: \$195 (Includes sessions, Saturday lunch and dinner, and Sunday lunch)



Chris Klug Chris Klug has been teaching Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) at the University of Iowa Hospitals & Clinics since 2001. With decades of meditation and yoga practice, extensive training with Jon Kabat-Zinn and colleagues, and a professional background in hospice and grief counseling, Chris brings both depth and warmth to his teaching.

Register Online: bit.ly/SilentMindfulnessMeditation or call 319-395-6700

Celebrating the Light of Advent

Saturday, Nov. 14, 10:00 a.m. – Sunday, Nov. 15, 3:00 p.m.

Facilitators: Rev. Jean Sullivan & Ann Jackson PBVM

As the days grow shorter and the natural world settles into winter stillness, Advent invites us to pause, listen and rekindle the light within.

Join us at Prairiewoods for a quiet and nourishing weekend as we prepare our hearts to enter the sacred season of Advent. Together we will explore the many invitations this season offers—to notice light in the darkness, to honor hope in uncertain times, and to welcome the possibility of new birth in our lives and in our world.

Through reflection, storytelling, contemplative practices and time on the land, retreatants will gather stories of celebration, forgiveness, reconciliation and birth. We will listen for the Spirit moving through the rhythms of the earth and within our own lives. From the tiniest spark of light within each heart to the great blaze of Love that surrounds the world, Advent reminds us that light is always being born.

This retreat offers a sacred pause amid the busy holiday season—a chance to slow down, breathe deeply and reconnect with what truly matters. Together we will cultivate quiet awareness, share meaningful conversation and prepare ourselves to carry the light of compassion, hope and healing into our communities.

Come rest, reflect and renew as we celebrate the promise of light returning to the world.

Fee: \$175 (Includes Saturday lodging, Saturday lunch & dinner; Sunday breakfast and lunch)

Commuter Fee: \$140 (Includes Saturday lunch and dinner; Sunday lunch)



Rev. Jean Sullivan serves as Prairiewoods' Hospitality Coordinator, welcoming groups that come to Prairiewoods to enjoy beautiful spaces, wonderful food and the great outdoors!



Ann Jackson, PBVM is Prairiewoods' coordinator of spiritual services. Blending love of nature, literature, leadership and spirituality, Ann delights in listening with others to the energy of Spirit stirring creativity, passion, discernment and service.

Register Online: bit.ly/CelebratingLightAdvent or call 319-395-6700

Winter's Wisdom & Rest Within Thy Soul's Shelter

Friday, Dec. 11, 6:30 p.m. – Sunday, Dec. 13, 1:00 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engle

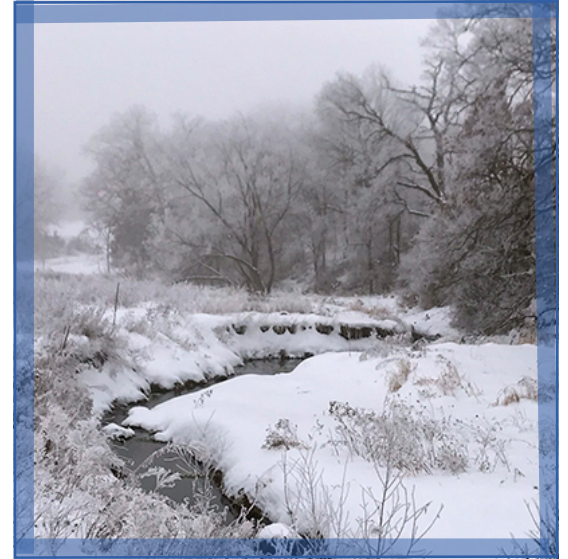
The soul and body crave time for quiet stillness and the velvety darkness of winter which The Sacred offers as gifts for regenerative rest, repair, incubation, and dreaming. Also, for experiencing Holy Encounter, transformative wisdom and guidance—if only we're willing to slow down, relax, shift awareness, and open the unknown and mysterious at work within and around us. This retreat offers such inter-spiritual wisdom and related experiences.

We do so through insights from nature, Winter Element (TCM) Qigong energy medicine, Taoist and yogic philosophy, as well as Celtic and other Christian mystical contemplative perspectives. We do so through cultivating an inner monastery, or awareness of Soul Shelter not only in but also around the physical body wherein we commune with Presence, and cultivate an armor of Light for finding courage to be Light and peace in our world. We also do so through slow, meditative gentle movement and seated practices to calm mind, rebalance energy centers and pathways of the body, and cultivate relaxed effortless ways of allowing mysterious primordial life force energy Spirit to infuse our inner being with the gentle power of grace, Light, and peace—loving, healing, guiding, working, and serving through us from the inside.

Yogic Sleep and prayerful singing bowl sound and vibration enrich this experience offering profound rest and renewal while soul remains aware in a state of numinous Union with The Sacred. Lectio Divina, connecting with vast night sky, an optional walk in the woods, and remaining awake as souls to both synchronicities and dreams whispering spiritual guidance, healing, and Encounter round out our gathering around gifts found in winter and Sacred darkness.

Fee: \$255 (Includes Friday and Saturday lodging; Saturday breakfast, lunch, and dinner; Sunday breakfast & lunch)

Commuter Fee: \$195 (Includes Saturday lunch, dinner; Sunday lunch)



Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel is a Franciscan affiliate who has been leading spiritual retreats for over a quarter century. She is a certified meditation, yoga and advanced yoga nidra instructor, sound healer, spiritual director/companion, dream guide, energy healer and qigong instructor, emerita college chaplain and Episcopal priest.

Register Online: bit.ly/WintersWisdom or call 319-395-6700

The Conscious Reset: A December Retreat for Intentional Living

Friday, Dec. 11, 6:30 p.m. – Sunday, Dec. 13, 11:00 a.m.

Facilitator: Leslie Schwarting

Growing an orchid requires more than sunlight and water—it asks for patience, awareness, and a quiet devotion to the unfolding of life. In many ways, living an intentional life is the same. It isn't about perfection or constant productivity; it's about presence, consciousness, and the courage to choose—again and again—what truly matters.

As the year comes to a close, December offers a powerful threshold—a natural moment to pause, reflect, and realign before stepping into a new cycle. Rather than rushing into the new year carrying the same patterns, this retreat invites you to slow down and consciously complete the year with clarity, gratitude, and intention.

This retreat is an invitation to step away from the noise of daily life and return to a deeper rhythm of being. A rhythm rooted in awareness, self-discovery, and purposeful living. Like the slow, graceful unfolding of an orchid bloom, this experience supports you in reconnecting with your inner wisdom, awakening your consciousness, and aligning with the life you are ready to cultivate in the year ahead.

Together, we will create a sacred space for reflection, renewal, and transformation. Through guided mindfulness practices, conscious movement, meaningful conversation, and intentional stillness, you'll gently release what no longer serves you and make space for what is ready to emerge.

December is not only an ending—it is a powerful beginning in disguise. When we take time to listen inward before the new year arrives, we step forward with deeper clarity, grounded intention, and a renewed connection to our purpose.

Come exactly as you are. Leave more grounded, more aware, and more fully alive—rooted in intention and ready to step into the new year with clarity, consciousness, and an open heart.

Fee: \$255 (Includes Friday and Saturday lodging, Saturday breakfast, lunch, dinner, and Sunday breakfast)

Commuter Fee: \$195 (Includes sessions, Saturday lunch and dinner)



Leslie Schwarting is a full-time spiritual director and retreat facilitator at Prairiewoods. She finds great fulfillment in supporting others as they seek to deepen their connection to the Divine, themselves and others, and is deeply empathetic to their personal and spiritual growth.

Register Online: bit.ly/ConsciousResetor call 319-395-6700

A Warm & Cozy Holiday Retreat

Friday, Dec. 18, 6:30 p.m. – Sunday, Dec. 20, 1:00 p.m.

Facilitators: Rev. Jean Sullivan & Ann Jackson PBVM

As winter settles across the land and the days grow shorter, the season invites us to slow down, gather close and remember the warmth that lives within community and the rhythms of Earth.

Yet the holidays can also bring busyness, expectations and the occasional shadow of loneliness. This retreat offers a sacred pause—a gentle invitation to step away from the rush and enter a weekend of warmth, reflection and light-hearted celebration.

Together we will savor simple joys that awaken the spirit of the season. Retreatants will bake and frost cookies together in the kitchen, share stories and laughter while sipping hot chocolate by the fire and wander along a luminary-lit path through the winter woods, allowing the quiet beauty of the land to calm the heart. There will also be space for quiet reflection, conversation and rest.

Guided by the spirit of hospitality and ecological mindfulness, this retreat invites you to reconnect with the gifts that winter offers: stillness, companionship, gratitude and hope. Through shared meals, simple rituals and moments of joy, participants will remember that the light of the season grows strongest when it is nurtured together.

Come gently coax your holiday spirit into joy while surrounded by the beauty of the winter landscape and the warmth of a welcoming community.

Bring a friend and receive 20% off your registration!

Fee: \$255 (Includes Friday and Saturday lodging, Saturday breakfast, lunch and dinner; Sunday breakfast and lunch)

Commuter Fee: \$195 (Includes Saturday lunch and dinner; Sunday lunch)



Rev. Jean Sullivan serves as Prairiewoods' Hospitality Coordinator, welcoming groups that come to Prairiewoods to enjoy beautiful spaces, wonderful food and the great outdoors!



Ann Jackson, PBVM is Prairiewoods' coordinator of spiritual services. Blending love of nature, literature, leadership and spirituality, Ann delights in listening with others to the energy of Spirit stirring creativity, passion, discernment and service.



Register Online: bit.ly/WarmCozyRetreat or call 319-395-6700

Power of Silence: Mini Silent Direct Retreat

Friday, Jan. 8, 11:00 a.m. – Tuesday, Jan. 12, 1:00 p.m.

Facilitators: Leslie Schwarting, Ann Jackson PBVM

The beginning of a new year carries a quiet invitation—to pause, listen and return to what matters most. At Prairiewoods Eco-Spirituality Center, the winter prairie rests beneath the wide Iowa sky, offering a sacred landscape for stillness and reflection. This Mini Silent Directed Retreat invites you into that same spaciousness of spirit.

During these days of gentle silence, retreatants enter a contemplative rhythm that allows the noise of daily life to settle. In this sacred quiet, many discover a deeper awareness of the Divine Presence moving within and through all of creation.

Each day you will meet individually with a trained spiritual director who listens with you for the movements of Spirit in your life. These conversations provide compassionate guidance and support as you notice where the Holy may be inviting healing, growth or new beginnings in the year ahead.

Silence creates the space to notice your thoughts, feelings and longings. Throughout the retreat you are invited to pray, journal, reflect, rest and walk the land. At Prairiewoods, the natural world becomes a partner in contemplation. The winter prairie, quiet woods and open sky gently mirror the stillness you are cultivating within.

Optional contemplative practices such as yoga, art, or sound meditation offer additional ways to deepen your experience. Shared meals are simple and quiet, allowing the body to be nourished while the spirit continues its listening.

If you long to begin the year grounded in peace, clarity and connection—with yourself, with Spirit and with the living Earth—this retreat offers a sacred container for that journey.

Fee: \$500 (Includes lodging, meals and spiritual direction. Partial scholarship funds are available.)



Leslie Schwarting is a full-time spiritual director and retreat facilitator at Prairiewoods. She finds great fulfillment in supporting others as they seek to deepen their connection to the Divine, themselves and others, and is deeply empathetic to their personal and spiritual growth.



Ann Jackson, PBVM is Prairiewoods' coordinator of spiritual services. Blending love of nature, literature, leadership and spirituality, Ann delights in listening with others to the energy of Spirit stirring creativity, passion, discernment and service.

Register Online: bit.ly/MiniSilent2027 or call 319-395-6700

Your Next Chapter: Navigating Change

Friday, Jan. 22, 6:30 p.m. – Sunday, Jan. 24, 11:00 a.m.

Facilitator: Leslie Schwarting

Life has a way of opening new chapters—sometimes gently, sometimes unexpectedly. You may be stepping into a new phase after a job change, a divorce, becoming an empty nester, the loss of a loved one, or simply sensing that something in your life is ready to shift. At times like these, it's natural to pause and ask: What's next for me?

The beginning of a new year offers a powerful opportunity to slow down, reflect, and reconnect with what truly matters. Instead of rushing into another busy season, this overnight wellness retreat invites you to step away from everyday demands and give yourself the gift of space—space for mindfulness, self-discovery, healing, and personal renewal.

During this personal development and wellness retreat, you will:

- Explore a compassionate roadmap for life's turning points, offering insight and permission to move forward with clarity and self-trust.
- Practice mindfulness, acceptance, and self-compassion, discovering the healing power of meeting your life exactly where it is.
- Build a toolkit for navigating change, including grounding and spiritual practices that support emotional well-being and inner balance.
- Clarify your core values and discover how living in alignment with what matters most can guide your decisions and direction.
- Connect with the wisdom of your future self, gaining perspective and inspiration for your next chapter.

This retreat is ideal for anyone seeking clarity, healing, mindfulness, and personal transformation at the start of the new year. Whether you are navigating change, searching for renewed purpose, or simply longing for time to reflect and reconnect, this experience offers a supportive and restorative space for growth. Come as you are.

Fee: \$255 (Includes Friday and Saturday lodging, Saturday breakfast, lunch, dinner, and Sunday breakfast)

Commuter Fee: \$195 (Includes sessions, Saturday lunch and dinner)



Leslie Schwarting is a full-time spiritual director and retreat facilitator at Prairiewoods. She finds great fulfillment in supporting others as they seek to deepen their connection to the Divine, themselves and others, and is deeply empathetic to their personal and spiritual growth.

Register Online: bit.ly/NextChapterRetreat or call 319-395-6700