

January/February 2021

Prairiewoods

A CATHOLIC, FRANCISCAN ECOSPIRITUALITY RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER

Imagining 2021

Leaning into the Wider “We”

“Let us dream, then, as a single human family, as fellow travelers sharing the same flesh, as children of the same earth which is our common home, each of us bringing the richness of his or her beliefs and convictions, each of us with his or her own voice, brothers and sisters all.”

—Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti*, §8

“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited, whereas imagination embraces the entire world, stimulating progress, giving birth to evolution.”

—Albert Einstein

“Imagine all the people living life in peace ... You may say I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one. I hope someday, you’ll join us. And the world will be as one.”

—John Lennon

The New Year 2021 begins with an urgent, potentially paradigm-altering invitation: to risk boldly, and to lean into the wider “We.” Noted mythologist and Prairiewoods’ *Spirituality in the 21st Century 2020* facilitator, Sharon Blackie reminds us that this remarkable time represents a critical “choice point,” and it is—by necessity—no time to play it safely. “We’re here to risk everything to fulfil our calling, to walk wholeheartedly along the path which leads us there, even if that path sometimes is dangerous, or hard.” We each carry a profound and essential gift within us, a necessary gift

for the good of the whole. “That gift isn’t just about the unfolding and growth of our own individual soul—it’s about serving the unfolding of the cosmos, and participating in its journey of becoming. It’s the source of our unique capacity to transform the world, to become an eager participant in its becoming” (“Becoming who we are,” *The Art of Enchantment* blog at www.SharonBlackie.net, Oct. 22, 2020). Sharon is inviting us to enter into the realm of the wider “We.” How might we do that in 2021 and in our current context, which is fraught with such rancorous division and heartache among our human kin?

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“Love also impels us towards universal communion. No one can mature or find fulfilment by withdrawing from others. By its very nature, love calls for growth in openness and the ability to accept others as part of a continuing adventure that makes every periphery converge in a greater sense of mutual belonging. As Jesus told us: ‘You are all brothers’ (Matthew 23:8).”

—Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti*

Although this newsletter is our January/February issue, it will be in your hands in December of 2020—a year universally acknowledged as presenting innumerable challenges for literally everyone in our global family. This reality gives new meaning to the season of Advent, as we prepare our hearts for the coming of Light to the world. I can't think of a time when letting go of the darkness I am holding in my heart has been more necessary. As Sharon Blackie wrote recently, “The first thing we have to do ... is to stop all this despair. Stop writing the world off. Stop writing ourselves off” (“Becoming who we are,” *The Art of Enchantment* blog at www.SharonBlackie.net, Oct. 22, 2020). What I am discovering in my Advent preparation is that releasing my grip on the despair, on the dark residue of pain and grief and fear from this difficult year, creates space for hope—and clears my vision to recognize the many reasons for gratitude.

On behalf of everyone at Prairiewoods, I wish to express our deep gratitude for:

... each and every one of you who took the time to engage with us this year through participation in online programs and retreats, reading and responding to our blog and Facebook posts, or scheduling spiritual direction or a private retreat in one of our hermitages.

... the many friends who took the time to sit down and write a card, note or email expressing your care, your prayers, and your support for Prairiewoods and our staff.

... sharing your financial resources to allow us to continue offering a place of peace and transformation to all comers, whether online or on these sacred 70 acres.

... showing up in unexpected ways and unanticipated numbers to assist with derecho response and restoration.

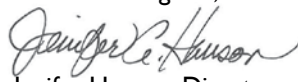
... entering into co-creative partnerships with us, as together we strive to bring about “the more beautiful world our hearts know is possible.”

... being part of the loving community of mutual belonging that is Prairiewoods.

This incredible community would not exist without the founding vision, sponsorship, hospitality and love of Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. For their unwavering support throughout the years—particularly in 2020—we are especially grateful.

May each and every one of you experience peace this holiday season, and a renewal of hope and joy with the coming of the New Year.

Peace and all good,


Jenifer Hanson, Director



Prairiewoods is a Catholic 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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What spiritual seekers require for today's challenges is a deep dive into the "imaginal realm," a liminal space that hovers between the visible and invisible, the spiritual and the material worlds. Renowned spiritual author Cynthia Bourgeault says the imaginal realm finds its native home in the "eye of the heart." It can be accessed through a pervasive, perennial awareness that shimmers with the perceptive acuity of deep wisdom, if we might only pay attention.

Bourgeault describes the imaginal realm as having its own language, one that requires a deeper listening, one that transcends specious intellectual certitude. "And when all the intellectual attractions have been stripped away, and it is allowed to speak in its own native tongue, what it speaks of, with surprising simplicity and directness, is beauty, hope and a mysteriously deeper order of coherence and aliveness flowing through this earthly terrain connecting it to the infinite wellsprings of cosmic creativity and abundance ... It calls us to a renewed sense of dignity, accountability, belongingness, cosmic intimacy, and love ... Our hearts get this language. It is called 'imaginal' because, while it is invisible to the physical eye, it is still clearly perceptible through the eye of the heart, which is in fact what the word *imagination* specifically implies in its original Islamic context: *direct perception through the eye of the heart, not through mental reflection or fantasy* ... The imaginal is a meeting ground, a kind of cosmic intertidal zone—and as in all intertidal zones, nourishment and metamorphosis furnish the principal order of business here. In this realm the fruits of our human striving—both conscious and unconscious—are offered up to the whole" (Cynthia Bourgeault, *Eye of the Heart: A Spiritual Journey into the Imaginal Realm*, 2020).

In a Newtonian universe, preference for observable, measurable, verifiable data is reified as "reality." Bourgeault notes, "Of course, in the modern West we now view the interior landscape through the filter of Wordsworthian romanticism and hear the word *imagination* as suggesting something personal, subjective, illusory, or 'made up'—which is of course exactly the opposite of what the term is actually intended to convey" (*Eye of the Heart*). This pre-quantum world-view effectively serves to relegate our experiential knowledge of "unverifiable data," e.g., inter-personal energy exchanges and shifts, full-spectrum sensorial awareness and communal consciousness,

experiences of déjà vu, serendipity and synchronicity, dreamwork, nature therapy, the efficacy of sacred presence and prayer, mystical experience, among many other ways of sensing and knowing, to the realm of the incredible. Much has changed with the advent of the quantum universe! In the post-Einsteinian world, "it is no longer possible to think that way; the old metaphysical maps must be redrawn to a new baseline in which energy, not substance, is the coin of the realm" (Bourgeault, *Eye of the Heart*). In a quantum universe, it is not only credible to acknowledge the imperceptible, subtle energy that flows in and through the universe, but it is necessary for "that *quality of aliveness* (emphasis added) moving through this realm, interpenetrating, cohering, filling things with the fragrance of implicit meaning whose lines do not converge in this world alone but at a point beyond" (*Eye of the Heart*). The art of being fully alive, being



fully present to the expansive quality of radically inclusive love, and being fully imbued with wild, exuberant creativity and unrestrained imagination are essential skills for spiritual sojourners today. If we are to reach beyond our anthropocentric myopia and lean into the embrace of the wider "We," we have to learn to play in the BIG sandlot, let go of outcomes, allow for improvisational surprises, and join in the fun of the cosmic whirling!

What is even more critical for spiritual seekers today is the efficacy of tapping into the imaginal realm for the good of the whole. Humans—among all life forms in the web of creation—are least likely to go first to the wider "We" for challenges to our perceived intellectual insuperability. We are only recently learning to tap into the wisdom of the planetary elders and our fellow travelers in the journey of the universe, but we are learning, slowly and steadily. Bio-mimicry and nature therapy, along with centering prayer, meditation, embodied prayer, energy healing, storytelling and mythic imagination, dance, art, music, play, accompaniment of our beloved creature-kin, and especially *listening*, really tuning into nature's rhythms and wildness, all serve as good primers. We can no longer neglect the wisdom of the unfathomable silence, of the scintillating fish and the trembling leaf, the eddying pools and the wild dynamism of the changing seasons. Wherever our deep dive into the imaginal realm may take us, we crave the depth and the flourishing of the wider "We."

Our time is now. The imaginal realm is beckoning. How might we enter this present moment with the eye of the heart?

Communal Examen for the New Year

A Communal Examen is a concept borrowed from St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*, a 450-year-old tradition. It asks us as a community to examine our consciousness as we look at the unfolding of God's work in our lives, where the Spirit is moving in our experiences of consolation and desolation, and how it might help us discern our interior disposition for mission moving forward. For the last several years, we have included a Communal Examen in our January/February Newsletter as a way for us to reflect on the previous year and step into the new one. We invite you to enter the liminal, imaginal realm, opening to that place in your own soul where your dreams and desires and hopes rest. In this time of seeing the unseen, use these questions to help you nurture your relationships with the Source of All Being, Creation, self and others:

- What is it about the new year that is liminal?
- What can we imagine for ourselves in the new year?
- What can we imagine for the land?
- What do we imagine the land is imagining?
- How does deep listening open us to the imaginal world and to the voice of the creator?
- How are we like seeds in the winter? Like prairie seeds in the snow?
- What is sensed and unseen in us, and how does that lead us in our calling?
- What is our special gift and how do we give our gift in the new year?
- How can we open the eye of our heart?
- How can our imagination bring creativity and abundance for all?

Caring for the Land Post-Derecho

Nancy Hoffman, FSPA, and our new Land Care & Holistic Ecology Coordinator, August Stolba, offer their words of wisdom as they work together (and with many volunteers) on land care and derecho recovery.

We sigh a deep sense of relief that our woodlands are once again safe for our creatures and our guests. We have tried to do our best for the health of the land and its inhabitants.

New small brush piles will supply winter homes and protection for many animals. We are aware that the food supply for some of the animals has been diminished. Thankfully the prairie grasses will still supply much nutrition. As we worked daily, we were privy to the abundant life all around us. A flock of more than a dozen turkeys gave us many smiles. Deer studied us as we observed them. Their rituals have not changed, and romance was in the air. Active and chattering squirrels were in competition with all the noise we caused.

History of the land was occasionally revealed as evidence of past farming times. Barbed wire and tools of other times were unearthed.

The Green Prairie Garden, a partnership with Metro Catholic Outreach, was put to bed with a very successful season, despite the storm. Downed trees were removed and fences were mended. Garden care, production and harvest efforts didn't miss a beat. Our orchard didn't fare as well. Most of the fruit trees were destroyed. However, our dedicated orchard volunteer looks enthusiastically at new plans for future production.

Just as everyone else, we struggled in how to cope with the enormous amount of material caused by downed and damaged trees. We have tried to find creative ways to repurpose this valuable resource. Despite that effort we still had to haul some to holding places. We are grateful to the cities of Hiawatha and Cedar Rapids for their help and for the awareness that they are working hard to repurpose as much of this material as possible.

Prairiewoods lost between 750 and 1,200 trees in the derecho, and while our hearts grieve this loss, we are recognizing the potential for new growth. Since the tree canopy has opened, there is light for this new growth. There is loss and there is light, and we hold deep gratitude that our big oaks survived. Going forward we will invite the community to be part of seed spreading, dancing and stomping events through the cold of winter, at the time prairies love to be seeded. In the spring we will plant trees and can be strategic about the planting, memorializing and placement of these new second growth trees. We are also working on areas of *hugelkultur*, where Prairiewoods trees who fell in the derecho can be part of permaculture efforts and continue to nurture and nurse new trees.

We are beyond thankful for the many volunteers and wonderful contractors who have helped us and continue to help us with recovery. We would not be at this stage of recovery were it not for the dedicated and untiring volunteers who have given us their wisdom, guidance and much hard muscle work. And to you our dear Prairiewoods family, your encouragement and support was and continues to be a major part of this recovery. This has been a valuable learning process for us. Thank you to God who carried us through. Thank you to God for continuing to bless us.

Spirituality in the 21st Century Celebrating Prairiewoods' 25th Anniversary

Flaring Forth into Fullness of Life

with Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, David Abram,
Kathleen Rude & Sara Thomsen
April 30–May 1 (via Zoom)

Prairiewoods celebrates our 25th anniversary year with a truly special *Spirituality in the 21st Century* event. This year's online gathering features Thomas Berry biographers **Mary Evelyn Tucker** and **John Grim** from the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology (<https://fore.yale.edu/>). Tucker and Grim are the executive producers of the Emmy Award–winning film *Journey of the Universe*, narrated by Brian Swimme (<https://www.journeyoftheuniverse.org/>). This year's event also welcomes eco-philosopher **David Abram**, founding director of the Alliance for Wild Ethics (<https://wildethics.org/>) and author of *Spell of the Sensuous* and *Becoming Animal*. We will also be joined by Joanna Macy—protege and Active Hope aficionada **Kathleen Rude**, author of the eco-mystical novel *The Redemption of Red Fire Woman* (<https://gaiawisdom.org/>). The beautiful musical accompaniment of **Sara Thomsen** (<https://sarathomsen.com>) will weave lyrical poetry throughout the weekend. This event promises to be one of profound story, an opportunity for healing and refreshment, a wakeful enlightenment for our imagination with music as balm for the soul, and a gentle invitation for immersion into the wider “We” we have been longing for with all our hearts.

From Prairiewoods' founding until 2021, our mission has been framed with the Universe Story, a 13.7-billion-year journey that celebrates the wild fecundity of life from the Great Flaring

Forth forward. Mary Evelyn and John share a passion and abiding love for the pioneering work of self-described “geologist” Thomas Berry, as well as his field's foremost formative architect, Jesuit paleontologist and eco-philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. They will take us along on a fantastic exploration of how Teilhard's and Thomas' work continues to unfold in eco-spirituality circles today. As a spellbinding artist and cartographer of the numinous in creation, David captivates listeners with his uncanny ability to draw us into communion with the breathing, animate Earth, a community of living subjects all pulsating with the rhythm of the unfolding cosmos. After an hour or two with David submerging us in what Berry called the “single gorgeous celebratory event” that is creation, we will begin to feel more in sync with our creature-kin and arbor-elders, the stones and the crashing waves, than we ever thought possible. And as an environmentalist, shamanic practitioner, writer and activist/educator, Kathleen will invite us to enter into the very fabric of creation's extended family, the ineffable beauty and mystery of the web of life, as healing for our spiritual malaise. Along with our beloved musician-of-Earth Sara Thomsen, they will coax us (ala Thoreau) to “live deep and suck all the marrow out of life,” and celebrate the unfolding of the Universe Story as a context for spiritual sojourners in 2021. If you are up for the mission, come expecting the joy of surprise and a taste of new life!



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

Sacred Mystery in the Heart of Creation Retreat Friday, Jan. 8, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

Facilitator: Linda Neil, CSJ

This interactive, online presentation via Zoom integrates the gospel with our call to care for Creation. Sacred Mystery pulsates throughout the universe. Jesus was immersed in this mystery. He drew so much of his inspiration and so many of his teachings from the wisdom and wonder of Creation. The program includes reflections on the scriptures in light of the Universe Story, the Beatitudes and selected parables. Participants will reflect on Jesus' witness to the awesomeness of our Earth using images from Hubble, the artwork of Marion Honors, CSJ, and the photography of Clare Pelkey, CSJ.



The afternoon session will reflect on experiencing creation through the lens of the three principles of the Universe. This can open our eyes and our heart to experiencing nature more intimately. The principles are manifestations of the Divine. Thomas Berry calls them "interdependent dynamic energy that courses through every aspect of life ... the governing intentionality of all."

There will be opportunities for personal reflection, group sharing and time in between for a walk, lunch and Zoom screen break.

Fee: \$75



Active Hope: Answering Earth's Call for Transformative Healing and Loving Action Retreat Friday, Feb. 12, 6:30–9 p.m., & Saturday, Feb. 13, 9 a.m.–6 p.m. (with offline time included)

Facilitator: Kathleen Rude

"Active Hope is not wishful thinking. Active Hope is waking up to the beauty of life on whose behalf we can act. We belong to this world. The web of life is calling us forth at this time and we are here to play our part. Active Hope is a readiness to discover the strengths in ourselves and in others; a readiness to discover the reasons for hope and the occasions for love."

—Joanna Macy



In this online retreat via Zoom, we will move through the spiral of The Work That Reconnects with the understanding that Earth is calling us to engage in transformative healing and loving action during these challenging times. Through our exploration, we will cultivate and strengthen our resilience to engage with COVID-19, the climate crisis, racial and environmental injustice, and overall anxiety in our lives.

We will spend time online in community and offline in self-reflection (with time outside if you're able) to receive inspiration and healing for our weary, overwhelmed hearts and souls.

In supportive and trustworthy space, we will honor our pain for the world, reconnect to active hope, and find clarity around how we can play a part in the healing of our communities and our beautiful planet.

This online retreat is designed with lots of breaks, offline exercises and a lunch break. The workshop is highly interactive with ritual and sharing in pairs, small groups and full group conversations. It includes experiential practices, inspirational readings, singing and simple rituals. It's engaging, invigorating and gives you tools for dealing with the challenges of living in difficult times.

Fee: \$150



Treasuring Our Trees

Did you participate in our Oct. 25 online event Treasuring Our Trees: Cedar Rapids and Surrounding Areas Following the Derecho, co-sponsored by Trees Forever, Indian Creek Nature Center, Prairiewoods, Cornell College Chaplain & Spiritual Life, Winding Pathways, People's Unitarian Universalist Church and Coe College? If so, you know how powerful the experience of gathering together on behalf of our fallen trees was for our communal psyche. We began the long process of grieving and healing following the decimation of our trees from the Aug. 10 derecho. An area-wide memorial afforded us the opportunity to honor, celebrate, give thanks and remember our revered arbor-elders through ritual, poetry, prayer and song.



Treasuring Our Trees, Part 2

Jan. 25–29 (a series of 40-minute Zoom sessions, times to be determined)

During the wintering months, we continue the journey of healing by going deeper, listening, doing the hard interior work of reflection and healing, while learning about ongoing care for creation and planning for the future. Throughout the week of Jan. 25–29, we will offer a series of 40-minute Zoom sessions to help us learn from the trees how to plunge deeper, to renew ourselves spiritually from the battering that has been 2020, and to learn how to care for the remaining wildlife habitat, stumps, logs, hollowed out soil, water and air that have been affected by the derecho, and also how to plan for spring planting when the time is ripe. Watch www.Prairiewoods.org for opportunities to log onto your favorite sessions and make the most of the dormancy of winter! In caring for our trees, together we can learn the art of communal healing and co-creating a bright future.

Treasuring Our Trees, Part 3

Sunday, April 11 (online, times to be determined)

Spring is the time for new life—for planting, for watering and for active hope! We have been doing the hard interior work of grieving, going deeper and learning, and in spring, we will join in the communal celebration of planting and welcoming new life! We come together as a community once more to lean into the role of courageous visionaries, imagining and planting a whole new generation of baby trees, caring for the sacred Earth, including the soil, air and water, through ritual, song, poetry and prayer. Please mark your calendar and plan to join us as we sing songs of joy once again with the exultant Earth and ritualize the welcome of our beloved baby trees and the resplendence of the trees we have all around us!

Fee: Free

Metta Yoga

Mondays & Thursdays, Jan. 4–Feb. 25, 9:30–10:30 a.m.

Facilitators: Carla Brems & Heather English

Experience the healing powers of meditative yoga from the spiritual environment and natural beauty of Prairiewoods via Zoom. Join us as we link our movements with our breath and cultivate strength, flexibility and relaxation through regular hatha-style yoga classes. RYT-200 Hour Certified Yoga Alliance Instructors Carla Brems and Heather English offer Gentle/Beginner's Yoga every Monday and Thursday from 9:30–10:30 a.m. People of all fitness levels and abilities are encouraged to participate whenever available. Carla Brems enjoys teaching hatha-style yoga so that all feel welcome and safe to appreciate and enjoy the physical, mental and spiritual benefits that yoga can bring. Heather English began practicing yoga for the mental health benefits and became a yoga instructor in order to share these amazing benefits with others. Heather is inspired by the potential that a regular yoga practice has for impacting so many areas of life. In fact, it was her yoga training that motivated her to begin crafting as a career, to share her crafting with others, and to regularly explore the intersection of yoga and creativity. Let's see how Carla and Heather can help us benefit from yoga! Please plan to attend via Zoom from a quiet corner in your home or yard with your screen of choice!

Fee: \$99 for eleven-punch card or \$60 for six-punch card, one punch per session

Dusk to Dawn: Transforming Grief into Joy & Gratitude

Monday, Jan. 4, 5:30–7 p.m.

Facilitator: Ann Jackson, PBVM

2020 posed deep invitation to courageously accept loss. Loss and grief pervaded local communities, the country, the world, Earth and all her creatures. We stand at the dawn of a new year and invite you to join us for a simple celebration—via Zoom—where word and song, silence and symbol may empower us to stand together through dusk honoring loss yet embracing the hope of dawn into 2021. Our celebrating together engenders balance and awakens us to the healing energies of joy and gratitude.

In my grief I saw myself being held, Us all holding one another in this incredible web of loving kindness. Grief and love in the same place. I felt as if my heart would burst with holding it all.

—A Zimbabwean woman, cited in Margaret Wheatley's *Perseverance*

Fee: Free-will offering

Offered in Partnership with Cedar Memorial Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

Information Sessions: Mondays, Jan. 4 & 11, 5:30–6:30 p.m.

Eight-Week Series: Mondays, Jan. 18–March 8, 5:30–8 p.m.

Combined Extended Class: Saturday, Feb. 27, 9 a.m.–3 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 sense of well-being. In the eight-week Mindfulness-Based Stress

Reduction (MBSR) program via Zoom, we will cultivate the skill of mindfulness through formal meditation practices and informal integrative practices. Facilitator Chris Klug, a grief counselor and mindfulness teacher, has been an instructor in the Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction program at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics since 2001. This series consists of a two-and-a-half-hour class each week for eight weeks and one extended six-and-a-half-hour Saturday class, all via Zoom. If you want to participate in this online eight-week series, please attend one of the information sessions.
Fee: Free for information sessions, \$300 for eight-week series (partial scholarships available through Cedar Memorial)



Prayer Experience Series
Tuesdays, Jan. 5–Feb. 23, 11:30 a.m.–12 p.m.
Facilitator: Angie Pierce Jennings

We are blessed with many ways to pray and reflect including songful prayer, contemplative prayer, *visio divina*, embodied prayer, silent prayer and guided meditation. Join us for this ongoing prayer series via Zoom and experience the joys of prayer and meditation together. Registration is appreciated but not required.
Fee: Free-will offering

Going Inward with Sounds & Vibrations
Mondays; Jan. 11, Jan. 25, Feb. 8 & Feb. 22; 6–7 p.m.
Facilitator: Kathy Broghammer

Experience sound, stillness, gentle movement, playfulness and relaxation through the enigmatic vibrations of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls. Over Zoom, Kathy Broghammer will lead us in gentle movement through the song of bowls to connect with our inner selves. We will be invited to sit or lie down to listen and just be. We will hear the sounds and feel the vibrations of the singing bowls going inward. Let's let our souls rest and allow ourselves to be recreated!
Fee: \$10 per session

Spiritual Renewal Day
Mondays, Jan. 11 & Feb. 8, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.
Facilitator: Angie Pierce Jennings

Join us for a tranquil day of spiritual renewal from wherever you are. The day will include an opening meditation session, morning yoga, an individual spiritual direction session, singing bowl prayer, a guided eco-spirituality experience and a closing reflection session via Zoom throughout the day. You'll also have free time to rest or explore the season outdoors. In preparation for the day, you will receive gentle instruction about mindfully creating your own sacred space for the day. Find renewal and care for your mind, body and spirit on this special day. Registration and a deposit of \$50 are required five days in advance.
Fee: \$65



Teacher Mindfulness Retreat
Multiple dates available

Calling all teachers, professors, school and university staff! Do you need a bit of rest and relaxation? Come to Prairiewoods to restore your mind, body and spirit. Bring and prepare your own food in a small Hermitage, complete with full kitchen and comfortable living space. Rest. Walk the prairie and woodland trails. Meet with a mindfulness teacher and/or spiritual director to process the celebrations and challenges of teaching! Contact Ann Jackson, PBVM, at ajackson@prairiewoods.org to schedule retreat space.
Fee: FREE (Thanks to a generous donation offered by the Sisters of the Presentation, Dubuque, all costs will be covered!)

Holistic Healing for Educators & Classrooms

Credit 1: Friday, Feb. 26, 5:30–8:30 p.m.;
Saturday, Feb. 27, 8 a.m.–5:30 p.m.;
Sunday, Feb. 28, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.

Facilitators: Kim Seward, RN, BSN, CMI, & Ann Jackson, PBVM

Have the stressors of teaching, the pandemic, hybrid-learning, and daily life affected your personal happiness and well-being? Have you experienced difficulty finding time to engage in self-care activities that may help? In this one-hour credit course, learn “microinterventions” to use daily to reset your brain and empower you to fully show up with a compassionate heart toward yourself, your students, your family and the world.

Through practices of mindfulness, self-compassion and neuroscience, begin to restore holistic healing and build resiliency, joy, optimism and curiosity, leading to health and well-being. This course via Zoom provides educators and any school or university staff with research-based theory, collaborative design and opportunities to practice. A text, *Practicing Presence*, is included in the registration fee.

Credits 2 and 3 will be offered in summer/fall, 2021. Credit 2 (June 23–25) will offer practices of mindfulness, self-compassion and neuroscience to develop a personal classroom toolkit for use with students. Deepening your own mindfulness and self-compassion skills will also be explored. Credit 3 (fall 2021) will invite collaboration to review outcomes, provide feedback and cite next steps.

Fee: \$35/credit hour, paid to Grant Wood Area Education Agency (Due to a generous donation by the Sisters of the Presentation, Dubuque, all additional costs will be covered!)



Presencing: Enacting Change

Wednesdays, Jan. 13, Jan. 27, Feb. 10 & Feb. 24; 5–6:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Ann Jackson, PBVM

Are you feeling called to enact some small, local project to meet a need and don't know how to begin? Are there changes you desire to enact to enliven a dream for your family, group of friends or community? Are you wondering how to cultivate curiosity, compassion and courage in the face of prejudice, anger and fear? Activating our imagination and enacting new ideas to transform the world may be THE greatest challenge of our time. Come, listen and imagine with others. Together, we will each engage a personal project of choice to enact and share experiences and ideas via Zoom. Each person may engage next steps with the support, imagination and encouragement of other participants. These four gatherings will introduce a method called TheoryU, a framework developed by Otto Scharmer, Peter Senge and others at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). We will apply TheoryU to individual issues that matter.

Fee: \$100 for four-part series

Offered in Partnership with Unity Point Hospice

Soul Care: Creative Arts Grief Support Group

Wednesdays, Jan. 20 & Feb. 17, 5:30–7 p.m.

Facilitators: Jamie Siela, LISW, & Christine Wagner-Hecht, MDiv

Take time to connect with others in grief and engage the creative spark. Jamie Siela and Christine Wagner-Hecht from Unity Point Hospice facilitate this monthly grief group open to anyone grieving loss through death. On the third Wednesday of each month, come together on Zoom to explore a different creative art medium. Our January art project is a moon phase wall hanging. As we turn the page into a new year, we will look at how we can move forward, forever impacted by our grief experience. The new moon marks the time for new beginnings, growth and optimism. We will create a moon phase hanging that will signify the changes that come and go as we continue our grief journeys. In February, we will create heart art. The fingerprint of those we have lost will forever be carried in our hearts. We will take this time to come together and create heart

art in memory of our loved ones using tissue and contact paper. Registration is required eight days in advance. We will meet online via Zoom, and group art kits will be mailed one week prior to the session.

Fee: Free, includes all art supplies

Women in Interfaith Dialogue

Saturday, Jan. 23, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Facilitators: Angie Pierce Jennings, Virginia Melroy, Dr. Paula Sanchini & Mary Beth Siemann

Come together quarterly via Zoom with women of various faith traditions for conversations about faith and spirituality. In January, we will talk about the trees

we've known and loved throughout our lives, as well as our spiritual connection with trees personally and within our faith traditions. We are invited to bring a reading or prayer to share with the group as well as an object that represents the topic or our spirituality in general. Registration is required by Friday at noon.

Fee: \$15



Release, Reset, Return: Rediscover Your Original Balance

Wednesdays; Feb. 3, 10, 17 & 24; 6–7 p.m.

Facilitator: Gerry Hopkins

Traditional Chinese martial and healing arts offer methods for training ourselves to participate fully in life in a state of optimal alignment, relaxation and focus, allowing us to confidently accept and engage life's challenges with strength, balance and grace. Join facilitator Gerry Hopkins for this four-week series via Zoom.

Fee: \$20 for four-week series

Thank you, thank you and thank you again!

When we began shifting our programming to an online format in March, we had no idea how long we would need to offer our programs and retreats virtually. But 2020 has been a year of adaptation, and we continue to shift our programming to an online format. We couldn't do it without the flexibility and generosity of our program facilitators, many of whom have donated their time and talents for free. We want to express our sincere gratitude to all the facilitators who have donated their most valuable resource of all—their time—to ensure that we can continue to connect with our spiritual community from the safety of our homes. The work of spiritual deepening is essential now more than ever, and we couldn't do it without you.

Thanks to you, the prairie and woodland trails at Prairiewoods are open! When the derecho hit, we lost upwards of 750 beautiful trees and sustained damage to the land and several buildings. Without our derecho cleanup volunteers, it would have been impossible to reopen the land in just three short months. But with the tireless efforts of our devoted staff and volunteers, our land is now available for those who need it. While no one expected this year to require even more adaptation, we are marveling at the blessings that surround us, and those blessings are chiefly the people who call Prairiewoods home, showing up with great generosity, flexibility and willingness to give back wherever they can. Thank you, truly, for all you've done and all you continue to do and be during this unique time!

Donors (September & October 2020)

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

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Thank you!



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**"The light shines in the
darkness, and the darkness
has not overcome it."
—John 1:5**

*May you have a peaceful holiday
season and a light-filled new year!*

photo by Joni Reed Cooley

March/April 2021

Prairiewoods

A CATHOLIC, FRANCISCAN ECOSPIRITUALITY RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER



Jubilee (noun)

- the celebration of any of certain anniversaries, as the twenty-fifth, fiftieth, sixtieth or seventy-fifth
- any season or occasion of rejoicing or festivity
- rejoicing or jubilation

—partial entry from dictionary.com

Whenever people join together in an endeavor that is big in scope, challenging of resources, and visionary or new in concept, there are moments that crystallize and become the seeds from which something meaningful has the potential to grow. Such were the moments when six Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA) spent time walking the property their community knew as “the farm,” listening for what the land wanted them to create there. Or at the neighborhood meeting where two guests heard the idea for a center dedicated to the New Universe Story and advised against it—only to later serve as faithful friends and Board members. Or the muddy July day when the first guests arrived for retreat at the newly-built ecospirituality center which still lacked sidewalks and window blinds! These moments of quiet reflection, shared (if trepidatious) commitment and communal laughter formed the seeds from which grew the place of peace and transformation now known as Prairiewoods. Twenty five years later, we joyfully raise our voices, declaring:

Praise be!

When Pope Francis chose these words to title his eco-encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*, he echoed the words of St. Francis of Assisi, from the beautiful “Canticle of Creation,” writing, “In the words of this beautiful canticle St. Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life. Our very bodies are made up of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters” (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*). Here at Prairiewoods, with joy and gratitude we echo both men named Francis when we take the phrase “Praise be!” as our 25th Jubilee theme. It celebrates our Franciscan heritage and our care for Earth, both inseparable from our mission, vision and values as articulated and lived this past quarter century.

Praise be! for our foundresses: FSPA Sisters Betty Daugherty, Joann Gehling, Maryam Gosling, Nancy Hoffman, Joanne Moeller and Therese Pedretti, and founding board member Lucille Winnike. Their vision enlivens Prairiewoods, setting a strong foundation rooted in evolutionary consciousness and flourishing in sacred relationship with the Source of All Being, Earth, self and others.

(continued on page 3)

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*Where the people who love you are gathered
Under the wise wishing tree
May we all be considered then straight on delivered
Down to the jubilee*

*'Cause the people who love you are waiting
And they'll wait just as long as need be
When we look back and say those were halcyon days
We're talking 'bout jubilee*

—Lamont Hiebert, "Jubilee" (recorded by Mary Chapin Carpenter)

Listening to the stories told by the FSPA sisters who founded

Prairiewoods and those who have worked here for the better part of 25 years, you begin to have a sense of Prairiewoods' extraordinary origins. The six foundresses spent time in study and contemplation, walked the land and even slept on it, in an effort to listen to the voice of the land. They changed the direction of their own lives, developed new skills (Nancy Hoffman, FSPA, became a holistic practitioner, for example) in service to the needs of this Center founded on the Universe Story, at the intersection of science and theology. There is laughter about those early days, when everyone pitched in to feed the guests or make the beds. "We didn't know what we didn't know!" said Sister Nancy one time after sharing a story of that first summer.

When we look back and say those were halcyon days/We're talking 'bout jubilee!

At its inception, Prairiewoods was fully staffed and supported by the FSPA community. Even though we have a largely lay staff now, the FSPA community continues to support Prairiewoods with their physical presence on staff, with values rooted in the example of Saints Francis and Clare of Assisi, and with their financial contributions. Over the days and years since Prairiewoods was founded, this place of peace and transformation has grown into a community of people that continues to expand, drawn here by the opportunity for peaceful exploration of relationship, spiritual deepening, communion with Earth, and the deep hospitality of being welcomed as you are, whatever your culture or religion.


Where the people you love are gathered/under the wise wishing tree...

Twenty-five years into the story of Prairiewoods, I find myself firmly rooted in the belief that what is yet to come will be a match for the beauty of what was and what is Prairiewoods. Father Richard Rohr is fond of saying that Franciscans stand on the outer edge of the inside of Catholicism. At Prairiewoods, practicing evolutionary consciousness means we are often stretching the edges of our understanding of what it means to be part of Creation. As we learn from our nonhuman relations who share this sacred space, we continue to ask: who is the wider WE we are becoming?

Rather than call this our 25th anniversary, we've opted for the term jubilee. Our Prairiewoods year of jubilee will be focused on our joy and gratitude for the many gifts, great and small, of the past and the present—as well as those we anticipate in the coming years. We hope to explore all three: our past, our present and our future in newsletters in the coming months. We hope you'll join in the jubilee with us!

**'Cause the people who love you are waiting/And they'll wait just as long
as need be .../We're talking 'bout jubilee**

Peace and all good,


Jenifer Hanson, Director



Prairiewoods is a Catholic 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.

Please address all correspondence to:

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Hiawatha, IA 52233
319-395-6700

www.Prairiewoods.org

Ecospirit@Prairiewoods.org



(continued from page 1)

Praise be! for the entire FSPA community, whose sponsorship, commitment and direct engagement both undergirds us and buoys us. Your charisms and deep concerns are infused in our mission and daily endeavors, and our gratitude is beyond words.

Praise be! for 25 years of friendship, fellowship and spiritual communion with our retreatants, facilitators, guests, volunteers, donors, staff and partner organizations. Praise be for this community that has given of your hearts, energy and love to Prairiewoods—the place and the people—unstintingly.

Praise be! for this beautiful land and the incredible blessings of loving and caring for it. Praise be for our plant and animal kin who call this sacred space home, and praise be for our amazing arbor-elders—our teachers and

companions. Praise be for the wind and the water and the prairie grasses. Praise be for the imaginal cells that allow caterpillars to transform into butterflies, for seeds that transform into all manner of fruits and vegetables and flowers and weeds, and for hearts called to open and heal in bountiful nature.

Praise be! For this 25th Jubilee, a time to rejoice and to give thanks; a time to reminisce, to celebrate what is, and to prepare for what may come in our next 25 years. Our year of jubilee will commence with this year's *Spirituality in the 21st Century* event, April 30–May 1, 2021, and close with the same event in spring of 2022. We invite you to celebrate with us—watch for the calendar of jubilee events which should arrive in your mailbox or inbox in April!

Francis of Assisi endeared all of creation as brother and sister, revealing a new worldview: God, as the source of all being, connects all as brothers and sisters to one another. Here is his Canticle of Creation (1225 A.D.):



photo by Paul Whitcombe

Canticle of Creation

Most high, all powerful, all good Lord!
All praise is Yours, all glory, all honor, and all blessing.

To You, alone, Most High, do they belong.
No mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your name.

Be praised, my Lord, through all Your creatures,
especially through my lord Brother Sun,
who brings the day; and You give light through him.
And he is beautiful and radiant in all his splendor!
Of You, Most High, he bears the likeness.

Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars;
in the heavens You have made them bright, precious and beautiful.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
and clouds and storms, and all the weather,
through which You give Your creatures sustenance.

Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Water;
she is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure.

Be praised, my Lord, through Brother Fire,
through whom You brighten the night.
He is beautiful and cheerful, and powerful and strong.

Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Mother Earth,
who feeds us and rules us,
and produces various fruits with colored flowers and herbs.

Be praised, my Lord, through those who forgive for love of You;
through those who endure sickness and trial.

Happy those who endure in peace,
for by You, Most High, they will be crowned.

Be praised, my Lord, through our sister Bodily Death,
from whose embrace no living person can escape.

Woe to those who die in mortal sin!

Happy those she finds doing Your most holy will.
The second death can do no harm to them.

Praise and bless my Lord, and give thanks,
and serve Him with great humility.

Spirituality in the 21st Century

Celebrating Prairiewoods' 25th Jubilee

Flaring Forth into Fullness of Life

with Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, David Abram,
Kathleen Rude & Sara Thomsen

Friday, April 30, 7–9 p.m., & Saturday, May 1, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. (via Zoom)

Fee: \$75 full event, \$25 Friday only, \$50 Saturday only • To register, visit Prairiewoods.org/Spirituality-in-the-21st-Century

Prairiewoods celebrates our 25th anniversary year with a truly special *Spirituality in the 21st Century* event. This year's online gathering features Thomas Berry biographers **Mary Evelyn Tucker** and **John Grim** from the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology (<https://fore.yale.edu>). Tucker and Grim are the executive producers of the Emmy Award–winning film *Journey of the Universe*, narrated by Brian Swimme (<https://www.journeyoftheuniverse.org/>). This year's event also welcomes eco-philosopher **David Abram**, founding director of the Alliance for Wild Ethics (<https://wildethics.org/>) and author of *Spell of the Sensuous* and *Becoming Animal*. We will also be joined by Joanna Macy–protege and Active Hope aficionada **Kathleen Rude**, author of the eco-mystical novel *The Redemption of Red Fire Woman* (<https://gaiawisdom.org/>). The beautiful musical accompaniment of **Sara Thomsen** (<https://sarathomsen.com>) will weave lyrical poetry throughout the weekend. This event promises to be one of profound story, an opportunity for healing and refreshment, a wakeful enlightenment for our imagination with music as balm for the soul, and a gentle invitation for immersion into the wider “We” we have been longing for with all our hearts.

From Prairiewoods' founding until 2021, our mission has been framed with the Universe Story, a 13.7-billion-year journey that celebrates the wild fecundity of life from the Great Flaring

Forth forward. Mary Evelyn and John share a passion and abiding love for the pioneering work of self-described “geologist” Thomas Berry, as well as his field's foremost formative architect, Jesuit paleontologist and eco-philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. They will take us along on a fantastic exploration of how Teilhard's and Thomas' work continues to unfold in eco-spirituality circles today. As a spellbinding artist and cartographer of the numinous in creation, David captivates listeners with his uncanny ability to draw us into communion with the breathing, animate Earth, a community of living subjects all pulsating with the rhythm of the unfolding cosmos. After an hour or two with David submerging us in what Berry called the “single gorgeous celebratory event” that is creation, we will begin to feel more in sync with our creature-kin and arbor-elders, the stones and the crashing waves, than we ever thought possible. And as an environmentalist, shamanic practitioner, writer and activist/educator, Kathleen will invite us to enter into the very fabric of creation's extended family, the ineffable beauty and mystery of the web of life, as healing for our spiritual malaise. Along with our beloved musician-of-Earth Sara Thomsen, they will coax us (ala Thoreau) to “live deep and suck all the marrow out of life,” and celebrate the unfolding of the Universe Story as a context for spiritual sojourners in 2021. If you are up for the mission, come expecting the joy of surprise and a taste of new life!



History of Spirituality in the 21st Century

This year's iteration of Prairiewoods' signature event celebrates the great arc of our founding mission as it continues to flare forth in our bioregion and for the good of the planetary community. When planning this year's *Spirituality in the 21st Century*, we wanted to offer a sweeping array of presenters whose special areas of interest would show how our mission has been unfolding these past 25 years. We hope those who come to this year's event will feel the progressive unfolding of our mission and celebrate with us the astounding beacon of hope that we experience as we try to deepen in mission every day. We know from experience that these gatherings have a poignant and lasting effect on those who join in the experience. Past participants have expressed their deep appreciation for the profound influence this event has had on their lives. Interspersed throughout the next few pages, you can hear a few precious voices in the chorus of gratitude we received from past years of this event.



"Change can happen even with small clusters of people who carry hope and faith and love."

"It was encouraging to see so many who attended and I hope that more and more wake up to the essentialness of mythic awareness and the world soul."



"The power of story, how it is a lovely conduit for helping us see things more clearly, helping us shift into a new way of being, the story we tell is the life we live!"

"I'm hearing about the imaginal from different voices and that gives me hope."



"Our lives can be simpler after the pandemic; cleaner water, air, less consumerism, more charity, love of nature and each other ... our re-memering will be beautiful!"

"Imagining a better future for our planet!"



Spirituality in the 21st Century: A Brief History



2001 John Shea: *Story and Spiritual Consciousness*



2003 Diarmuid O'Murchu: *Spirituality for the Third Millennium*



2007 Marcus Borg: *A Tale of Two Christianities: The Church in the 21st Century*



2011 Barry Donaghue, cfc, & Sara Thomsen: *A Point of Divergence: Connecting the Dots, Reconnecting with God*

“Prairiewoods’ signature annual event was initiated by Karen Flottmeier, FSPA, in 2001 and continued by Ann Jackson, PBVM, from 2003–2013 and by Laura Weber, Ph.D. since 2014. Each speaker has approached *Spirituality in the 21st Century* as a way to enlighten and engage participants about the ways in which our new understandings of the Universe Story impact how we discover the Divine in the world and understand our role as humans. This unfolding of the meaning of the Universe Story is a major way in which Prairiewoods gives public voice to the depth and scope of the Prairiewoods mission.”

—Betty Daugherty, FSPA

To read Sister Betty’s full history of this event, please visit [Prairiewoods.org/Spirituality-in-the-21st Century](http://Prairiewoods.org/Spirituality-in-the-21st-Century)



2004 Brother Wayne Teasdale: *Spirituality in the 21st Century*



2005 Father Joseph Nassal: *Setting the Table in a Divided World*



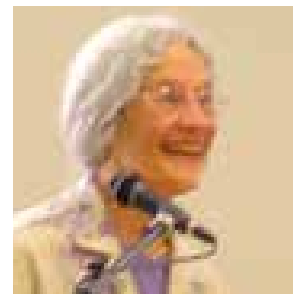
2008 John Haught: *What’s Really Going on in the Universe? Evolution and Faith: What is at Stake?*



2009 Ilia Delio, OSF: *An Invitation to Radical Amazement*



2002 Joyce Rupp: *Awaken and Embody the Celtic Spirit*



2006 Elaine Prevallet, SL: *Seeking Wisdom: A Feminine Approach to Healing the Planet*



2010 Michael Morwood: *God, Jesus, Prayer and Ritual in the New Universe Story*



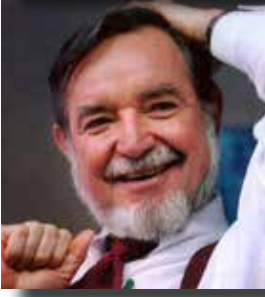
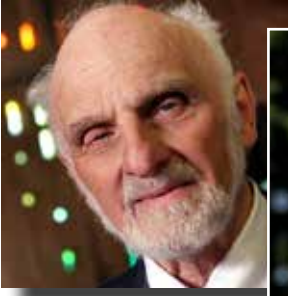
2012 Fr. John Heagle: *Coming of Age in the Milky Way: Spiritual Transformation and Creative Hope*

“This transformation we are living through is held in the realm of Universal Energy.”

“We and the world are being transformed. I can be open to the guidance from the imaginal world.”

“Beautiful, beautiful experience!”

History of Spirituality in the 21st Century



2013 Walter Brueggemann, Peter Block, John McKnight & Barbara McAfee: *Engaging Community, Narrating Change*

2014 Marc Ian Barasch & Drew Dellinger: *Rooted in Compassion: Cosmology, Eco-justice and Empathic Wisdom*

“You are doing a fantastic ministry and meeting the needs of so many who need a safe place to be nourished and explore the language of their spirit.”

“Direct connection with others who are passionate about the issues—inspiring and hopeful!”

“Thank you so much for being the way-showers! Keep these events happening! Life changing!”



2015 Gail Worcelo, CP, & Sara Thomsen: *Evolutionary Consciousness: Somewhere to Begin*



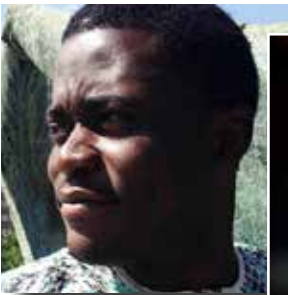
2016 Diarmuid O'Murchu, MSC, & Peter Mayer: *Everyone in the Circle: Toward a Spirituality of Inclusivity*



2017 Ilia Delio, OSF, & Sara Thomsen: *Consciousness & Christogenesis: Mind, Matter & Emerging Wholeness*



2018 Miriam Therese Winter & Sara Thomsen: *Cosmic Spirit: Planetary Spirituality for All*



2019 Bayo Akomolafe, Charles Eisenstein & Sara Thomsen: *Living in the Mangle: Coming to Life in a World Alive*

“Bayo and Charles opened for me a new (sacred) space to explore, consider, reflect and grow. Who knew that spiritual composting could be such a challenge, such a gift?”

“I hope that we as individuals and as a body ‘re-member,’ that we come away changed, transformed, transfigured, as One body united, that we will, with great heart, ‘Court the World Soul.’ The core root of the verb *court* is ‘cour,’ meaning heart. May we be reunited through a heart connection-divine Love!”



2020 Sharon Blackie & Sara Thomsen: *Courting the World Soul*

Retreats & Programs

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

Embracing Struggle Retreat: Walking in Hope with Teilhard de Chardin

Friday, March 12, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

Facilitator: Kathleen Duffy, SSJ, Ph.D.

The call to embrace struggle is not an act of resignation but a commitment to life in its fullness. In this retreat, we walk with Pierre Teilhard de Chardin—Jesuit, scientist and mystic. With him, we explore the powerful imagery found in his essay “The Spiritual Power of Matter,” consider the way he faced his life struggles—especially those related to the Church and to the World—and prayerfully reflect on their relevance to our own life experiences and present situations. This online retreat via Zoom includes time for prayer, input, reflection, contemplative dialogue and sharing.

Kathleen Duffy, SSJ, Ph.D., is professor emerita of physics and director of the Institute for Religion and Science at Chestnut Hill College. She is president of the American Teilhard Association and associate editor of *Teilhard Studies*, and she serves on the advisory board of *Cosmos and Creation*. Her present research deals with the way Teilhard de Chardin’s religious writings connect with modern science. She has published several book chapters and articles on these topics, an edited volume of essays entitled *Rediscovering Teilhard’s Fire* (St. Joseph’s University Press, 2010), and two books: *Teilhard’s Mysticism: Seeing the Inner Face of Evolution* (Orbis Books, 2014) and *Teilhard’s Struggle: Embracing the*



Work of Evolution (Orbis Books, 2019). Kathleen also guides evening, weekend and week-long retreats on topics related to Teilhard’s life and work.

Fee: \$75

Metta Yoga

Mondays & Thursdays, March 1–April 29, 9:30–10:30 a.m.

Facilitators: Carla Brems & Heather English

Experience the healing powers of meditative yoga from the spiritual environment and natural beauty of Prairiewoods via Zoom. Join us as we link our movements with our breath and cultivate strength, flexibility and relaxation through regular hatha-style yoga classes. RYT-200 Hour Certified Yoga Alliance Instructors Carla Brems and Heather English offer Gentle/Beginner’s Yoga every Monday and Thursday from 9:30–10:30 a.m. People of all fitness levels and abilities are encouraged to participate whenever available. Carla Brems enjoys teaching hatha-style yoga so that all feel welcome and safe to appreciate and enjoy the physical, mental and spiritual benefits that yoga can bring. Heather English began practicing yoga for the mental health benefits and became a yoga instructor in order to share these amazing benefits with others. Heather is inspired by the potential that a regular yoga practice has for impacting so many areas of life. In fact, it was her yoga training that motivated her to begin crafting as a career, to share her crafting with others, and to regularly explore the intersection of yoga and creativity. Let’s see how Carla and Heather can help us benefit from yoga! Please plan to attend via Zoom from a quiet corner in your home or yard with your screen of choice!

Fee: \$99 for eleven-punch card or \$60 for six-punch card, one punch per session

Going Inward with Sounds & Vibrations

Mondays; March 1, March 15, April 5 & April 19; 6–7 p.m.

Facilitator: Kathy Broghammer

Experience sound, stillness, playfulness and relaxation through the enigmatic vibrations of Himalayan

and crystal singing bowls. During this hour over Zoom, Kathy Broghammer will lead us to connect with our inner selves through the song of bowls. We will be invited to sit or lie down to listen and just be. We will hear the sounds and feel the vibrations of the singing bowls going inward. Let’s let our souls rest and allow ourselves to be recreated!

Fee: \$10 per session

Prayer Experience Series Tuesdays, March 2–April 27, 11:30 a.m.–12 p.m.

Facilitator: Angie Pierce Jennings

We are blessed with many ways to pray and reflect including songful prayer, contemplative prayer, visio divina, embodied prayer, silent prayer and guided meditation. Join us for this ongoing prayer series via Zoom and experience the joys of prayer and meditation together. Registration is appreciated but not required.

Fee: Free-will offering

Go Deeper Thursdays Online Thursdays, March 4–April 29, 4–5 p.m.

Facilitators: Laura Weber & Ellen Bruckner

Join friends of Prairiewoods via Zoom for some healthy and necessary conversation in this time of spiritual deepening. This is an opportunity to relieve stress and connect at a deeper level. We have a brief check-in and talk about how our spiritual awareness and practice during this time of upheaval is shifting. Grab a beverage, relax and let’s do this together!

Fee: Free-will offering

Prairiewoods Knitters & Stitchers

Tuesdays, March 9 & April 13,
9:30–10:30 a.m.

Calling all knitters and stitchers ... practice your hobby in the company of new friends! All who enjoy knitting or crocheting (or want



to learn) are invited to join us via Zoom for a fun, free morning of crafting and conversation with Prairiewoods friends. We hope you'll grab your needles and join us for this fun morning!



Fee: Free

Deep Peace: Cultivating Nonviolence

Tuesdays, March 9–30, 5:30–7 p.m.

Facilitator: Ann Jackson, PBVM

Practicing a spirituality of nonviolence has often been portrayed in the lives of extraordinary, spiritual leaders who considered themselves ordinary people: Rosa Parks, Gandhi, Malala Yousafzai, Dennis Banks, Martin Luther King, Wangari Matthai ... These icons of peace echo a lifelong invitation to us—to teach ourselves how to live nonviolently in widening circles that build communities of peace. In these four sessions via Zoom, we will meditate, reflect, discuss and enact spiritual practices to learn to extend nonviolence toward self, nonviolence toward all others, and participation in global, grassroots movements of nonviolence. Each session will offer reflection, silent meditation, spiritual practices and conversation to illumine how we may deepen our conviction to live peace.

Fee: \$20 per session or \$75 for four-week series if paid in advance

Spiritual Renewal Day

Mondays, March 15 & April 12, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Angie Pierce Jennings

Join us for a tranquil day of spiritual renewal from where ever you are. The day via Zoom will include an opening meditation session, morning yoga, an individual spiritual direction session, singing bowl prayer, a guided eco-spirituality experience and a closing reflection session via Zoom throughout the day. You'll also have free time to rest or explore the season outdoors. In preparation for the day, you will receive gentle instruction about mindfully creating your own sacred

space for the day. Find renewal and care for your mind, body and spirit on this special day. Registration and a deposit of \$50 are required by noon on the prior Wednesday.

Fee: \$65

Singing Bowl Prayer

Mondays, March 15 & April 12, 1–1:30 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 this session via Zoom, we will let the resonant sounds of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls relax the entire body and create a pathway for clearer connection with the divine. We will be invited to just receive and breathe.

Fee: \$5 per session

Offered in Partnership with Unity Point Hospice

Soul Care: Creative Arts Grief Support Group

Wednesdays, March 17 & April 21, 5:30–7 p.m.

Facilitators: Jamie Siela, LISW, & Christine Wagner-Hecht, MDiv

Take time to connect with others in grief and engage the creative spark. Jamie Siela and Christine Wagner-Hecht from Unity Point Hospice facilitate this monthly grief group open to anyone grieving loss through death. On the third Wednesday of each month, come together on Zoom to explore a different creative art medium. In March we will make a peaceful pillowcase. Sometimes we need a reminder of calm and safety before going to bed at night or first thing in the morning when we rise. We will use our time together to decorate a rest easy pillowcase with pictures that make us feel safe and calm, positive affirmations and memory symbols. Our April project is three-dimensional hand art. The hands that hold our memories are as unique as our personal grief journeys. We will focus our session on creating three-dimensional hand art in colors that are meaningful to our individual experiences and the memories we lift up. Registration is required eight days in advance. We will meet online via Zoom, and group art kits will be mailed one week prior to the session.

Fee: Free, includes all art supplies

Treasuring Our Trees, Part 3

Sunday, April 11, 1–2 p.m.

Spring is the time for new life—for planting, for watering and for active hope! Since October, we have been doing the hard interior work of grieving for our lost trees, going deeper into our knowledge of the natural world and learning all that trees have to teach us. In spring, we will join in the communal celebration of planting and welcoming new life! We are coming together as a community via Zoom once more to lean into the role of courageous visionaries, imagining and planting a whole new generation of baby trees, caring for the sacred Earth—including the soil, air and water—through ritual, song, poetry and prayer. Please join us as we sing songs of joy once again with the exultant Earth and ritualize the welcome of our beloved baby trees and the resplendence of the trees we have all around us!

This is the final session of a three-part series celebrating and honoring the trees we lost in the derecho. It is co-sponsored by Prairiewoods, Trees Forever, Indian Creek Nature Center, Winding Pathways, Backyard Abundance, People's Unitarian Universalist Church, Cornell College Chaplain & Spiritual Life and Coe College. You do not need to have attended the previous sessions to join this online session via Zoom.

Fee: Free



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

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1996



2020

Nancy Hoffman, FSPA, has been tending Earth at Prairiewoods for 25 years! Her dedication is a reminder that Earth Day is every day. Thank you, Sister Nancy, and the many others who help plant seeds of peace and transformation!



THEN
&
NOW



2020

May/June 2021

Prairiewoods

A CATHOLIC, FRANCISCAN ECOSPIRITUALITY RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER



Mission Statement

Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center: a sacred space where people explore and integrate their relationships with God, Earth, Self and Others.

Vision Statement

Our vision is:

To be open to the Divine Presence within all members of the Earth Community.

To integrate the principles of the universe: interiority, diversity, and communion.

To reverence all of creation as sacred and revelatory of the Holy.

To embody a lifestyle that cares for Earth and celebrates the human.

To extend hospitality to all.

To impact ecological consciousness.

Prairiewoods' original mission and vision statements.

Prairiewoods' 25th Jubilee: A Look Back

The land at Prairiewoods was purchased by Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in 1962. Known simply as "the farm," the land remained undeveloped while the FSPA community ruminated on its possibilities. Undeveloped, but not unused: "Land like that at Prairiewoods gathers us," wrote foundress Betty Daugherty, FSPA. "Long before the groundbreaking in 1995, neighborhood children built tree houses, rode their sleds and created a pattern of biking trails. People came for bird watching and to discover those hidden places where mushrooms could be found in early spring."

Several events steadily led the FSPA community toward establishing a spirituality center, particularly several meetings of the Central Region of the FSPA that explored ecology as a major concern for the community and its approach to the land. Regional meetings in 1988, 1991 and 1992 included inspirational challenges from speakers Paula Gonzales, SC, and Cecilia Corcoran, FSPA. Sister Cecilia wondered what might happen "if we could once look at the Boyson Road site: our land, and just once dream with her ... just once ... for the land is the most vibrant of symbols for people ..."

Inspired by these words and by the integration of

spirituality and ecology called for in the new Story of the Universe, as articulated in the work of Thomas Berry and others, the FSPA community was able to craft a vision for a spiritual and educational center at the heart of which was both an evolutionary consciousness and deep care for creation through stewardship of this particular parcel of land. How they did this is best seen through the words of Sister Betty:

"The six of us (i.e., FSPA foundresses Betty Daugherty, Joann Gehling, Maryam Gossling, Nancy Hoffman, Joanne Moeller and Therese Pedretti) were commissioned by our community, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, to create a spirituality/ecology center on this land. This center was to be founded on an incarnational theology rooted in the Gospel life of Jesus that sees God as present and active in this world. Other theological principles that led us come from our Franciscan heritage in which creation itself is seen as God's word, revelatory of the Divine. The Earth and all life on it is sacred ..."

"When the six of us came together back in 1994 to begin this exciting work, the challenge of laying the groundwork for what would become Prairiewoods,

(continued on page 3)

PRAIRIEWOODS STAFF

Laurie Erlacher
Cook

Joann Gehling, FSPA
Holistic Services, Spiritual
Director

Jenifer Hanson
Director

Trace Harshman
Housekeeper

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

Ann Jackson, PBVM
Spiritual Services
Coordinator, Spiritual
Director

Evan Langston
Chef/Kitchen Manager

Andi Lewis
Marketing Coordinator

Jessica Lien
Development Coordinator

Erik Meggers
Maintenance Coordinator

Angie Pierce Jennings
Hosted Groups &
Hospitality Coordinator

Nancy Schrimper
Office Administrator

August Stolba
Land Care & Holistic
Ecology Coordinator

Laura Weber
Retreats Coordinator,
Associate Director

Lucille Winnike, FSPA
Retreats, Spiritual
Director



*"Leadership is the capacity to translate vision into reality."
—Warren Bennis*

Entering into a year-long celebration of Prairiewoods' 25th Jubilee has led me to ruminate on the subject of leadership. Prairiewoods' foundresses and the entire FSPA community articulated an inspiring vision when they decided to turn this farmland into an ecospirituality center. Enlivening that vision while also holding firm to Franciscan values, deepening ties to Earth and the surrounding community, and continuing to explore Prairiewoods' growing edges—THAT took leadership.

In the early years, Prairiewoods' six FSPA foundresses—Betty Daugherty, Joann Gehling, Maryam Gossling, Nancy Hoffman, Joanne Moeller and Therese Pedretti—set the tone and modeled the concept of collaborative leadership. Together, they discerned not only what Prairiewoods' next step or next greatest area of need might be, they also worked together to identify the person(s) whose gifts would best serve. Several of the foundresses got additional training, education or experience to serve Prairiewoods' vision.

When it became apparent that Prairiewoods' growth and financial sustainability required a larger team for decision making, the Prairiewoods Operating Board was established.* Since its inception, the Board has been a committed group of volunteers, drawn from FSPA and the greater Cedar Rapids communities, whose gifts have been generously given to steward Prairiewoods.

Growth and change, two inevitabilities for a burgeoning spirituality center, led to the hiring of an administrative director.** While each individual who has served in the director position has brought unique qualities and gifts to the role, the collaborative leadership model established by the initial core team of six has remained consistent and strong. Both Prairiewoods as a whole and each subsequent director have benefitted from the conscientious and loving stewardship of those who held the role before them.

Almost from the beginning, lay staff were hired to fulfill roles from office (Marcia Hammill had her hands full with ringing telephones, I'm told!) to housekeeping to cooks to program directors to holistic services. The commitment and loyalty each person has displayed toward Prairiewoods' mission as a sacred space supporting and welcoming others to explore relationships with God, self, Earth and others has been extraordinary.

If leadership truly is "the capacity to translate vision into reality," then virtually every person engaged in the endeavor known as Prairiewoods—whether foundress, Board member, director or staff—has shown leadership in service to making a beautiful vision reality. Prairiewoods today stands on sacred ground on which their leadership has been poured like a libation and a blessing. I cannot thank each of them—each of you—enough for co-creating this place of peace and transformation.

Notes: I wish I had room to list all who have served as Board and staff members over the past 25 years. Lacking that, I would like to recognize the members of our first Board and the previous directors in whose footsteps I follow.

Peace and all good,

Jenifer Hanson, Director

* Members of the first Board were Mary Kathryn Fogarty, FSPA; Delmarie Gibney, FSPA; Delores Hannon, RSM; Norb Hemesath; Kathleen Kenkel, FSPA; Irene Nieland, FSPA; Suzanne Rubenbauer, FSPA; Shannon Ramsay; Carol Sudmeier; Bill Stigliani and Lucille Winnike, FSPA.

** Directors were Helen Elsbernd, FSPA; Barry Donaghue, CFC; Joann Gehling, FSPA, and Donna Venteicher, FSPA (interim); Laurie Harris and Laura Weber (interim).



Prairiewoods is a Catholic 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.

Please address all correspondence to:

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

www.Prairiewoods.org

Ecospirit@Prairiewoods.org



(continued from page 1)

“we felt called by the spirit of Francis of Assisi, himself a dreamer, to become dreamers ourselves. We spent two years meeting almost weekly. Together we studied, prayed, planned and dreamed. And we listened.

“We listened, not just to many words of wisdom from people recognized nationally and internationally in the world of ecology, spirituality and theology, but also to people who live locally, people who became our advisers and friends, who knew how to plant trees and install solar panels ... people who came to lend a hand, to plant a tree and then build a fence around it to protect it from deer ... and friends who offered advice about so many things that were entirely new to us and who gave us support when needed. We are grateful for each of them.

“And we were led to listen to the land itself, to ask the land what it wanted us to do. We sat in the company of the great oaks that grace this land and we wandered through and across its sprawling fields. We felt connected to the spirits of all who have lived here, especially the Native Peoples and their deep spirituality, their sense of the sacredness of Mother Earth. We spent time resting on Mother Earth herself, wondering about the future ...”

—Betty Daugherty, FSPA, remarks made Oct. 4, 2019

And so Prairiewoods was born: “a place to explore and nurture relationships with God who is both transcendent and immanent, with the sustaining and sacred Earth, with one’s own inner life and with others” (Betty Daugherty, FSPA).

Over the 25-year history of Prairiewoods, there have

been countless memorable events and moments. There have been countless beautiful dawns and sunsets, countless creatures sheltering in prairie and woodland. People, too, have come in numbers. Visitors, guests, retreatants, volunteers, facilitators, staff—many have connected with, co-created, and been touched by the wonder of creation and the beauty of Prairiewoods.

Perhaps one of the most joyful events took place on Oct. 4, 2019, when FSPA signed an agreement with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation to place the Prairiewoods land in a conservation easement, protecting it from further development in perpetuity. Again, the words of Sister Betty, Prairiewoods’ chronicler and historian, speak eloquently of both gratitude and the ongoing future of this place of peace and transformation, and offer a fitting close to this look into Prairiewoods’ past:

“We thank you for coming today and we welcome you to come often, to walk the trails, to admire the strength of the trees, to engage with the residents, the denizens of prairie and woods. We invite you to listen to the wisdom coming from the land itself. It will teach us to be grateful for the gifts of each season.

“So today, we can look back at the long history of this land and of how it somehow called to us, honored us through its welcoming arms, beckoned us to come, to share its life. We want to express our gratitude to the Divine Spirit who guides the process of evolving creation and with whom we have been invited to be co-creators in shaping the future.”

—Betty Daugherty, FSPA, remarks made Oct. 4, 2019



◀ 1996 Formal dedication and ribbon cutting

2019 Entering into a conservation easement ▶



Prairiewoods' 25th Jubilee: A Time Line

1962 75 acres of land now known as Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center were purchased by Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA).

1981 Knights of Columbus purchased 2.5 acres of the land for use by Discovery Living, an organization that provides housing and care for disabled adults.



Spring 1993 A Planning Committee was organized. This committee, who became our six foundresses, worked with leaders of the FSPA community, who suggested that the project be developed on a larger scale in accordance with the needs of the Cedar Rapids area.



July 5, 1996 Before there were even sidewalks or a finished kitchen, the first guests came for a Silent Directed Retreat. It included eleven retreatants and two spiritual directors: Lucille Winnike, FSPA, and Janet Mallak, SSND.



Sept. 28-29, 1996 Prairiewoods opened its doors for an Open House, welcoming members of the Cedar Rapids community to the new eco-spirituality center.

1999 Two straw-bale-insulated Hermitages—rustic cottages on the edge of the woods—were constructed. They were entirely solar-powered and off the grid and are still a popular option for retreatants today.



2001 An outdoor labyrinth made of sand and bricks was constructed. A labyrinth is a powerful ancient spiritual symbol of our journey through life. Walking the labyrinth can be meditative and spiritually enlightening.

Around 2002 A Cosmic Walk, which highlights major “moments of grace” in our 14-billion-year evolutionary journey, was added. Beginning behind the Center and ending near the Labyrinth, the Cosmic Walk provides a visual history of our evolutionary story.



Prairiewoods' 25th Jubilee: A Time Line

1988 FSPA sisters walked and prayed the land to listen to what the land was calling for.

1991 Paula Gonzales, SC, was invited to address the sisters on the topic of *The Dream of the Earth*.



1992 Cecilia Corcoran, FSPA, addressed the community on *Mother Earth: Our Eucharistic Land*. In her creative and moving address, she recalled the history of the land and challenged the Central Region to move toward preserving Earth's fragile environment by creating a spiritual and ecological center.

May 7, 1995 Groundbreaking: First to come were the great many volunteers who planted trees, created a network of trails and began the work of restoring the prairies. Another early benefit was the encouragement from organizations like Trees Forever in the form of donated seedlings and prairie plants along with their valuable professional support. Iowa Renewable Energy Association (I-Renew) actively supported Prairiewoods in so many ways—from promoting workshops on environmental topics and installing solar panels to bringing their annual Expo, an event that brought new friends and collaborators who joined the already growing community. Members of the Native American community came with an offer to build a sweat lodge, a blessing to the land and to all who continue to join with them in this sacred ritual. Scout leaders brought troops of young workers, some of whom created Eagle Scout projects that continue to enhance the land. Churches and schools responded by encouraging participation in programs and by sending busloads of energetic students to help in the development of the outdoors.



Oct. 4, 1996 On St. Francis Day, Prairiewoods was dedicated by Archbishop of Dubuque Jerome Hanus and President of FSPA, Marla Lang.

Oct. 3–4, 1997 A year after opening, Prairiewoods hosted its first annual Franciscan Fest, which would grow over the next two decades to include the Blessing of the Animals and a day of family-friendly fun.



2001 *Spirituality in the 21st Century*, Prairiewoods' signature annual event, was initiated by Karen Flottmeier, FSPA, in 2001 and continued by Ann Jackson, PBVM, from 2003–2013 and by Laura Weber, Ph.D., since 2014. Each speaker has approached Spirituality in the 21st Century as a way to enlighten and engage participants about the ways in which our new understandings of the Universe Story impact how we discover the Divine in the world and understand our role as humans. This unfolding of the meaning of the Universe Story is a major way in which Prairiewoods gives public voice to the depth and scope of the Prairiewoods mission.



Summer 2009 An array of 40 solar photovoltaic panels were added, and another 60 were added in the summer of 2010. These 100 panels still provide about 50% of the energy used in the Center.



Oct. 4, 2019 A huge celebration honored Prairiewoods' land being entered into a conservation easement with Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. This easement protects much of the land at Prairiewoods from future development in perpetuity.



Spirituality in the 21st Century

Celebrating Prairiewoods' 25th Jubilee

Flaring Forth into Fullness of Life

with Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, David Abram,
Kathleen Rude & Sara Thomsen

Friday, April 30, 7–9 p.m., & Saturday, May 1, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. (via Zoom)

Fee: \$75 full event, \$25 Friday only, \$50 Saturday only • To register, visit Prairiewoods.org/Spirituality-in-the-21st-Century

Prairiewoods celebrates our 25th anniversary year with a truly special *Spirituality in the 21st Century* event. This year's online gathering features Thomas Berry biographers **Mary Evelyn Tucker** and **John Grim** from the Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology (<https://fore.yale.edu>). Tucker and Grim are the executive producers of the Emmy Award–winning film *Journey of the Universe*, narrated by Brian Swimme (<https://www.journeyoftheuniverse.org/>). This year's event also welcomes eco-philosopher **David Abram**, founding director of the Alliance for Wild Ethics (<https://wildethics.org/>) and author of *Spell of the Sensuous* and *Becoming Animal*. We will also be joined by Joanna Macy–protege and Active Hope aficionada **Kathleen Rude**, author of the eco-mystical novel *The Redemption of Red Fire Woman* (<https://gaiawisdom.org/>). The beautiful musical accompaniment of **Sara Thomsen** (<https://sarathomsen.com>) will weave lyrical poetry throughout the weekend. This event promises to be one of profound story, an opportunity for healing and refreshment, a wakeful enlightenment for our imagination with music as balm for the soul, and a gentle invitation for immersion into the wider “We” we have been longing for with all our hearts.

From Prairiewoods' founding until 2021, our mission has been framed with the Universe Story, a 13.7-billion-year journey that celebrates the wild fecundity of life from the Great Flaring

Forth forward. Mary Evelyn and John share a passion and abiding love for the pioneering work of self-described “geologist” Thomas Berry, as well as his field's foremost formative architect, Jesuit paleontologist and eco-philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. They will take us along on a fantastic exploration of how Teilhard's and Thomas' work continues to unfold in eco-spirituality circles today. As a spellbinding artist and cartographer of the numinous in creation, David captivates listeners with his uncanny ability to draw us into communion with the breathing, animate Earth, a community of living subjects all pulsating with the rhythm of the unfolding cosmos. After an hour or two with David submerging us in what Berry called the “single gorgeous celebratory event” that is creation, we will begin to feel more in sync with our creature-kin and arbor-elders, the stones and the crashing waves, than we ever thought possible. And as an environmentalist, shamanic practitioner, writer and activist/educator, Kathleen will invite us to enter into the very fabric of creation's extended family, the ineffable beauty and mystery of the web of life, as healing for our spiritual malaise. Along with our beloved musician-of-Earth Sara Thomsen, they will coax us (ala Thoreau) to “live deep and suck all the marrow out of life,” and celebrate the unfolding of the Universe Story as a context for spiritual sojourners in 2021. If you are up for the mission, come expecting the joy of surprise and a taste of new life!





Prairiewoods
**Garden
Party**
an at-home celebration

NO tickets. **NO** three-course meal. **NO** auction.

You're invited to stay home and celebrate a special 2021 Garden Party! As part of a community of supporters who make our mission possible, will you join us this year **in spirit** for an event that will **not** take place in person in 2021? Don't dress up, don't leave home and don't join us at a fancy venue.

2021 Garden Party Challenge

We challenge you to give at least \$25 in honor of our 25th Jubilee! Your donation is tax deductible.

Last Chance to Match

All donations received **by June 30** will be **MATCHED** through the generosity of Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration to our endowment.

For more information or to donate by credit card, please visit www.Prairiewoods.org/Garden-Party or call 319-395-6700.

*Thank you for your support.
We couldn't do this work without you!*

Retreats & Programs

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

“ At Prairiewoods there is space for exploring soul, for coming close to God, the God whose love and joy can be seen in the interior fire that exists in every oak and basswood, every tall shoot of prairie grass, every flower and leaf. There is space for learning more about the landscapes of one’s own story, one’s own yearnings and longings. Those who walk on this land can clear their minds of all unnecessary things. They can experience the wonder of creation, can listen as stars and rocks, butterfly and hedgehog speak to them of the Sacred Story of the universe. ”

—Betty Daugherty, FSPA, *History of Prairiewoods*

Praise be! 25th Anniversary Silent Directed Retreat Monday, July 5, 4 p.m.–Sunday, July 11, 1 p.m.

Spiritual Directors: Rev. Rose Blank; Joann Gehling, FSPA; Ann Jackson, PBVM; Kim Seward, BSN, RN; & Lucille Winnike, FSPA

Praise be! Prairiewoods first opened its doors July 5, 1996, when its very first retreatants enjoyed a week-long silent directed retreat. Guests had a wonderful retreat experience in spite of the lack of sidewalks, an unfinished kitchen and other inconveniences associated with the opening of a new center. Twenty-five years later to the day, with joy and gratitude Prairiewoods celebrates the deepening of its mission and the spiritual growth compelled by thousands of retreatants who have walked and prayed these acres. Come, spend the week in joy and gratitude for all the ways in which Spirit invites you to growth and transformation. Maximum capacity is 14 retreatants, so register soon!

Fee: \$425 includes spiritual direction, lodging and all meals (*Lodgers only, please.*)



Metta Yoga

Mondays & Thursdays, May 3–June 28, 9:30–10:30 a.m.

Facilitators: Carla Brems & Heather English

Experience the healing powers of meditative yoga from the spiritual environment and natural beauty of Prairiewoods via Zoom. Join us as we link our movements with our breath and cultivate strength, flexibility and relaxation through regular hatha-style yoga classes. RYT-200 Hour Certified Yoga Alliance Instructors Carla Brems and Heather English offer Gentle/Beginner’s Yoga every Monday and Thursday from 9:30–10:30 a.m. People of all fitness levels and abilities are encouraged to participate whenever available. Carla Brems enjoys teaching hatha-style yoga so that all feel welcome and safe to appreciate and enjoy the physical, mental and spiritual benefits that yoga can bring. Heather English began practicing yoga for the mental health benefits and became a yoga instructor in order to share these amazing benefits with others. Heather is inspired by the potential that a regular yoga practice has for impacting so many areas of life. In fact, it was her yoga training that motivated her to begin crafting as a career, to share her crafting with others, and to regularly explore the intersection of yoga and creativity. Let’s see how Carla and Heather can help us benefit from yoga! Please plan to attend via Zoom from a quiet corner in your home or yard with your screen of choice!

Fee: \$99 for eleven-punch card or \$60 for six-punch card, one punch per session

Going Inward with Sounds & Vibrations

**Mondays; May 3, May 17, June 7 & June 21;
6–7 p.m.**

Facilitator: Kathy Broghammer

Experience sound, stillness, playfulness and relaxation through the enigmatic vibrations of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls. During this hour over Zoom, Kathy Broghammer will lead us to connect with our inner selves through the song of bowls. We will be invited to sit or lie down to listen and just be. We will hear the sounds and feel the vibrations of the singing bowls going inward. Let’s let our souls rest and allow ourselves to be recreated!

Fee: \$10 per session

Prayer Experience Series

Tuesdays, May 4–June 29, 11:30 a.m.–12 p.m.

Facilitator: Angie Pierce Jennings

We are blessed with many ways to pray and reflect including songful prayer, contemplative prayer, visio divina, embodied prayer, silent prayer and guided

meditation. All are welcome to join this ongoing prayer series via Zoom and experience the joys of prayer and meditation together. Registration is appreciated but not required.

Fee: Free-will offering

Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton

Thursdays; May 6, May 20, June 3 & June 17; 6:30–8 p.m.

Facilitator: Carole Butz

The practice of contemplative living helps us respond to everyday experiences with greater awareness of our connections with God and others. It becomes a positive force in our lives and provides direction for our journey, enabling us to embrace our truest selves. On these Thursday evenings, we use the *Bridges to Contemplative Living* series, which includes excerpts from the writings of Thomas Merton and other authors, to explore the truths of human existence. The process involves readings, reflections and contemplative dialogue. Registration is not necessary.

Fee: \$5 per session

Day of Spiritual Renewal & Nature Therapy

Mondays, May 10 & June 14, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Angie Pierce Jennings

Join us for a tranquil day of spiritual renewal from wherever you are. The day will include an opening meditation session, morning yoga, an individual spiritual direction session, singing bowl prayer, a guided nature and forest therapy experience, and a closing reflection session via Zoom throughout the day. You'll also have free time to rest or explore the season outdoors. In preparation for the day, you will receive gentle instruction about mindfully creating your own sacred space for the day. Find renewal and care for your mind, body and spirit on this special day! Registration and a deposit of \$50 are required by noon the prior Wednesday.

Fee: \$65

Singing Bowl Prayer

Mondays, May 10 & June 14, 1–1:30 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 this session via Zoom, we will let the resonant sounds of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls relax the entire body and create a pathway for clearer connection with the divine. We will be invited to just receive and breathe. Registration is required by noon on the day of the session.

Fee: \$5 per session

Nature & Forest Therapy Experience

Mondays, May 10 & June 14, 2:30–3:45 p.m.

Facilitator: Emelia Sautter

Join via Zoom in your favorite nature space with certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide Emelia Sautter for a slow walk with the natural world. Experience Forest Therapy, a sensory-focused practice that invites us to slow down and be present with self and the natural world around us. According to the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy, "Forest Therapy is a practice that supports health and wellness through guided immersion in forests and other environments to promote the well-being of both people and the land. It is inspired by Shinrin-yoku, the Japanese practice of 'Forest Bathing.'" Much research has been done on the healing and therapeutic benefits of Forest Therapy. Hundreds of clinical and non-clinical studies show numerous positive effects including reductions in stress, anxiety, depression, mental fatigue, anger and pain. Improvements include better cognitive functioning, sleep, mood, confidence and creativity. Time with our



nature kin also boosts our immune system, regulates blood pressure, improves



relationships, increases feelings of gratitude and much more. Registration is required by noon three days prior to the session.

Fee: \$20

Prairiewoods Knitters & Stitchers

Tuesdays, May 11 & June 8, 9:30–10:30 a.m.

Calling all knitters and stitchers ... practice your hobby in the company of new friends! All who enjoy knitting or crocheting (or want to learn) are invited to join us via Zoom for a fun, free hour of crafting and conversation with Prairiewoods friends. We hope you'll grab your needles and join us for this fun morning! Registration is not necessary.

Fee: Free

Offered in Partnership with Cedar Memorial

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

Information Sessions: Tuesdays, May 18 & 25, 5:30–6:30 p.m.

Eight-Week Series: Tuesdays, June 1–July 20, 5:30–8 p.m.

Extended Class: Saturday, July 10, 9 a.m.–3 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 sense of well-being. In the eight-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program via Zoom, we will cultivate the skill of mindfulness through formal meditation practices and informal integrative practices. If you want to participate in this online eight-week series, please attend an information session.

Fee: Free for information sessions, \$300 for eight-week series (partial scholarships available through Cedar Memorial)

Offered in Partnership with Unity Point Hospice

Soul Care: Creative Arts Grief Support Group

Wednesdays, May 19 & June 16, 5:30–7 p.m.

Facilitators: Jamie Siela, LISW, & Christine Wagner-Hecht, MDiv

Take time to connect with others

in grief and engage the creative spark. Jamie Siela and Christine Wagner-Hecht from Unity Point Hospice facilitate this monthly grief group open to anyone grieving loss through death. On the third Wednesday of each month, explore a different creative art medium. In May we will create peace flags, which are small but meaningful flags. They are an outlet for expressing our hopes, dreams and concerns, and they honor the sacred memories of our loved ones. Our June artwork is a paint-by-number activity. When words may be hard to find, we can use things like painting to express ourselves. We will use our time together to create a paint-by-number masterpiece. Registration is required eight days in advance. We will meet online via Zoom, and group art kits will be mailed one week prior to the session.

Fee: Free, includes all art supplies

Go Deeper (Third) Thursdays Thursdays, May 20 & June 17, 4–5 p.m.

Facilitators: Ellen Bruckner & Laura Weber

This time of “PanDeepening” over the past year has offered a generous foray into the wellsprings of shifting paradigms and an exploration of what it means to be part of a wider “We” with not only all of humanity, but all of creation. Who are the “We” we’re becoming? Join us on the third Thursdays in person at Prairiewoods or via Zoom as we come together to breathe deeply, engage in collective presencing, and reflect on how we are gracefully composting our life experience and spiritual wisdom to grow into our evolving sense of the whole. Together we learn, and together we go deeper.

Fee: Free-will offering

In-Person Nature & Forest Therapy Experience Fridays, May 21 & June 11, 1–4 p.m.

Facilitator: Emelia Sautter

We invite you to join the land at Prairiewoods and certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide Emelia Sautter for a slow, three-hour walk with the natural world. Experience Forest Therapy, a sensory-focused practice that invites us to slow down and be present with self and the natural world around us. According to the Association of Nature

and Forest Therapy, “Forest Therapy is a practice that supports health and wellness through guided immersion in forests and other environments to promote the well-being of both people and the land. It is inspired by Shinrin-yoku, the Japanese practice of ‘Forest Bathing.’” Much research has been done on the healing and therapeutic benefits of Forest Therapy. Hundreds of clinical and non-clinical studies show numerous positive effects including reductions in stress, anxiety, depression, mental fatigue, anger and pain. Improvements include better cognitive functioning, sleep, mood, confidence and creativity. Time with our nature kin also boosts our immune system, regulates blood pressure, improves relationships, increases feelings of gratitude and much more. Registration is required by noon three days prior to the session. Please dress for being outdoors the entire time and bring a water bottle.

Fee: \$35

Reaching In & Reaching Out: Our Call to Ecological Relationship

Saturday, May 22, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.

Facilitators: Angie Pierce Jennings; August Stolba; Meg Earsley, FSPA; & Sarah Hennessey, FSPA

In today’s world of isolation, we feel a call in our hearts to create connections of love and hope. Join us as we

deepen our relationship with the Creator and all of creation in a day of discovery, play, reflection and inspiration. This three-hour program via Zoom will include online prayer and discussion, and offline reflecting, including an invitation to interact with nature in your own environment. This is a collaborative event between Prairiewoods and Marywood Franciscan Spirituality Center in Arbor Vitae, Wisconsin, and the Franciscan Spirituality Center in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

Fee: \$5 (all proceeds will be donated to Catholic Climate Covenant)



Release & Renew: Vibrational Sound Healing Blessing & Labyrinth Walk

Sunday, May 23, 1–4 p.m.

Facilitators: Kathy Broghammer & Catherine Quehl-Engle

Let go of sorrow and heaviness and venture into the new life of hope this season brings. This outdoor event brings together the healing tones and vibrations of the singing bowls and the meditative practice of walking the labyrinth for an afternoon of spring healing. Mask and social distancing required for the wellbeing of all. Please meet at the outdoor labyrinth.

Fee: Free-will offering

Women in Interfaith Dialogue Saturday, June 12, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Facilitators: Angie Pierce Jennings, Virginia Melroy, Dr. Paula Sanchini & Mary Beth Siemann

Come together quarterly via Zoom with women of various faith traditions for conversations about faith and spirituality. For our summer gathering, we will talk about the ways in which we experience the divine in our natural environment, both personally and within our faith traditions. We are invited to bring a reading or prayer to share with the group as well as an object that represents the topic or our spirituality in general. Registration is required by Friday at noon.

Fee: \$15

Foraging Urban Wild Edibles Saturday, June 26, 10 a.m.–12 p.m.

Facilitators: Jen Kardos & Fred Meyer

Come walk with us! Meander and munch and learn to identify the most common wild edibles found in an urban backyard, as well as cultivated herbs and berries integrated into Prairiewoods’ Garden of Eat’n. We will create and sample simple delicious snacks and drinks by blending our foraged bounty with familiar veggies and culinary herbs. Recipes, informational handouts and book recommendations will be provided. Planned dishes include a detoxing greens drink, foraged pesto and a juneberry crisp. Please dress for hands-on, outdoor learning. Tell us if mobility accommodations may be needed, as we will cover quite a bit of ground during the class. Registration and payment are required by Friday.

Fee: \$15

Donors (January & February 2021)

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

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Thank you!



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



volunteers
**THEN
&
NOW**

Volunteers, like this group of 450 students from St. Pius X School (above) and Green Iowa AmeriCorps (right), have helped maintain the land at Prairiewoods since we opened in 1996. Our 70 acres of woods and prairie take a lot of attention to maintain, and groups help get a lot of work done in a short amount of time.



July/August 2021

Prairiewoods

A CATHOLIC, FRANCISCAN ECOSPIRITUALITY RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER



Deep Diving into New Life

In this moment of “PanDeepening” and the evolution of human consciousness, we find ourselves at an inflection point, a watershed in the journey of our Universe. It may seem to many that the current moment reflects a dying of sorts. The poetess Mary Oliver, reflecting on the imminence of death, notes that it is our inter-connection with the wider “We” that sustains and energizes us for the journey into new ways of being, new life itself. *“And therefore, I look upon everything as a brotherhood and a sisterhood, and I look upon time as no more than an idea, and I consider eternity as another possibility, and I think of each life as a flower, as common as a field daisy, and as singular, and each name a comfortable music in the mouth, tending, as all music does, toward silence, and each body a lion of courage, and something precious to the earth. When it’s over, I want to say all my life I was a bride married to amazement”* (Mary Oliver, excerpt from “When Death Comes”).

From the Great Flaring Forth of the Universe some 13.7 billion years ago, through the tumultuous and wildly fecund journey celebrated as a “single, gorgeous,

celebratory event” (ala geologist Thomas Berry), right up to this liminal moment, we are brides “married to amazement.” If we are fully present to what is unfolding right now, what is becoming all around and within us, we open ourselves to infinite possibilities. We find ourselves, especially in respect to our personal and communal breath, expanding exponentially. Our “We” is so much wider than our own ego, even our own human-kin. The Age of the Anthropocene (human-centeredness) is fading, and the Age of the Sumbios (being WITH all Life) is emerging (<https://theecologist.org/2019/feb/27/after-anthropocene>). The potency of our “Now” is that it encompasses and composts ALL that has given and become life and transforms it into something entirely new, something immeasurably more complex, more unified. Spiritual writer Eckhart Tolle reminds us to “Die to the past every moment. You don’t need it. Only refer to it when it is absolutely relevant to the present. Feel the power of this moment and the fullness of Being. Feel your presence” (Eckhart Tolle, *The Power of Now: A Guide to Spiritual Enlightenment*). *In other words, to live in this present moment, take a deep breath and dive.*

(continued on page 3)

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"At the deepest level of ecological awareness you are talking about spiritual awareness. Spiritual awareness is an understanding of being imbedded in a larger whole, a cosmic whole, of belonging to the universe."

—Fritjof Capra

Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple, gave a famous commencement speech in which he said that life may feel random as we move through it because we can't connect the dots moving forward, we can only connect them when we stop to look back. Looking back, we are able to see the ways that each step led to the next, bringing us to our present. In the last issue of this newsletter, we took a good long look back at Prairie Woods' beginnings. In this issue, we hope to give a good idea of where we are now ... and, in the next issue, where we hope the next 25 years will take us!

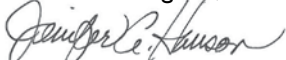
I came to Prairie Woods in 2015, arriving the same week as *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis' eco-encyclical, was released. Although these two events had no direct connection, looking back I can see the deep impact *Laudato Si'* has had on my understanding of Prairie Woods' mission, bringing alive for me the foundational theology of the Universe Story. Pope Francis writes, "Everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth" (*Laudato Si'*, paragraph 92).

This past year, living in the midst of a global pandemic and, locally, recovering from a devastating natural disaster, has made it abundantly clear that we cannot in good conscience approach the world, our common home, from an individual perspective alone. Our connectedness with Earth, with all of this creation of which we are a part, has been made clear in very direct ways—in a world in which we share the very air with every other living being, it doesn't feel coincidental that so much of our collective experience in recent months has revolved around our ability to breathe.

Connecting the dots backward, one of the most important decisions made at Prairie Woods' founding was to establish an ecospirituality center on this land. Prairie Woods is a place where we take our responsibility to care for this earth seriously, and it is also a place where exploring and nurturing relationships with Creator, Earth, self and others is seen as the deeply important work of our times.

Looking ahead, toward the next 25 years in this sacred space, we continue to seek ways for Prairie Woods to engage with our community and foster the ecological conversion that Pope Francis calls for in *Laudato Si'*. "We are not faced with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the underprivileged, and at the same time protecting nature (*Laudato Si'*, paragraph 139)." My hope is that Prairie Woods continues to be a place where engaging with these complexities is encouraged, and where both peace and transformation flourish.

Peace and all good,


Jenifer Hanson, Director



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

Mission: Prairie Woods Franciscan Spirituality Center is a sacred space where people of all faiths and cultures are invited to explore and nurture their relationships with the Source of All Being, Earth, Self and Others with an increasing awareness of the story of the Universe.

The Prairie Woods staff collaborates to publish this newsletter bimonthly. Content, except where otherwise noted, is created by our staff in consultation and with care to offer a uniquely Prairie Woods perspective.

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(continued from page 1)

The sacredness of Holy Breath/Spirit/Wind (from the Greek word *Pneuma/Pneumatōs*, which means spirit/breath/wind, and compared to the Latin word *Spiritus*, which means breath/spirit) permeates all we are, all we do. We swim in it, we live in it and it inheres in us, although we can't see it. We see only *through* it. And we share it with every living being in the biosphere that has been flowing in its cosmic flotsam since the beginning. As *Spirituality in the 21st Century* (SP21C): Flaring Forth into Fullness of Life co-facilitator David Abram articulated so beautifully, "Air is the utmost mark of transcendence, and the uttermost archetype of immanence." The mysterious quality of sacred Air/Wind/Soul-Breath is that it is quite beyond us, transcendent. "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (New International Version Bible, from Jesus' dialogue with Nicodemus, John 3:8). While the sacred Breath/Spirit is truly beyond us, it is also deeply, intimately within us, echoing even the awesome silence of the unpronounceable Name of the Divine, which pulls in breath and exhales breath around four ineffable Hebrew consonants. The "One Who Is" is embedded in all Holy Breath, in Life itself. Indigenous cultures and spiritual traditions have revered and celebrated, ritualized and prayed with Holy Breath for centuries for this reason. How might we today—so beset by a global pandemic that affects our communal breathing—celebrate and dive deeper into our wider "We," where inter-breathing is helping us to evolve beyond our egoic selves?

A fervent Joanna Macy (*Active Hope: The Work That Reconnects*) protegee, Kathleen Rude, reminded us at SP21C to practice the rituals of authentic grieving that lead us to embrace our communal pain and our communal identity for healing and new life. Leading us through a ritual calling of the Council of All Beings, Kathleen encouraged us to connect at a deep level with those creature-kin, bodies of water, arbor-elders and other kin of our common home, representing their voices, celebrating their diverse gifts and learning from their deep wisdom.

Another SP21C co-facilitator, John Grim, reminded

us that only by "sensing, minding and creating" anew with the flow that is the common experience of inter-breathing with all creation can we know ourselves in a new way, feel our way into the "We" we are becoming. Highlighting indigenous rituals such as Walking into the World, The First Smile and Introducing a Child to the Cosmos, John reminded us that it is our profound inter-connection with creation's ubiquitous beauty and mystery that we are most likely to encounter the Holy.

Mary Evelyn Tucker, our other honored co-facilitator for SP21C, accompanied us through a four-fold prayer invitation of "orienting, grounding, nurturing and transforming" in our reverence for and our celebration of communal Breath.

Learning from the orienting nature of the night sky, grounding ourselves in creation's own rhythms and patterns, nurturing our other-than-human kin as we do our human kin, and being more and more open to the transformative powers that are within us will aid us on the journey. They all seem to be saying, "*Listen, be present, breathe into the moment.*"

Who we are becoming is still a mystery, but it is clear that we are "cocooning," and the moment for caterpillars-into-butterflies is upon us. Poetically speaking, we are trembling at the brink, composting, alchemizing, transfiguring, metamorphosing. We are experiencing the imaginal cells of the Universe—God's own Holy Breath—

conspiring to transform not only us human-kin, but the cosmic "We" into something truly more complex and more unified. When we *look within*, we find the urgency to become more fully who "We" are, and we are expanding our concepts and our spirituality to accommodate this fullness. When we *look around*, we can't help but notice the vast array of Life in all its intense shape and color and variation. It astounds; it attracts. It calls us into an *inexorable union*. "Interiority, Diversity and Communion"—hallmarks of the evolving Universe—are more and more at play as we go about learning the daily mini-steps—the "Great Work" (ala Berry) of co-creating this "single, gorgeous, celebratory event" that is our unfolding Now.

Altogether now: Let's take a deep breath. And dive.



COUNCIL of all Prairiewoods BEINGS

Grandmother Oak (Joann Gehling, FSPA)

I am Grandmother Oak! My roots are deep and my branches reach out in WELCOME to non-humans and humans alike. I am strong and sturdy—yet fragile—missing my companion trees lost in the Derecho. I am GRATEFUL for the colorful NEW LIFE that now brightens my day.



Decomposing Log (Carol Tyx)

I was once a home for squirrels and birds, but now fungus and beetles have taken up residence, my tough strength given way to soft pliability. Don't think I no longer serve a purpose; I am returning my life-giving energy to the earth. I have my own kind of beauty. Rejoice with me in the cycle of life that nourishes all of us.



At

our *Spirituality in the 21st Century* event, co-facilitator Kathleen Rude led us in a wonderful Council of All Beings reflection, where we each imagined ourselves as a more-than-human being, such as an animal, a plant or a whole eco-system. We were asked to reflect on what that being might say, and what that being might want humans to know.

We are inspired by that powerful reflection as we give voice to some of our beloved Prairiewoods friends in our Council of All Prairiewoods Beings. We offer images of Prairiewoods beings as seen and heard now, at this time—from a conversation between two pine trees, to words of wisdom from Grandmother Oak, to the musings of a decomposing log, to the voice of Dry Creek. We also hear the voice of the deer, often seen in the woods. And if we really listen, we might hear the voice of Brother Fox, rarely seen and perhaps living in one of the post-derecho habitats found throughout the Prairiewoods land.

We thank the following humans for their gentle listening ear, for hearing and giving voice to these beings: Rev. Rose Blank, Tom Dean, Sister Joann Gehling, Sister Nancy Hoffman, Amy Nolan and Carol Tyx.

Brother Fox (Amy Nolan)

My golden face sees much from the shelter of my den. I am safe here, surrounded by lush green and the calls and footsteps of my brothers and sisters deer, owl, snake, honeybee and Grandmother Oak. I speak for myself and my fellow foxes, who must travel far and wide for food and shelter, whose bodies I have seen curled, their black feet forever stilled, on the side of the highway, where humans move at impossible speeds. I ask that human beings live in the wild and beautiful present, to slow down, place their hands on their hearts, and listen. I thank the humans among you who are quiet, tread lightly and behold us in stillness.





Pine Trees (Nancy Hoffman, FSPA)

“Hi, my friends call me Dakota. I guess that’s because I am a Black Hills Pine. I’m about two years old and I live along Boyson Road.”

“Well hello, Dakota. Call me Whitey. I’m the large White Pine right behind you, the one with my top third cracked off. I am 25 years old. Sorry that I fell right on top of you during the derecho.”

“Oh that’s OK, Whitey. The feeling of love I got when the people pulled you off me and made happy sounds more than made up for the jolt I got from you. I hope you are OK.”

“Yes, I’m just happy they left me to live, because I want to continue my life’s work of absorbing enormous amounts of CO₂ from the many cars traveling Boyson Road. And don’t forget all the wonderful O₂ that I breathe out. My thick branches act as a buffer for all the noise while adding beauty to the area. Our friends the deer and the rabbits like to shelter under us. Some people claim we give off a very vibrant energy.”

“Well, Whitey, I may be small, but I have a mighty request of our human family. Service your cars to limit the CO₂ emissions.”

“Ugh! It makes me choke. Please plan your route to accomplish many errands on one trip. Oh my, would you please, please stop throwing your garbage out the window? It’s unsightly and so harmful to my bird and animal friends. If everyone in those thousands of cars that pass each day would do something to limit global warming it would make a great impact. We trees feel the effects of the warming. I’m told that you elder trees never used to suffer so much from the lack of or access to rain.”

“The erratic temperature changes affect us too. I have a whole list more but I’ll stop with this final plea to stop putting all those chemicals on your lawn. Really, you must know where that all goes. My young roots and my veins can give you a clue.”

“Oh, Dakota, such wisdom already, you give me hope. I will watch over you and send you nutrients through my roots if you need help. Let us along with all other creatures continue to praise God for this wonderful Earth.”

“Friends forever, Whitey!”



Dry Creek (Rev. Rose Blank)

I am the voice of Dry Creek—hardly dry at all, but a living, vibrant ecosystem that nurtures the land through which I flow as well as the creatures who inhabit this rich land around me. I am alive with the wonder and joy that fill me as I wander through farmland and cityscape until I come to this space at Prairiewoods. It is such a sacred space for me. I delight in the quiet of the people who walk nearby, the reflective nature of those who sit by my banks in contemplative prayer—these things are a small part of what feeds me for the rest of my journey as I make my way downstream. While there is much joy in being a gurgling creek as I make my way around the bends and turns of the land here, there is also a great sadness in the garbage that flows in my waters. I long for people to care for me, as I care for them. I want them to know I am part of what some Indigenous peoples call the First Medicine that binds all of life. Along with all the plants and animals who find nurture here, the minerals of the rocks that line my bed and my shoreline, the people who sit by me for the refreshment of their spirits, we are all part of the sacredness of all creation. Come, sit by me; pray for me and all my Sister waters. Do what is yours to do so that you might help every waterway to be clean so we might nurture and offer joy to all beings who are one in our Creator.



Deer (Tom Dean)

I have a gentle nature and a graceful bearing, but know that it comes from my fierce protectiveness and constant vigilance. I can stand regally for many moments, yet I move quickly and change direction when my sharp senses and deep instincts tell me to do so. At all times, my life is about profound attention to the world. In our interconnectedness, I hope you will share such mindfulness with me.

What We Know Now

Earlier in 2021, in preparation for our 25th Jubilee year, we decided it was time to learn from all of you! We sent an electronic survey to our email list and received 533 responses! We thought you'd be interested in some of what we learned. We asked 24 questions; each yielded many individual responses, so we are only able to share a small snapshot with you here. (Please note: where we've listed responses in quotation marks, these are a small sampling of the individual responses for that question.)

Q1: When and how did you first get involved with Prairiewoods?

When: answers ranged from every year since 1990 through 2021, and from "before you broke ground" to "I discovered you online during the pandemic"

How: "Attended a workshop with Kathleen Duffy in March 2021"

"Just went there to walk"

"Day of Caring 5 years ago"

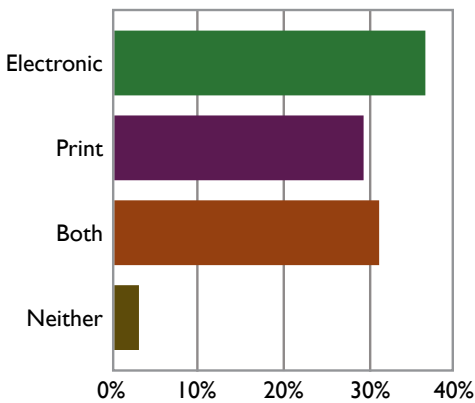
"Spirituality in the 21st Century in 2019 with Charles Eisenstein and Bayo Akomolafe"

"I participated in a Day of Self Renewal"

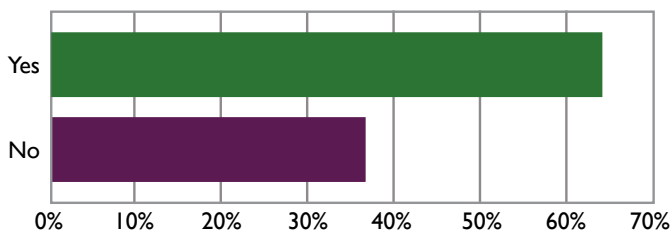
"Through my church"

"Attended a concert by Johnny Lipford"

Q3: Do you currently receive our newsletter?



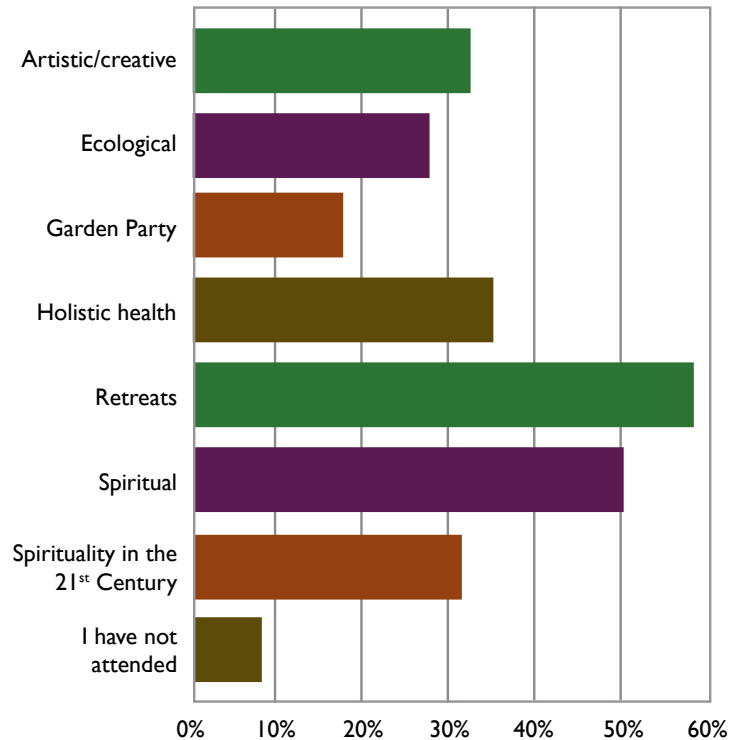
Q8: Do you currently participate in a faith community?



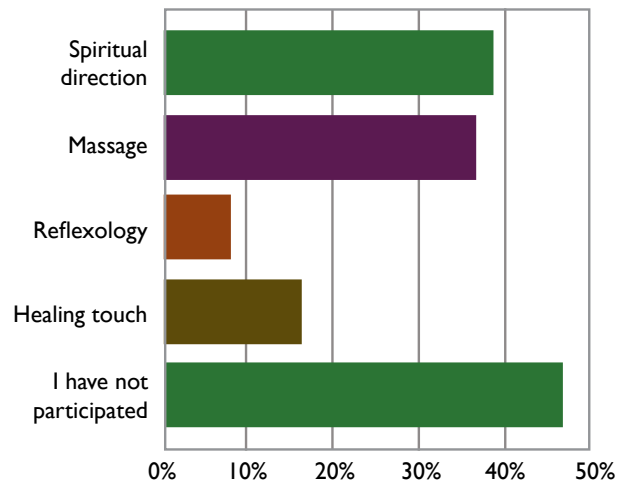
Q7: What religion do you identify as?

While the majority of respondents identified as Christian, others also selected Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Secular Humanist, Unitarian Universalist and spiritual but not religious.

Q14: What type of programs have you attended at Prairiewoods?



Q15: Which of the following services have you participated in at Prairiewoods?



Q23: What ecospirituality topics do you hope to see at Prairiewoods in the future?

"Indigenous speakers/authors"

"Writing"

"Silent retreats"

"Stress and trauma response; building resilience"

"Forest meditation"

"Water quality"

"Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*"

"More poetry, please!"

"Anything about connecting health to spirit"

Thank you to all who responded to our survey!



Prairiewoods
**Garden
Party**
an at-home celebration

NO tickets. **NO** three-course meal. **NO** auction.

You're invited to stay home and celebrate a special 2021 Garden Party! As part of a community of supporters who make our mission possible, will you join us this year **in spirit** for an event that will **not** take place in person in 2021? Don't dress up, don't leave home and don't join us at a fancy venue.

2021 Garden Party Challenge

We challenge you to give at least \$25 in honor of our 25th Jubilee! Your donation is tax deductible.

Last Chance to Match

All donations received **by June 30, 2021**, will be **MATCHED** through the generosity of Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration to our endowment.

For more information or to donate by credit card, please visit www.Prairiewoods.org/Garden-Party or call 319-395-6700.

*Thank you for your support.
We couldn't do this work without you!*

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

Post-Covid Spirituality: A Deep Dive into the Wider “We” Retreat

Friday, Aug. 13, 6:30 p.m.–Sunday, Aug. 15, 1 p.m.

Facilitators: Ellen Bruckner & Laura Weber, PhD

Where do we find ourselves spiritually after a year and a half immersed in a global pandemic? In the spirit of Prairiewoods' process of PanDeepening and Go Deeper Thursdays, we offer a weekend retreat to learn and practice some of the skills we need to expand our consciousness about who “We” are in these unprecedented times. We will explore and practice:

1. our self-concept and expression of our own unique role in this Age Beyond the Anthropocene (human-centeredness)
2. relanguaging some concepts around spirituality, community, creation and God-imagery to help us during this transition
3. mapping our breath and collective presencing in our circles of trust

We will learn how to read and enter into conversations of the more intimate circles of which we are a part, such as our families, neighborhoods and communities of many kinds. Saturday evening and Sunday morning will offer extended quiet time for processing what we've explored in the three sessions Friday night, Saturday morning and Saturday afternoon. This will be a hybrid in-person and Zoom retreat, and those who participate via Zoom will be online and in break-outs Friday evening, 6:30–9 p.m. Central; Saturday morning, 9 a.m.–noon; and Saturday afternoon, 2–5 p.m. Breaks will also be included in our online time. Also, we encourage everyone to consider joining Go Deeper every third Thursday online as a way of continuing to practice our skills with this learning community. Prior participation in Go Deeper Thursdays is not a prerequisite.

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

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

Zoom fee: \$100 includes three sessions

Save the Date!

for retreats this fall:

Honoring Grief & Celebrating Life Retreat, Sept. 2–3

Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life (S.E.E.L.) Opening, Sept. 11

Jubilation! Retreat in Honor of Prairiewoods' 25th Jubilee, Oct. 8–10

Silent Mindfulness Meditation Retreat, Nov. 12–14

Winter Solstice: Opening to the Light Retreat, Dec. 17–19

Watch future newsletters and www.Prairiewoods.org for details on these upcoming retreats!

Metta Yoga

Mondays & Thursdays; July 1–Aug. 30; 9:30–10:30 a.m., 10:45–11:45 a.m. & 5:30–6:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Heather English

Experience the healing powers of meditative yoga from the spiritual environment and natural beauty of Prairiewoods. Join us as we link our movements with our breath and cultivate strength, flexibility and relaxation through regular hatha-style yoga classes. RYT-200 Hour Certified Yoga Alliance Instructor Heather English offers Gentle/Beginner's Yoga every Monday and Thursday. People of all fitness levels and abilities are encouraged to participate whenever available. Heather began practicing yoga for the mental health benefits and became a yoga instructor in order to share these amazing benefits with others. She is inspired by the potential that a regular yoga practice has for impacting so many areas of life. In fact, it was her yoga training that motivated her to begin crafting as a career, to share her crafting with others, and to regularly explore the intersection of yoga and creativity. Let's see how Heather can help us benefit from yoga! Beginning in July, yoga will resume meeting in person at Prairiewoods.

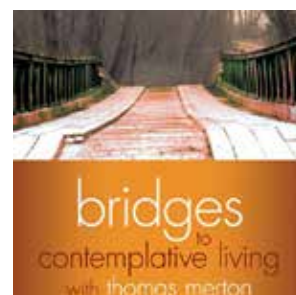
Fee: \$99 for eleven-punch card or \$60 for six-punch card, one punch per session

Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton

Thursdays; July 1, July 15, Aug. 5 & Aug. 19; 6:30–8 p.m.

Facilitator: Carole Butz

The practice of contemplative living helps us respond to everyday experiences with greater awareness of our connections with God and others. It becomes a positive force in our lives and provides direction for our



journey, enabling us to embrace our truest selves. This group meets via Zoom on the first and third Thursday evenings of each month. We use the *Bridges to Contemplative Living* series, which includes excerpts from the writings of Thomas Merton and other authors, to explore the truths of human existence. The process involves readings, reflections and contemplative dialogue. Registration is not necessary.

Fee: Free-will offering



Going Inward with Sounds & Vibrations

Mondays; July 5, July 19, Aug. 2 & Aug. 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 in-person hour, Kathy Broghammer will lead us to connect with our inner selves through the song of bowls. We will be invited to sit or lie down to listen and just be. We will hear the sounds and feel the vibrations of the singing bowls going inward. Let's let our souls rest and allow ourselves to be recreated!

Fee: \$10 per session

Prayer Experience Series Tuesdays, July 6–Aug. 31, 11:30 a.m.–noon

Facilitator: Angie Pierce Jennings

We are blessed with many ways to pray and reflect including songful prayer, contemplative prayer, visio divina, embodied prayer, silent prayer, guided meditation, and many others. All are welcome to join this ongoing prayer series via Zoom and experience the joys of prayer and meditation together. Registration is not required.

Fee: Free-will offering

Prairiewoods Knitters & Stitchers

**Tuesdays, July 13 & Aug. 10,
9:30–11 a.m.**

Facilitators: participants

Practice knitting and stitching in the company of new friends! This is a group of crafters of various skill levels who create handmade goods for charity. New participants are always welcome, including those who are new to knitting and crocheting. Together we create hats, mittens, blankets and baby items for charity. Grab your needles and join us! This group will resume meeting in person. Registration is not necessary.

Fee: Free

Nature & Forest Therapy Experience

Evening Sessions:

Wednesdays, July 14 & Aug. 4, 6–8 p.m.

**Afternoon Session: Monday,
July 19, 2:30–3:45 p.m.**

Facilitator: Emelia Sautter

We invite you to join the land at Prairiewoods and certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide Emelia Sautter for a walk with the natural world. Experience Forest Therapy, a

Prairiewoods Grand Prairie Picnic & Field Day

Saturday, July 31, 11 a.m.–3 p.m.

Join us for a celebration of everything we've co-created with nature on the land at Prairiewoods! The day will include games and activities for the whole family, as well as the opportunity to browse through a time line of Prairiewoods land care. Check out our edible landscaping in the Garden of Eat'n, our Healing Garden and the Green Prairie Garden, which provides fresh, organic produce to the Metro Catholic Outreach food pantry. Learn more about how we've responded to the devastation of last year's derecho; enjoy our groomed walking trails, outdoor labyrinth and Cosmic Walk; and participate in field day activities for all ages, featuring our community partnerships with a number of area organizations, including Trees Forever, Backyard Abundance, the City of Cedar Rapids Stormwater Division, Green Iowa AmeriCorps, I-Renew and Metro Catholic Outreach. You may choose to add lunch for \$8 or to bring your own lunch. Registration is appreciated for the event and required for lunch.

Fee: Free, or you may choose to add lunch for \$8 (if reserved in advance)



sensory-focused practice that invites us to slow down and be present with self and the natural



world around us. According to the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy, "Forest Therapy is a practice that supports health and wellness through guided immersion in forests and other environments to promote the well-being of both people and the land. It is inspired by Shinrin yoku, the Japanese practice of 'Forest Bathing.'" Much research has been done on the healing and therapeutic benefits of Forest Therapy. Hundreds of clinical and non-clinical studies show numerous positive effects including reductions in stress, anxiety, depression, mental fatigue, anger and pain. Improvements include better cognitive functioning, sleep, mood, confidence and creativity. Time with our nature kin also boosts our immune system, regulates blood pressure, improves relationships, increases feelings of gratitude and much more. Registration is required by noon three days prior to the session. Please dress for being outdoors the entire time and bring a water bottle.

Fee: \$30 for evening sessions, \$20 for afternoon session

Go Deeper Third Thursdays Thursdays, July 15 & Aug. 19, 4-5 p.m.

Facilitators: Ellen Bruckner & Laura Weber

This time of "PanDeepening" over the past year has offered a generous foray into the wellsprings of shifting paradigms and an exploration of what it means to be part of a wider "We" with not only all of humanity, but all of creation. Who

are the "We" we're becoming? Join us on the third Thursdays in person at Prairiewoods or via Zoom as we come together to breathe deeply, engage in collective presencing, and reflect on how we are gracefully composting our life experience and spiritual wisdom to grow into our evolving sense of the whole. Together we learn, and together we go deeper.

Fee: Free-will offering

Offered in Partnership with Unity Point Hospice

Soul Care: Creative Arts Grief Support Group

**Wednesdays, July 21 & Aug. 18,
5:30-7 p.m.**

Facilitators: Jamie Siela, LISW, & Kristine Shultis, MDiv, LMT, CHT

Take time to connect with others in grief and engage the creative spark. Jamie Siela and Kristine Shultis from Unity Point Hospice facilitate this monthly grief group open to anyone grieving loss through death. On the third Wednesday of each month, come to Prairiewoods or join us online to explore a different creative art medium.

- In July, our art work will be salt painting. In grief we may experience emotions that seem to explode when they are least expected. Using glue, salt and paint, we will create a seasonal firework masterpiece.
- Our August artwork will be understanding grief masks. Using paper mâché masks, we will acknowledge the brave face many of us wear while grieving. These masks are sometimes used to hide our true feelings from the outside world. We will compare how we let the outside world see us with what we feel on the inside.

Registration is required by noon eight days in advance. As a joint program with Unity Point, Covid screening questions will be asked upon arrival for those in person.

Fee: Free includes all art supplies

Day of Self Renewal Monday, Aug. 16, 8:30 a.m.- 4:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Angie Pierce Jennings

Find rest and relaxation for mind, body and spirit! This tranquil day features two 30-minute holistic services, group guided meditation, access to walking trails and all that Prairiewoods has to offer, a fresh lunch and hours of free time. (Choose from massage, head and shoulder massage, reflexology, healing touch, spiritual direction or yoga.) Registration, a nonrefundable, nontransferable deposit of \$50 and your top three services choices are required five days in advance. Enjoy a relaxing day stay. (Private guest rooms are not available for this date.) **Fee:** \$95 includes guided meditation, singing bowl prayer, two holistic services and lunch



Singing Bowl Prayer Monday, Aug. 16, 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 this session, we will let the resonant sounds of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls relax the entire body and create a pathway for clearer connection with the divine. We will be invited to just receive and breathe. Join us as we return to in-person gathering. Registration is required by noon.

Fee: \$5

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

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HONORARIA

In honor of Julia Andrews
David Coughlin & Kristin Hutson
In honor of Earth Day & Arbor Day M.L. Folkedahl-meehleder
In honor of Joann Gehling, FSPA Jerry Gehling
In honor of Nancy Hoffman, FSPA Jacqueline Severidt
In honor of Nancy Hoffman, FSPA, & Ann Jackson, PBVM Anonymous
Deb & Steve Kennedy
In honor of Prairiewoods' 25th Jubilee
Dave Higdon
Sheila Rouse
In honor of the Prairiewoods staff
M.L. Folkedahl-meehleder
Mark & Pat McCright
In honor of Linda Severidt
Casey Dreher

MEMORIALS

In memory of Pat & Ray Brown
Dave & Linda Langston
In memory of Dr. Carl William Bruch
Janet & Ron Nimer
In memory of Betty Daugherty, FSPA
Tamara McReynolds
In memory of Elena Doherty Macdonell
Maureen Byrne
In memory of Donald Heires
Mary Thompson
In memory of Antoni & Dorene Moreau
Colleen & Jim Nieman
In memory of Esther Sand & Nellie Smith
Anita O'Gara
In memory of Mary Skallerud Jessica Lien
In memory of John & Patricia Snyder, Robert & Betty Ulstad
Jane & Steve Ulstad
In memory of Donald Stewart Jessica Lien

IN-KIND DONATIONS

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Al Boyden
Martha Donnelly, PBVM
Judy Hines
Karen Lueck, FSPA
Charles Luster
Dale Peterson, Ever-Green Landscape
Delores Phillips
Linda Ponder
Kathy Schumacher
Bonnie & Steve Sovern
Carole Teator

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Paul Crawford
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Rick Sandstrom
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Lucy Slinger, FSPA
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Matteo Tormene
Alina Warner
John Weber
Kyle Wissenberg
Leslie Wright
Zae Young





120 E Boyson Rd
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You may send this by mail, email ecospirit@prairiewoods.org or call **319-395-6700**. If mailed, please include this address label.

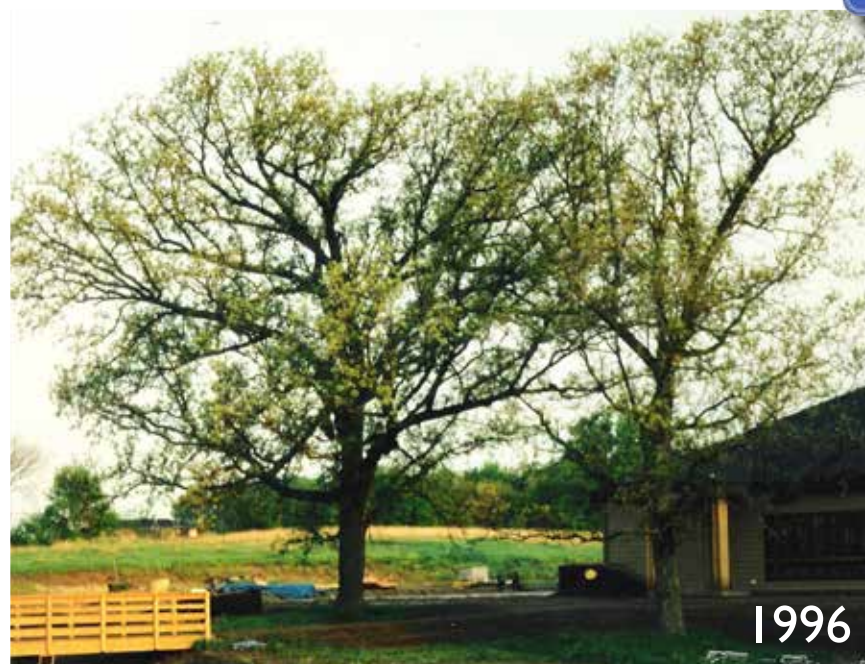
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bur oaks

**THEN
&
NOW**



1996



2021



2021

Prairiewoods' beloved bur oaks stood together for many years, growing together and reaching out to each other with their branches and root systems. Above, they are pictured in 1996, by the south entrance of the Center, just a few months before Prairiewoods would open its doors for the first time. Over the years, many Prairiewoods visitors remember enjoying their shade, admiring their beautiful welcoming presence, and sitting in their tree swings, peacefully held by the strong branches of those two sister trees. Now, 25 years later, one tree stands, while the other fell during the derecho. And yet, there is still so much life in our fallen bur oak friend, and a new oak sapling is growing and being nurtured in her stump.

September/October 2021

Prairiewoods

A CATHOLIC, FRANCISCAN ECOSPIRITUALITY RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER



our Future Births a Wider "We"

Prairiewoods' creation story tells of the six foundresses spending time walking on the land, listening to the land, even dreaming on the land in order that their hearts would hear the real music of this sacred space, so that a close enough connection would be established that they might begin to understand what the land was calling into being on these acres. Each day that a guest tells us, "As soon as I turned onto the drive at Prairiewoods, I felt at peace," we know in our hearts that those women, and the many others who joined them to build Prairiewoods, succeeded in their endeavor! The frequency with which this happens (almost daily) tells us just how much it means to

"The world is part of our own self and we are a part of its suffering wholeness. Until we go to the root of our image of separateness, there can be no healing ... Only when our feet learn once again how to walk in a sacred manner, and our hearts hear the real music of creation, can we bring the world back into balance.

—Llewellyn Vaughan-Lee

people that Prairiewoods exists.

A 25th jubilee year is a wonderful time to look back at all that has taken place, everything that has been built and stewarded, and the myriad ways that relationships with Source, Earth, self and others have been nourished and cherished. As we have taken time to celebrate all that is and has been Prairiewoods these past 25 years, how could we proclaim anything but "Praise be!"?

An anniversary is also a propitious time to look forward, to ask ourselves what impacts, dreams and service we will bring to our community in the next 25 years.

(continued on page 3)

PRAIRIEWOODS STAFF

Laurie Erlacher
Cook

Joann Gehling, FSPA
Holistic Services, Spiritual
Director

Jenifer Hanson
Director

Trace Harshman
Housekeeper

Brydon Hill
Cook

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

Ann Jackson, PBVM
Spiritual Services
Coordinator, Spiritual
Director

Evan Langston
Chef/Kitchen Manager

Andi Lewis
Marketing Coordinator

Jessica Lien
Development Coordinator

Erik Meggers
Maintenance Coordinator

Angie Pierce Jennings
Hosted Groups &
Hospitality Coordinator

Mary Rasmussen
Hospitality Assistant

Nancy Schrimper
Office Administrator

August Stolba
Land Care & Holistic
Ecology Coordinator

Laura Weber
Retreats Coordinator,
Associate Director

Lucille Winnike, FSPA
Retreats, Spiritual
Director



"We welcome you to come often, to walk the trails, to admire the strength of the trees, to engage with the residents, the denizens of prairie and woods. We invite you to listen to the wisdom coming from the land itself. It will teach us to be grateful for the gifts of each season."

—Betty Daugherty, FSPA, from her address on Oct. 4, 2019


When the land at Prairiewoods was purchased by Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration (FSPA), it was farmland. Over time, the cities of Cedar Rapids and Hiawatha have grown and developed, and now Prairiewoods is bordered by residential neighborhoods and a thriving business community. By 2035, Linn County is projecting population growth of 25.8%, while the City of Hiawatha is projected to grow by a whopping 48.9%.

No newsletter issue on the future of Prairiewoods would be complete without discussing the conservation easement agreement FSPA entered into with the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation (INHF). This agreement ensures that most of the 70 acres of Prairiewoods' woodlands and prairies will remain undeveloped "in perpetuity." This means that the land here will remain a natural oasis in a growing urban environment—a place where many species of plants, animals, pollinators, insects will be protected and allowed to thrive, and where their human kin will be invited into relationship with the land and its residents.

Looking ahead, we see the importance of this "wild" and undeveloped space for the healing of all. The realities of climate change in our lived experience, the need for expansive spaces to nurture our communal development from an "I" to "We" consciousness, the immanence of the Divine in creation are all reasons that Prairiewoods' land is such a vital resource for the future. Thomas Berry wrote, "For Children to live only in contact with concrete and steel and wires and wheels and machines and computers and plastics, to seldom experience any primordial reality or even to see the stars at night, is soul deprivation that diminishes the deepest of their human experiences" (Thomas Berry, "The University," in *The Great Work*, 82). Prairiewoods offers enhancement and proliferation, where so much of modern life offers diminishment.

For these reasons, we celebrate the easement agreement between FSPA and INHF as one of the most important impacts of Prairiewoods on our wider community moving into the future, into our next 25 years. As FSPA President Eileen Makenzie said at our easement signing celebration, "As the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, we're very comfortable with the words, 'In perpetuity.'" Praise Be for that reality!

Peace and all good,


Jenifer Hanson, Director



Prairiewoods is a Catholic 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.

Please address all correspondence to:

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(continued from page 1)

This is a somewhat more difficult task than taking satisfaction in what has already been accomplished. If the coronavirus pandemic has taught us anything, it is that we are unable to predict how the future will unfold—planning for the next 25 years feels particularly difficult when we don’t know what to expect in the next month. Our mission remains our best guide, allowing us to move boldly into the unknown future.

Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center is a sacred space ...

We recognize that we are a part of the web of life, not separate from or above it. For this reason, caring for this sacred space is a responsibility, a privilege and a deep joy. We enter into relationship with the land, the water, the air—and with all of the beings whose lives are lived here. As we continue to respond to last year’s derecho, which brought many changes to the woods and prairies, we see new opportunities arise, including transforming our storm-damaged orchard into a food forest; creating a small wetland or water garden to welcome Sister Water as she drains onto Prairiewoods’ southwest corner; and continuing to seek new ways to contribute to food security in our larger community through stewardship of our relationship with Metro Catholic Outreach, the Green Prairie Garden and through development of additional meaningful partnerships. We continue to learn from others and from Earth itself, and Prairiewoods will always be a place where we share through our program offerings what we learn about tending what is sacred.

... where people of all faiths and cultures are invited ...

Since we opened in 1996, Prairiewoods has welcomed all, striving to extend hospitality to each individual who came through our doors or walked our paths. Increasingly, we are aware that extending welcome and Franciscan hospitality is invitational as well. We are exploring ways to actively invite people and populations who might otherwise not have either access to or knowledge of all that Prairiewoods has to offer. For example, through a Seeding A Legacy of Healing grant by Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, we are entering into partnerships with several other nonprofits in the area (African American Museum of Iowa, Catherine McAuley

Center, Catholic Worker House of Iowa City and Matthew 25) to invite their staffs and the community members they serve to enter into relationship with Prairiewoods. While we don’t know yet the scope or outcomes of these new partnerships, we are excited to see them evolve. We also continue to invite a broader representation from our community to engage with us as Board members and volunteers. Finally, we continue to conduct thoughtful self-evaluation to seek—and hopefully remove—barriers that may prevent others from accepting our proffered invitation.

... to explore and nurture their relationships with the Source of all Being, Earth, Self and Others ...

As an ecospirituality center, Prairiewoods cherishes the belief that the web of life inheres in the Divine Source, which animates all that lives and breathes in the planetary community. We have always offered opportunities for individuals to explore and deepen their relationships with Spirit. Increasingly, though, we also see and hope to contribute to the communal shift from ego to eco, from “I” to “We.” Since the

pandemic, we’ve repeatedly asked ourselves and those willing to enter into the question with us, “Who are the WE we are becoming?” In our next 25 years, we will continue to be a place of sanctuary and retreat. We will continue to be a place of deepening. And we will continue to be a place where questions and dialogue are both encouraged and supported, where it is safe to explore the big questions—age-old questions or new queries inspired by the exigencies of our current times.

... with an increasing awareness of the story of the Universe.

Geologian Thomas Berry, one of the great influences on Prairiewoods, wrote, “The origin moment of the universe presents us with an amazing process that we begin to appreciate as a mystery unfolding through the ages” (Thomas Berry, “The Earth Story,” in *The Great Work*). The cosmos, Earth and all of her creatures continue to evolve—as does our very consciousness. For 25 years, Prairiewoods has been evolving while holding our mission firmly at the heart of all of our endeavors. The next 25 years will be times of unprecedented change in the wider Earth community of which we are all a part. It is our commitment and our prayer that Prairiewoods will continue to evolve and to deepen around our expansive mission.

Praise be!

Our 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.



Fruitful Partnerships with Community Collaborators

“I urgently appeal, then, for a new dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet. We need a conversation which includes everyone, since the environmental challenge we are undergoing, and its human roots, concern and affect us all” (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*, 14).

In his encyclical letter *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis calls the whole human family to come together to address the most urgent challenges and needs of our time. Pope Francis has advocated for collaborative effort where it is possible and acknowledges the value of diverse perspectives: “All of us can cooperate as instruments of God for the care of creation, each according to his or her own culture, experience, involvements and talents” (LS 14).

Prairiewoods is committed to strengthening partnerships and collaboration with organizations invested in addressing the challenges we face together. As we look ahead, we highlight just a few of our many fruitful partnerships and their hopes for future collaboration with Prairiewoods. Through these partnerships we may, as *Laudato Si'* encourages, “hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor” (LS 49)—and look for ways to respond to those cries within our larger community.

Prairiewoods was founded by and continues to be sponsored by *Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration*, an order of sisters out of La Crosse, Wisconsin. “Rooted in its founding charism, Prairiewoods will find unique and meaningful ways of branching out in service of its mission in the community. The vision is life-giving, healing, and creative. Looking into the future, FSPA and Prairiewoods will both continue to seek ways to engage a narrative that brings healing to the world. Sharing unique gifts in pursuit of a common goal, we will continue learning from one another and grow a movement of peace and justice.”

—Eileen McKenzie, FSPA,
President of Franciscan Sisters
of Perpetual Adoration

The permaculture experts at *Backyard Abundance* have helped Prairiewoods on a number of projects, including the Garden of Eat'n, as well as hands-on gardening workshops. “We think both Backyard Abundance and Prairiewoods resonate with that feeling in our bones that we know we need to reconnect with Mother Earth for our own healing, as well as hers. Through digging deeper in ourselves, we have come to know that Mother Earth and her plants are our elders who love to care for us and provide us much of what we need to sustain our vitality. Only when we are in communion with her, tending to her charming and enchanting creations, can both of us reap the benefits to thrive. We are noticing after all the stress and trauma people have been through the past several years, we are yearning on our Soul levels to get back to the plants and soil for healing and restoration. Each year, Backyard Abundance guides others to connect deeper with Nature through hands-on practices like growing food in our public and private landscapes, creating respite habitats for critters and humans, and delighting in our senses through foraging edibles. We can't wait to see what beauty is wanting to emerge from our future collaborative projects!”

—Jen Kardos, Wellness Program
Director of Backyard
Abundance

*Trees
Forever* has

been a major part of our history, and we expect it to be an integral part of our future, as well. In our early years, Trees Forever helped Prairiewoods by offering their expertise and a variety of saplings. From 2004–2006, they aided us in creating a comprehensive, long-range land management plan. And as we continue to recover from the derecho, we rely on their expertise in all things tree-related.

Prairiewoods is now partnering with *Matthew 25* through a new Seeding a Legacy of Healing grant,

but there is a long history between the two organizations. “Matthew 25 was founded after its Co-Executive Directors, pastors and brothers, Courtney Ball and Clint Twedt-Ball spent time in retreat with a Prairiewoods Spiritual Director, Sister Joann Gehling. During our fifteen years of operating, Matthew 25 has continued to build a strong bond with Prairiewoods. Both organizations know there is a deep connection between the health of the planet and the health of people. We also know that it is the most economically marginalized people that are the most impacted by the climate crisis. As we move into the future, Matthew 25 and Prairiewoods will continue to explore how we work together as advocates, justice seekers and holistic healers of all of creation.”

—Clint Twedt-Ball,
Executive Director
of Matthew 25

A solar energy training center sits on Prairiewoods’ property along Boyson Road. It is a testament to the partnership between the *Iowa Renewable Energy Association (I-Renew)* and Prairiewoods. “I-Renew, ... to an extent, owes its very existence to Prairiewoods. Since both organizations’ inception in the early ’90s we have closely collaborated on our related missions ... (Prairiewoods) has allowed us to maintain our headquarters on their campus since 2010 ... As president of the board of I-Renew ... I am so gratified that we have the great honor to be a partner of Prairiewoods. Our missions are so aligned and we have so much to learn from this great organization. We volunteer, we work, we partner and we collaborate—all for helping each other, our brothers and sisters, human and non-human. For that, I-Renew is proud to say we are a partner with Prairiewoods.”

—David Gustafson, Board
President of I-Renew

Did you know that Prairiewoods is helping people experiencing food insecurity in the Cedar Rapids area? We partner with *Metro Catholic Outreach (MCO)* on the Green Prairie Garden, the huge vegetable garden on our 70 acres of land. Each year, we grow about 1,500 pounds of produce to share with those in need through MCO’s food pantry! We grow another 500 pounds to help our chefs feed Prairiewoods guests nearly 8,000 meals a year.

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

Honoring Grief & Celebrating Life Retreat Thursday, Sept. 2, 9 a.m.–Friday, Sept. 3, 3 p.m.

Facilitator: Kathleen Rude

We have lost so much in this past year from the ravages of Covid-19, the derecho, lockdown and social isolation. We haven't been able to gather together to grieve and remember. Our heroic health care workers, in particular, have had to put emotions aside just to get through the days of caring for the sick and dying. Our unexpressed grief has taken an emotional and spiritual toll on us all. It's time now to come together to grieve those we have lost—our human loved ones, treasured trees, creature-kin, lost life moments—and to celebrate the gift of their lives.

On Thursday, we will spend the day in ritual, reflection and sharing, honoring our grief in the morning and celebrating life in the afternoon. We will have ample time outside in the healing presence of nature. On Friday, we will nourish ourselves with experiences to strengthen our resilience so we can continue to face these challenging times with hope, gratitude and compassion. We encourage you to spend the full two days for healing and transformation, but if you can only make one day, we recommend the full day Thursday. Please let us know at registration if you only wish to spend one day, either Thursday or Friday.

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

Commuter Fee: \$150 for Thursday only, \$75 for Friday only



Jubilation! Retreat in Honor of Prairiewoods' 25th Jubilee

Friday, Oct. 8, 6:30 p.m.–Sunday, Oct. 10, 10 a.m.

Facilitator: Laura Weber

Celebrate your soul singing with the joy of all creation as we warm up for a Prairiewoods weekend of homecoming and the gentle embrace of Earth. What a time to celebrate life in this sacred place, where we explore and nurture our relationships with Source of All Being, self, others and creation. Autumn is a time of abundance, of ripening, of harvest and giving thanks for all good gifts. What better way to celebrate Prairiewoods as a place of peace and transformation than by spending a weekend praying and playing in the lingering sun and basking in the fall colors?

On Friday evening, we will gather for sunset prayer to enter into the quietude of innermost sanctuary, where Spirit stills and anoints us for the journey. Saturday morning, following a hot breakfast, we will gather for some gentle tai chi movement and time for spiritual journaling, meditative art or poetry for the soul. A silent nature mindfulness meditation walk follows, concluding the morning with lunch on the patio (weather permitting). Saturday early afternoon is free for prayer, reflection, walking, meditation or a deeply restful snooze in your own comfy room or under your favorite tree. We meet again as a group at 4 p.m. for a prayerful journey of the universe out on the Cosmic Walk and conclude with dinner ala Prairiewoods. Stay the night and join in the festivities of Sunday's Praise be! 25th Jubilee Celebration & Open House. A hot breakfast awaits you before the day's events begin. We can't wait to host you in this beautiful, Edenic oasis!

Fee: \$225 includes lodging and all meals

Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life (S.E.E.L.) 14 Retreat

Saturdays, monthly beginning Sept. 11, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

Facilitators: Rose Blank; Ann Jackson, PBVM; & Lucille Winnike, FSPA

"Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life offers a way to reflect and sift through life's experiences and to discover in them the leading thread of God's longing and desire to make us a holy people who are given in service to others" (Carol Ann Smith and Eugene F. Merz, *Moment to Moment: A Retreat in Everyday Life*).

Do you long for GOD? Do you desire time to reflect on your spiritual path and the movement of the Spirit within your life? Do you wish to enrich your spiritual experience through monthly prayer and reflection? Would you like a framework in which to explore and pray your "heart's desire"? Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life (S.E.E.L.) is a nine-month retreat based on the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola. Ignatius explored a number of different kinds of prayer in creating the Exercises. He recognized that emotions and feelings in addition to the intellect help us to sense the movement of the Spirit in

our lives. The Exercises develop dispositions of the heart for prayer, which then become part of daily life.

Retreatants in S.E.E.L. become increasingly aware of the presence of and activity of God in all things. They learn to discern that movement of God in their lives and in the world and to integrate meditation, contemplation and action.

Participation in S.E.E.L. requires a time commitment. We invite you to commit to one hour of prayer each day for nine months; at least one monthly meeting with a spiritual director; and nine monthly Saturday sessions, Sept. 2021 through May 2022. (Monthly meeting dates are Sept. 11, Oct. 9, Nov. 13, Dec. 4, Jan. 8, Feb. 5, March 12, April 9 and May 14.) This retreat is best suited for those who have or are interested in establishing a discipline of regular personal prayer, have experience of sharing their spiritual journey with others, and who are called and committed to deepening personal faith and nurturing a spirituality that transforms society.

Fee: \$450 (payable in Sept. 2021 or in monthly installments of \$50) plus monthly spiritual direction sessions paid separately (usually \$45 per hour)

Offered in Partnership with Cedar Memorial

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR)

Information Sessions: Mondays, Aug. 23 (online) & Aug. 30 (in person), 5:30–6:30 p.m.

Eight-Week Series: Mondays, Sept. 13–Nov. 1, 5:30–8 p.m.

Extended Class: Saturday, Oct. 16, 9 a.m.–3 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 sense of well-being. In the eight-week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, we will cultivate the skill of mindfulness through formal meditation practices and informal integrative practices. If you want to participate in this eight-week in-person series, please attend an information session.

Fee: Free for information sessions, \$400 for eight-week series (partial scholarships available through Cedar Memorial)

Metta Yoga

Mondays & Thursdays; Sept. 2–Oct. 28; 9:30–10:30 a.m., 10:45–11:45 a.m. & 5:30–6:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Heather English

Experience the healing powers of meditative yoga from the spiritual environment and natural beauty of Prairiewoods. Join us in person as we link our movements with our breath and cultivate strength, flexibility and relaxation through regular hatha-style yoga classes. RYT-200 Hour Certified Yoga Alliance Instructor Heather English offers Gentle/Beginner's Yoga every Monday and Thursday. People of all fitness levels and abilities are encouraged to participate whenever available.

Fee: \$99 for eleven-punch card or \$60 for six-punch card, one punch per session

Go Deeper Thursdays

Thursdays; Sept. 2, Sept. 16, Oct. 7 & Oct. 21; 4–5 p.m.

Facilitators: Ellen Bruckner & Laura Weber

The fruitful Go Deeper gatherings during the pandemic opened some avenues into a collective presence—a

“WE space”—a time when a group of people listened into the middle in order to hear the Spirit's guidance. Gathering each week for over a year during the pandemic called into being a foundation of relationships exploring the collective consciousness, or WE space. Beginning in September, Go Deeper will gather online via Zoom on the first and third Thursdays of each month to practice some of the tools that aid participation in the wider WE space that help us to read the collective and listen deeply to our emergent, inter-connected wisdom. Who is this “WE” that we mean? It is wider than our own ego or individual selves, wider than our most intimate circles, our community, work, worship and social circles, and wider even than our human community. It is no less than the “WE” of all creation.

On each first Thursday, we will focus on the tools that enhance this journey of going deeper into the WE space. On the third Thursday, we will explore a topic that deepens the dive into the collective. Also, beginning in September, a one-time registration will be required. We know from listening that we must continue this journey of going deeper, so come join us!

Fee: Free-will offering

Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton

Thursdays; Sept. 2, Sept. 16, Oct. 7 & Oct. 21; 6:30–8 p.m.

Facilitator: Carole Butz

The practice of contemplative living helps us respond to everyday experiences with greater awareness of our connections with God and others. It becomes a positive force in our lives and provides direction for our journey, enabling us to embrace our truest selves. This group meets via Zoom on the first and third Thursday evenings of each month. We use the *Bridges to Contemplative Living* series, which includes excerpts from the writings of Thomas Merton and other authors, to explore the truths of human existence. The process involves readings, reflections and contemplative dialogue. Please register for your first session to get the Zoom link.

Fee: Free-will offering

Going Inward with Sounds & Vibrations

Mondays; Sept. 6, Sept. 20, Oct. 4 & Oct. 18; 6:30–7:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Kathy Broghammer

Experience sound, stillness, playfulness and relaxation through the enigmatic vibrations of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls. During this in-person hour, Kathy Broghammer will lead us to connect with our inner selves through the song of bowls. We will be invited to sit or lie down to listen and just be. We will hear the sounds and feel the vibrations of the singing bowls going inward. Let's let our souls rest and allow ourselves to be recreated!

Fee: \$10 per session

Prayer Experience Series

Tuesdays, Sept. 7–Oct. 26, 11:30 a.m.–12 p.m.

Facilitator: Angie Pierce Jennings

We are blessed with many ways to pray and reflect including songful prayer, contemplative prayer, visio divina, embodied prayer, silent prayer, guided meditation and many others. All are welcome to join this ongoing prayer series via Zoom and experience the joys of prayer and meditation together. Registration is not required.

Fee: Free-will offering

Men Exploring Faith

Thursdays; Sept. 9, Sept. 23, Oct. 14 & Oct. 28; 4–5:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Jeff Schumacher

Behavioral scientists and spiritual guides have noted a major transformation in the life direction of many men as we mature. It may happen gradually or abruptly, as early as our 20s or in our 50s or 60s. Some men never make this shift, described as a change from goal drivenness to receptivity, from ego to wisdom. The transition can start from the inside (*Why am I doing what I'm doing?*) or the outside (from a loss or threat), and it may seem disruptive while on the way to being life-enhancing. Join with a small group of reflective men in honest conversation about these changes. This group meets in person the second and fourth Thursdays of each month.

Fee: Free-will offering

Day of Self Renewal
Mondays, Sept. 13 & Oct. 18,
8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Angie Pierce Jennings

Find rest and relaxation for mind, body and spirit! This tranquil day features your choice of two services, group guided meditation, singing bowl prayer, a private guest room, a fresh lunch, and access to the labyrinth and all that Prairiewoods has to offer. (Choose from massage, head and shoulder massage, reflexology, healing touch, spiritual direction, Nature & Forest Therapy Walk, yoga or chair yoga.) Registration, a nonrefundable, nontransferable deposit of \$50 and your top three services choices are required five days in advance. (At this time, massage, reflexology and healing touch are available for vaccinated individuals.)

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

Singing Bowl Prayer
Mondays, Sept. 13 & Oct. 18,
12:45–1:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Kathy Broghammer

Throughout history, singing bowls have been used around the world to foster meditation, relaxation, prayer and mind-body-spirit wellness. In these in-person sessions, we will let the resonant sounds of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls relax the entire body and create a pathway for clearer connection with the divine. We will be invited to just receive and breathe. Registration is required by noon on the day of the session.

Fee: \$5 per session

Nature & Forest Therapy Walks
Afternoon Walks: Mondays, Sept. 13 & Oct. 18, 2:30–3:45 p.m.

Fall Equinox Walk: Wednesday, Sept. 22, 6–8 p.m.

Weekend Walk: Sunday, Oct. 17, 1–3 p.m.

Facilitator: Emelia Sautter

We invite you to join the land at Prairiewoods and certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide Emelia Sautter for a walk with the natural world. Experience Forest Therapy, a sensory-focused practice that invites us to slow down and be present with self and the natural world around us. According to the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy, “Forest Therapy is a practice

that supports health and wellness through guided immersion in forests and other environments to promote the well-being of both people and the land. It is inspired by *shinrin yoku*, the Japanese practice of ‘Forest Bathing.’”



Much research has been done on the healing and therapeutic benefits of Forest Therapy. Hundreds of studies show numerous positive effects, including reductions in stress, anxiety, depression, mental fatigue, anger and pain. Improvements include better cognitive functioning, sleep, mood, confidence and creativity. Time with our nature kin also boosts our immune system, regulates blood pressure, improves relationships, increases feelings of gratitude and much more. Registration is required by the day before the session. Please bring a water bottle and dress for being outdoors.

Fee: \$20 per session (\$15 for shorter afternoon sessions)

Prairiewoods Knitters & Stitchers
Tuesdays, Sept. 14 & Oct. 12,
9:30–11 a.m.; & Wednesdays,
Sept. 22 & Oct. 27, 6:30–8 p.m.

Facilitators: participants

Practice knitting and stitching in the company of new friends! This is a group of crafters of various skill levels who create handmade goods for charity. New participants are always welcome, including those who are new to knitting and crocheting. Together we create hats, mittens, blankets and baby items for charity. Grab your needles and join us! This group meets in person on the second Tuesday and fourth Wednesday of each month. Registration is not necessary.

Fee: Free

Wednesday Women Reconvening!
Wednesdays, Sept. 15–Oct. 27,
10–11:30 a.m.

Facilitator: Ann Jackson, PBVM

Join women seeking spiritual enrichment, inspiration and motivation. This vibrant group of women finds

spiritual growth each Wednesday in the supportive setting of Prairiewoods. Come any Wednesday! Topics arise from within the hearts and minds of those gathered. In September, we will explore our call to embody rest, reflection and growth via Christine Valters Paintner’s book *Sacred Time: Embracing an Intentional Way of Life*. In it, Christine introduces eight cycles of sacred time to assist us in moving through the stress of each day into a more intentional way of living.

Deep reflection, learning, lively conversation, laughter, storytelling and inquiry all generate incredible energy and spiritual stimulation. We also view TED Talks, converse, reflect, support and challenge one another to personal growth no matter what stage of life.

Fee: \$10 per session

Offered in Partnership with
Unity Point Hospice
Soul Care: Creative Arts Grief
Support Group

Wednesdays, Sept. 15 & Oct. 20,
5:30–7 p.m.

Facilitators: Jamie Siela, LISW, & Kristine Shultis MDiv, LMT, CHT

Take time to connect with others in grief and engage the creative spark. This monthly grief group is open to anyone grieving loss through death. On the third Wednesday of each month, explore a different creative art medium. Our September project is empower art. Words are a powerful tool in our grief journeys. It can sometimes become difficult to remember the strength we hold inside ourselves when we are grieving. We will use our time together to create art that will help us to remember these strengths as we continue on our journeys. For October, we will focus on grief and creativity as non-linear processes. When these two processes come together there are many possibilities. We will create a circular journal. The format is a metaphor and a container

for both grief and creativity. As the symbol of wholeness, the circle can hold the fragmented



pieces of the self, as losses are integrated within the changed landscape of our life. The format of this journal invites a gentle exploration of grief, allowing for multiple perspectives on living with grief. Registration is required by noon eight days in advance. As a joint program with Unity Point, Covid screening questions will be asked upon arrival.

Fee: Free includes all art supplies

Grow Herbal Tea

Saturday, Sept. 18, 2–4 p.m.

Facilitators: Jen Kardos & Fred Meyer

A cup of tea can be medicine for the mind, body and soul. We could all use a good dose of that kind of medicine these days. During this class, we will take home all the knowledge, publications and inspiring ideas needed to successfully and enjoyably cultivate delicious tea plants that also feed birds and pollinators. We will meander and create simple drinks by blending freshly picked herbs. Please bring a personal cup or thermos for drinking hot tea and dress for the weather, as we will be outside.

Fee: \$15

Braiding Sweetgrass Book Discussion

Tuesday, Sept. 21, 6–8 p.m.

Facilitators: Prairiewoods, Franciscan Spirituality Center & Marywood Franciscan Spirituality Center

Please join us via Zoom for an evening of discussion and reflection as we immerse ourselves in the book *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Published in 2013, this beautiful and impactful book continues to gain readers and awaken ecological consciousness. Kimmerer draws on her own life as an indigenous scientist, reminding us of the lessons and gifts that other living beings—including plants and animals—offer to us all. She invites us into reciprocal relationship with the natural world and reminds us that nature loves us in return. All are welcome to join in conversation via Zoom with staff from three different Franciscan spirituality centers. Please purchase the book on your own and register by Sept. 20 at noon.

Fee: \$5 (donated to the Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance)

Blessing of the Animals

Sunday, Sept. 26, 2–3:30 p.m.

Celebrate the patron saint of ecology, St. Francis of Assisi, with Prairiewoods' popular annual Blessing of the Animals! Join us in person for a celebration of our connection with animals and all of Creation. Kids and animal companions (whether furry, winged, scaled or finned) are invited to join us for this free afternoon.

Fee: Free



Dream Workshop Series

Wednesdays; Oct. 6, 13, 20 & 27; 1–3 p.m.

Facilitator: Karen Sindelar

Dreams can open us into our inner landscape and help us to grow spiritually. Working and playing with our dreams can bring transformation and inner healing. Together we will be exposed to a Jungian approach to deciphering our dreams. We will be prepared to work with our dreams individually or in a group. After completing these four workshop sessions, we will be eligible to join a monthly Dream Group. Facilitator Karen Sindelar holds a master's degree in applied psychology with an emphasis in Jungian studies. Karen has been an active participant in dream groups since 1986. Registration is requested by Oct. 1.

Fee: \$80 for four-week series, whether present or not (payable in advance or \$20 at each session)

Grow Easy Pollinator Habitat

Saturday, Oct. 16, 2–4 p.m.

Facilitators: Jen Kardos & Fred Meyer

Support your buzzing friends by establishing a pollinator garden of native prairie plants that will emerge next spring. Top plants and seed mixes that thrive in Iowa's climate will be discussed. We will learn how to:

- Prepare a patch of turfgrass for seeding.
- Prepare an existing garden bed for seeding.
- Properly spread native prairie seed.

Free seed packets of native prairie plants will be provided. We will discuss only organic methods, not synthetic pesticides or fertilizers. All experience levels are invited. Please dress for the weather.

Fee: \$15

Praise be! 25th Jubilee Celebration & Open House

Sunday, Oct. 10, 2–4 p.m.

All are welcome to join us for this celebration of 25 years of Prairiewoods! Our theme for the day will be joy and gratitude for the many friendships, opportunities and blessings of the past 25 years. In true jubilee fashion, the sisters and staff will welcome friends, family, volunteers, donors and community members who have loved and connected with Prairiewoods at any time here in this sacred space. While the afternoon will be a true open house, there will be a brief program of gratitude at 2 p.m., followed by refreshments. This will be held mostly outdoors, so please dress for the weather.

Registration is appreciated but not required.

Come help us celebrate 25 years of peace and transformation!

Fee: Free



Women in Interfaith Dialogue

Saturday, Oct. 30, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.

Facilitators: Angie Pierce Jennings, Virginia Melroy, Dr. Paula Sanchini & Mary Beth Siemann

Come together quarterly with women of various faith traditions for conversations about faith and spirituality. For our fall gathering, we will talk about thresholds, liminal space and in-between times. How can our faith support and inform us during these in-between times? We are invited to bring a reading or prayer to share with the group, as well as an object that represents the topic or our spirituality in general. Registration is required by Friday at noon. This group will meet either in person or via Zoom, to be determined closer to the event.

Fee: \$15

Donors (May & June 2021)

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

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1997



2007

**BLESSING OF THE
ANIMALS
THEN
&
NOW**

The *Blessing of the Animals* is a beloved Franciscan tradition, as well as a favorite Prairiewoods tradition! Since the early years of Prairiewoods, we've enjoyed hosting the Blessing of the Animals to celebrate and honor the connection we all share with animals. We hope your whole human and animal family will join us on *Sunday, Sept. 26, from 2-3:30 p.m.* for our 25th Jubilee Blessing of the Animals. This outdoor event is free and open to the public, and all are welcome!



2018



2019

November/December 2021

Prairiewoods

A CATHOLIC, FRANCISCAN ECOSPIRITUALITY RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER

between *the* DARKNESS & *the* LIGHT

Two moments of each day help us celebrate and eclipse the boundaries of our wildest imagination. They strengthen our ability to hold tensions and navigate transitions. Hushed presencing at the splendid emergence ... Sunrise. We are breathed into being. Welcome to the brand new day! Then the denouement. Soulful listening, as sunset and moonrise mesh and meld ... A Great Amen and thanks!

Gentle bathing in this mysterious liminal space, hovering somewhere between the darkness and the light, is where many of us find ourselves today. *In between.*

The inner odyssey has traditionally called spiritual sojourners into the light. We are taught to find and follow the light as it illuminates, inspires and calls forth our diverse and plentiful gifts for mission. Darkness, for many centuries, has often been seen as the opposite of light, the place where the divine cannot be found. It even claims a period of history between the fall of the Roman Empire and the Renaissance, characterized by the decay of intellectual, cultural, political and socio-economic progress,

the so-called "Dark Ages."

However, darkness has more recently been reclaimed as the place for creative gestation and deep soul-work. It has

been dubbed "holy darkness" for this reason, a space for deepening, for wonderment and reflection. Barbara Brown Taylor, in her spiritual work *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, surmises, "I have learned things in the dark that I could never have learned in the light, things that have saved my life over and over again, so that there is really only one logical conclusion. I need darkness as much as I need light" (2014). It is that place of spiritual depth that beckons, whether in the depths of fear and disorientation, or in the allurements of what lies unseen, mysterious and potent.

(continued on page 3)



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"Each day is a journey. We come out of the night into the day. All creativity awakens at this primal threshold where light and darkness test and bless each other. You only discover the balance in your life when you learn to trust the flow of this ancient rhythm."

—John O'Donohue, *Anam Cara*

In August, The Washington Post published an article introducing the concept of "pandemic flux syndrome," a non-clinical term for what many people report experiencing recently: "blunted emotions, spikes in anxiety and depression, and a desire to drastically change something about their lives" (Amy Cuddy and Jill Ellyn Riley, "Why this Stage of the Pandemic Makes Us So Anxious," The Washington Post, Aug. 11, 2021). One of the reasons we may be feeling this way is that we have been operating at what the authors describe as "surge capacity" for too long, without the opportunity to reset to normal capacity—the normal daily rhythms of life without the stressors of a global pandemic.

Irish priest and mystic John O'Donohue wrote a great deal about the interplay between dark and light, suggesting in his book of Celtic wisdom *Anam Cara* that we need a light that has retained its kinship with the darkness. Sharon Blackie (*Spirituality in the 21st Century* 2020) writing about the summer solstice says, "Today, we celebrate the fullness of the light—which is nevertheless pregnant with the rich, fertile dark. And that's the other thing I love about it: that seeming paradox. That winter is contained in the very heart of summer. Just as death is contained in life. These points of the year are containers for opposites, bringing them together and throwing the cycles of birth and death and rebirth into sharp relief."

Just as each day contains both dark and light, and each season contains the spark of its opposite, perhaps as we live at "surge" capacity it behooves us to seek out some pockets of time for powering down, for reconnecting with these natural Earth rhythms. Prairiewoods is here for that! While we haven't been able to host large, in-person gatherings, we continue to offer opportunities for prayer, reflection and growth, both at our Center and online. We continue to welcome guests for private retreats in both our Guest House and Hermitages. And, as always, we welcome you to the land. We've been busy with land care projects all year, and both the woods and prairies offer the gift of seasonal beauty and an expansive space to drop out of "surge capacity" into gentler rhythms.

As the year begins to wind down toward the winter solstice, at which we welcome the return of light to our days (summer in the very heart of winter, as Sharon Blackie might say), I'd like to take a moment to say thank you to all of you who have continued to connect with us throughout the cycles of another year. Your constancy and friendship bless us more than you may realize. Praise be, friends, for the journey we are on together!

Peace and all good,

Jenifer Hanson, Director



Prairiewoods is a Catholic 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.

Please address all correspondence to:

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Ecospirit@Prairiewoods.org



(continued from page 1)

No longer a simplistic dichotomy is this symbiotic relationship of light and darkness, as though they were oppositional foils in a mythological literary construct. *Rather, the light scintillates and seeps into the darkness and the darkness oozes and morphs gradually into the light.* One births the other in a continuous cycle of ebbing and flowing, a graceful ballet that can feel at times like a tempestuous cacophony when spiritual seekers are caught somewhere in transition, like getting caught in a revolving door. In other words, at times like these.

Even at the best of times, spiritual sojourners live in between the shadows of the great unknowns and the bright daylight of revelation and insight. At other times, our dawns and dusks can feel like spiritual cataracts, causing muddled perception and cascading confusion. The mysteries we encounter in transitional times might seem too great for our hearts to hold without snatching our breath, making us feel like we don't know where

we fit, where we're going, who we are or who we are becoming. In this time of "PanDeepening," our current Covid experience of disorientation, disillusion and unravelling, it may seem to many that we have more of a foothold in the darkness than in the emergence of light. "There's got to be a morning after," we think. Where is it?

Our global experience is yielding catastrophic and collective trauma as eco-calamities like devastating wildfires, droughts, floods, earthquakes and derechos rip through our collective home and our communal psyche. As humanity struggles "to mask or not to mask, to vax or not to vax," a raging and resurgent pandemic takes those most vulnerable from our midst. "We can't breathe." Socio-political upheaval is everywhere. Violent oppression and social injustice plunge us into the depths of perplexity at the state of human decency, and perhaps at times, we are left with hopelessness or despair. Spiritual sadness, and the malaise that comes from feeling overwhelmed and coming apart at the seams, threaten. What are we to do when the dark night of the soul seems endless?

Slow down. Be still. Listen. Wait. Go deeper. "To know the dark, go dark. Go without sight, and find that the dark, too, blooms and sings" (Wendell Berry, *To Know the Dark*, 1999). The Creator's signature is everywhere in between the darkness and the light. Even in the scintillating abyss, waiting for the sunrise, we hear the echo of Love's pervasive refrain: "We are one. We are one." As Jeremy Lent reminds us, "When we truly open

our hearts to each other, there is no burden too heavy for us to carry together, there is no pain too deep for us to hold in each other's arms. And it's in that place—of feeling the Earth's injuries, and feeling it with each other—that the alchemy emerges. It's in the cauldron of sharing our grief with our community, of gazing at it together and not looking away, that the heartbreak turns to hope" (Keynote, The Whidbey Institute annual gala, October 2020).

What deep wisdom tells us as we are living in this liminal space between the darkness and the light is that while our impulse may be to rush around, to do something, fix something, solve problems and address needs, *an even more crucial response is to go deeper. Take a collective breath and listen into the wider "We."* It becomes even more important to find our sacred space, settle into our central awareness, our owlsh nocturnal perception, and call out into the enveloping darkness, "Whoo? Whoo? Who cooks for yooooouuu?" Let the primordial questions ring out in the stillness of our own interior depths and wait patiently for

the echo to reverberate in the fierce terrain of our night-time journey, like the wise magi seeking to follow a star. As Robert Macfarlane counsels, "To understand light you need first to have been buried in the deep-down dark" (*Underland: A Deep Time Journey*, 2019). Let the quietude of creation and the divine whisper prepare the depths of our heart's longing for the seed of new life.

Prairiewoods stands in silent witness to the need we all share for sacred space to contemplate what is real, and what is illusory. A sacred

space gives us permission to burrow into the depths, to explore our deeper relationships with the One and the many. It grounds and connects us even as the unrelenting river of change flows all around and through us. It reveres the inherent dignity of the spiritual quest to live authentically with the utter perplexity and the questions, somewhere in between the darkness and the light. Wherever we find ourselves in this continuum, we join together in contemplation, reflection, centering, meditation, mindfulness, nature bathing and embodied prayer, all designed to keep us listening and open. It isn't knowing all the answers that heralds the dawn. It's learning to thrive in the midst of the rolling darkness, slowly and certainly opening to the light, that deepens us in wisdom and hope. It's just a matter of hovering in the enveloping shadows and finding that they are already suffused with light, creation's way of birthing Love in the deep wintering darkness.



PRAIRIEWOODS:

Stand still. Lay down your load.

*Take your life firmly in your two hands,
(Gently ... you are trusted with
something precious)*

*While you search your heart's yearnings:
What am I seeking? What is my quest?*

*When your star rises deep within,
Trust yourself to its leading.*

*You will have the light for first steps.
This is Trasná, the crossing place.*

*Choose!
This is Trasná, the crossing place.*

Come!
—Raphael Considine, PBVM, excerpt from *Trasná*

In our lived experience of light and dark, we all pass between the two. Sacred spaces offer a threshold where crossing from one to the other—and back again—can happen as needed for the particular moment we are experiencing on our spiritual journeys. In her poem *Trasná*, Raphael Considine, PBVM, calls these liminal spaces “crossing places.” On these pages, we asked some Prairiewoods friends to discuss their own experiences of Prairiewoods as such a crossing place.

“Most important to me is the opportunity to interact with a spiritual director for assistance in the spiritual renewal of my Inner Self. I find this so important in leading a happy and productive life.”

—Nate Walton

“This year I set the intention of increasing connection—of mind, body, soul, and community. I also wanted to pay more attention to the rhythms in my life—the rhythm of day and night, and seasonal changes, such as dark and light, temperature changes, and especially the different animals, birds, and plants I see and hear and smell outdoors throughout the year. Many of the Prairiewoods programs supported me in these endeavors. I traveled through the seasons with a group of women in the SEEL Program; spiritual direction was very grounding; and the six-day, silent, directed group retreat allowed me to connect deeply to the Prairiewoods grounds.”

—Janet Razbadouski

“Every August for Episcopal Education for Ministry (EfM) mentor training, Prairiewoods is a place set apart for quiet prayer and reflection; perfect for our intentional retreat and training. I have been personally nourished by your natural setting, locally sourced food and hospitality. The flexibility and the kindness offered to our group throughout this pandemic has touched my heart and soul and provided us hope to once again gather at our summer haven, Prairiewoods.”

—The Rev. John Doherty,
Episcopal Diocese of Iowa

“I especially remember walking the labyrinth on 9/11/2011. One by one, we tapped the gong and made our way slowly into the center. There, we held each other and prayed and cried. One by one, wiping our faces, we made our way slowly out. When I tapped the gong, I felt so much lighter. So comforted.”

—Jan Blazanin, The Children's Writers Workshop

“When you drive into Prairiewoods, you know you are in a sacred space. You just know that. You can feel it. And as you stay there, that sacredness works its way into all those dark places inside of you and you start to soften, and lighten up! If you can stay for a day or more, you begin to feel the rhythm of life again: the sun rises, the sun sets, the world turns. You leave again, renewed.”

—Mary Hoefler

A Crossing Place

“Over 10 years ago, a wise and faith-filled woman friend invited me to join Wednesday Women Prairiewoods. On my very first visit there I found a place of warm welcoming, peace, acceptance, and a beauty that has not waned. Weekly gatherings of praying together, exposure to new ideas, and sharing of life experiences with a creative Prairiewoods group leader and with other women soon became an important part of my life. Meaningful prayer rituals, books, films and discussion about topics of interest to the group opened up my small world, leading me to a deeper appreciation of the goodness of all creation and a real experience of God.”
—Marianne Arndorfer

“God, who goes ahead of us, led me to an Oasis of peace, tranquility, hope and joy, and that Oasis is here at Prairiewoods. It is a great place to come and hear God communicate, in the silence of God’s creation. Participating in programs that Prairiewoods offers, spiritual direction, retreats, conferences and many others, has been a source of much growth for me and a deepened awareness of the presence of the Divine in every person and in all creation.”
—Sister Anna Phiri, OSF

“Since 1998, Friendship Yoga, based in Iowa City, has been holding annual spring retreats at Prairiewoods. Its location, setting, and spiritual and ecological mission dovetailed with our purpose and values as Iyengar Yoga practitioners. We always feel nurtured by Prairiewoods, and so grateful for the opportunity to temporarily nest there while we seek to deepen our Yoga practice, celebrate the renewal that comes with spring, and relish the camaraderie that’s unique to a retreat experience in such an extraordinary place.”
—Nancy Footner, Friendship Yoga

“The Men’s Group at Prairiewoods has an open, welcoming and sharing spirit. Men’s spiritual groups are rarely found. We meet on the second and fourth Thursdays at 4 p.m. and owe a deep debt of gratitude to Prairiewoods for allowing a group of men to gather and share in these uncertain times. Personally, I count the members of this group as not only dear friends but as companions on my day-to-day journey.”
—Linzy Martin

“I am so grateful for the many ways that Prairiewoods has been a spiritual anchor for me throughout the past several years, but especially since the pandemic began. The space and the people bring me such light and remind me that prayer, humor, hope, and connection are the answers to the big and small challenges we are all navigating right now. The online programming, spiritual direction, and land have sustained me and fueled my own healing and growth. This past summer my family and I spent a lovely day at Prairiewoods exploring the creek, visiting Grandmother Oak, picking raspberries, and visiting Sr. Lucille—it was a beautiful reminder of all of the good around us and within us.”
—Sarah Montgomery

“We have held our Unitarian Universalist ministers retreat at Prairiewoods for many years, and there’s always a sense of homecoming ... With the opportunity to curl up in a private nook, participate in group activities, or just wander the grounds, our spirits have a chance to be refreshed before going back into the work of serving the world.”
—Rev. Leslie Mills, PrairieStar UUMA

“Ah, Prairiewoods. Just the thought brings a sense of peace. When I pulled in shortly after the derecho I found a place to grieve ... the loss this dear place had itself sustained, the passing of my husband, the ongoing pandemic. When I returned recently I was surprised at the resilience that met me. The land was healing and in the silence so lovingly cultivated there I saw my own resilience and healing mirrored back to me. I am so very grateful for the hospitality that meets me where I am and offers the space to go deep and leave changed.”
—Joan Fumetti

A Thank You to Our Valued Volunteers

Prairiewoods is made possible by those who call this place of peace and transformation home. While it was envisioned by the Franciscan Sisters, volunteers helped by stepping in and planting prairie grasses. Volunteers helped the sisters and staff to plant trees, to build the Hermitages and to help keep Prairiewoods going through difficult times.

25 years later, after a catastrophic inland hurricane swept through the land and removed over 60 percent of the tree canopy, we are still here. That is owed in no small way to the number of volunteers who selflessly stepped in and offered help. Volunteers showed up to offer chain saws, forklifts, an extra set of hands, earnest prayers and well-timed funds. In those early days since the derecho, Prairiewoods was restored much faster than could have been expected, despite the pervasive damage.

We offer a heartfelt thanks to the wonderful people who continue to help Prairiewoods thrive. Throughout the pandemic, so many donors and volunteers have showed up, again and again, offering to help in any way they could. To those who stayed to help long after the storm debris was removed from prairie trails and the land was accessible, we thank you. To those who showed up to online programming and to the many who earmarked special donations to help during these difficult times, we thank you.

Whether you help outside, in the office, knitting for charity, on the board or other committees, or with special projects, please know you play a critical role in our operations, and we dearly appreciate it. We simply can't thank you all enough!

Sincerely,
The Prairiewoods Staff



Volunteer at Prairiewoods today to co-create a brighter tomorrow!
To learn more about volunteering, contact Jessica Lien at jlien@prairiewoods.org.

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

Silent Mindfulness Meditation Retreat

Friday, Nov. 12, 6:30 p.m.–Sunday, Nov. 14, 1 p.m.

Facilitator: Chris Klug

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

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

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

Winter Solstice: Opening to the Light Retreat

Friday, Dec. 17, 6:30 p.m.–Sunday, Dec. 19, 1 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

Like plants opening to light, so we—amid the strain of

pandemic, political strife and other life storms—seek revitalizing ways to heal, rest, release, open, transform and renew. This deeply nourishing retreat offers such healing. It offers invitation to holistically perceive, experience and re-identify with what ancient spiritual wisdom traditions, mystics, Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and quantum physics have been trying to tell us: that all of creation, including our own embodied beings, is vibrating energy or Light. Also how our separate sense of self is an illusion because this Light, Qi or indwelling life force energy weaves us as One. Join facilitator Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel for a weekend of Light, ease-filled lightness of being, and both personally and collectively experiencing mystical union with the Sacred in creation and in our bodies, minds and souls. Offerings include: TCM energy-based meditative Yin Yoga and Qigong for opening energy pathways for physical, emotional, mental and spiritual wellbeing; night prayers with compassionate embrace of life’s night seasons, Mystery and dark nights of the soul; star gazing and inter-spiritual ways of praying with (and learning from) quiet Earth, animals, moon and sky amid winter stillness; healing energy transmission; and resting in sublime serenity and Theta/Delta brainwave states through Yogic Sleep and soothing Vibrational Sound Healing for release of stress, communing with the Sacred, and planting the seed of re-identification with Light and more ease-filled ways of being within the subconscious.

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

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



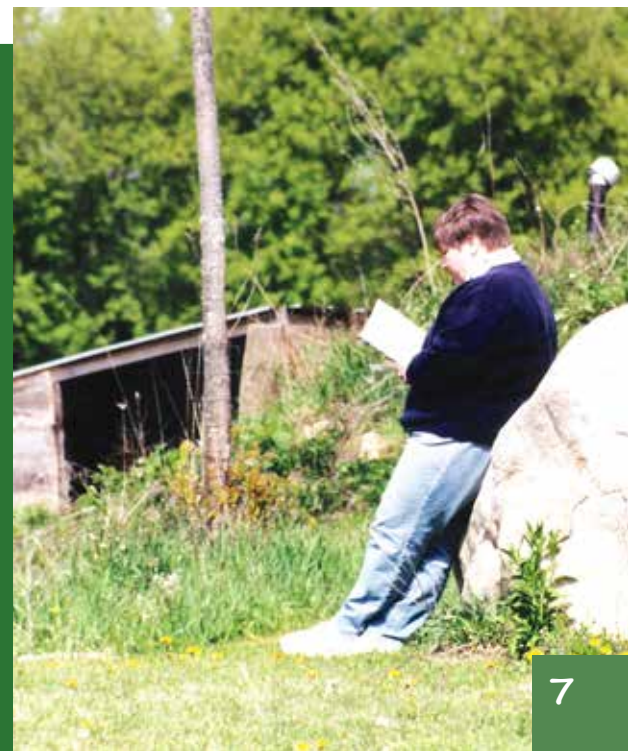
Silent Directed Retreat

Monday, Nov. 15, 5:30 p.m.–Sunday, Nov. 21, 1 p.m.

Spiritual Directors: Rev. Rose Blank; Ann Jackson, PBVM; & Lucille Winnike, FSPA

Invite yourself into a week of sacred space, solitude, rest, peace and prayer. Tap the love of all of creation amid the deep silence of 70 acres of prairie and woodland. Deepen your awareness of life’s gifts. Regain a sense of balance. Learn to be still to live in the moment and to deepen your relationship with God, with yourself, with others and with Earth. Each day affords opportunity for healthy meals, lots of quiet personal reflection and an hour-long session with a spiritual director who will help you sense and cite the movement of the Spirit in your life. An optional centering prayer session closes each day. Body modalities, such as massage, healing touch and reflexology, are available at additional cost. Silent directed retreats are ideal for anyone who desires quiet time away from over-stimulation to return to one’s center, to learn the art of deep listening, to recover a sense of wonder and gratitude for life, and to fall in love again with all of creation.

Fee: \$425 includes spiritual direction, lodging and all meals (*Lodgers only, please.*)



Announcing Spirituality in the 21st Century 2022 Speaker!

Save the date of *April 29–30, 2022*, for our annual *Spirituality in the 21st Century* event! This event has brought you facilitators like Marcus Borg, Walter Brueggemann and Ilia Delio. The facilitator for 2022 will be *Jim Enote*, a Zuni tribal member who has spent over 40 years working professionally to protect and steward cultural and natural resources. He is the CEO of the Colorado Plateau Foundation, which supports regional Native communities to protect water and sacred places, ensure food security, and preserve languages and ancestral knowledge. He also serves as the chair of the board of trustees for the Grand Canyon Trust and lives in Zuni, New Mexico. Make plans today to join us online for this huge virtual event focused on eco-spirituality!



Join Us for a Virtual Holiday Mini-Bazaar

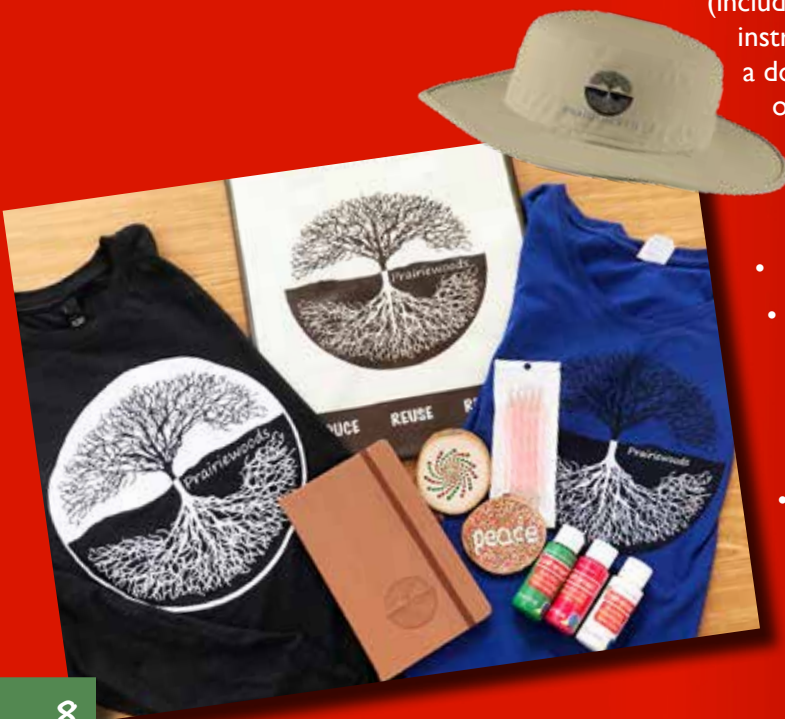
This year, rather than gathering in person, we will host a *Virtual Holiday Mini-Bazaar* with some special *Prairiewoods* items available for order via phone (319-395-6700) or email (ecospirit@prairiewoods.org) from *Nov. 19–Dec. 20*, with contactless pick-up available.

- Tree-shirts with our tree top and roots image, in classic black or royal blue (back by popular demand!) (\$16 for short-sleeve V-neck, \$22 for long-sleeve crew-neck)
- Brand new gardening/trail hats with our tree image to keep the sun out of your eyes and the mosquitoes off your neck (in small/medium or large/extra large, \$30)

- Wooden disc ornament kits for creating at home (includes eight discs cut from *Prairiewoods* trees, instructions for painting both a spiral mandala and a dotted word of intention, ribbons for hanging, one set of dotting tools and three full-size acrylic paints)—this is a great activity for the whole family! (\$20)

- Reusable *Prairiewoods* shopping bags (\$6)
- Wood-grain journals (\$17)
- Trappistine Creamy Caramels (\$25 for 24 oz. *Finest Caramel Assortment*, \$10 for 8 oz. *Gold Striped Bags of Vanilla Caramels or Chocolate Caramels, limit two of each kind*)
- Gift certificates (any dollar amount)

Gift certificates can be mailed. All other items will be available for contactless pick-up at *Prairiewoods* at your convenience.



Metta Yoga

Mondays & Thursdays; Nov. 1–Dec. 23; 9:30–10:30 a.m., 10:45–11:45 a.m. & 5:30–6:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Heather English

Experience the healing powers of meditative yoga from the spiritual environment and natural beauty of Prairiewoods. Join us in person as we link our movements with our breath and cultivate strength, flexibility and relaxation through regular hatha-style yoga classes. RYT-200 Hour Certified Yoga Alliance Instructor Heather English offers Gentle/Beginner's Yoga every Monday and Thursday. People of all fitness levels and abilities are encouraged to participate whenever available.

Fee: \$99 for eleven-punch card or \$60 for six-punch card, one punch per session

Going Inward with Sounds & Vibrations

Mondays; Nov. 1, Nov. 15, Dec. 6 & Dec. 20; 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 in-person hour, Kathy Broghammer will lead us to connect with our inner selves through the song of bowls. We will be invited to sit or lie down to listen and just be. We will hear the sounds and feel the vibrations of the singing bowls going inward. Let's let our souls rest and allow ourselves to be recreated!

Fee: \$10 per session



Prayer Experience Series

Tuesdays, Nov. 2–Dec. 21, 11:30 a.m.–12 p.m.

Facilitator: Angie Pierce Jennings

We are blessed with many ways to pray and reflect including songful prayer, contemplative prayer, visio divina, embodied prayer, silent prayer, guided meditation and many others. All are welcome to join this ongoing prayer series via Zoom and experience the

joys of prayer and meditation together. Registration is not required.

Fee: Free-will offering

Go Deeper Thursdays

Thursdays; Nov. 4, Nov. 18, Dec. 2 & Dec. 16; 4–5 p.m.

Facilitators: Ellen Bruckner & Laura Weber

The fruitful Go Deeper gatherings during the pandemic opened some avenues into a collective

presence—a “WE space”—a time when a group of people listened into the middle in order to hear the Spirit's guidance. Gathering each week for over a year during the pandemic called into being a foundation of relationships exploring the collective consciousness, or WE space. Go Deeper gathers online via Zoom on the first and third Thursdays of each month to practice some of the tools that aid participation in the wider WE space that help us to read the collective and listen deeply to our emergent, interconnected wisdom. Who is this “WE” that we mean? It is wider than our own ego or individual selves, wider than our most intimate circles, our community, work, worship and social circles, and wider even than our human community. It is no less than the “WE” of all creation.

On each first Thursday, we will focus on the tools that enhance this journey of going deeper into the WE space. On the third Thursday, we will explore a topic that deepens the dive into the collective. Please register for your first session.

We know from listening that we must continue this journey of going deeper, so come join us!

Fee: Free-will offering

Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton

Thursdays; Nov. 4, Nov. 18, Dec. 2 & Dec. 16; 6:30–8 p.m.

Facilitator: Carole Butz

The practice of contemplative living helps us respond to everyday experiences with greater awareness of our connections with God and others.



It becomes a positive force in our lives and provides direction for our journey, enabling us to embrace our truest selves. This group meets via Zoom on the first and third Thursday evenings of each month. We use the *Bridges to Contemplative Living* series, which includes excerpts from the writings of Thomas Merton and other authors, to explore the truths of human existence. The process involves readings, reflections and contemplative dialogue. Please register for your first session to get the Zoom link.

Fee: Free-will offering

Day of Self Renewal

Mondays, Nov. 8 & Dec. 6, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Angie Pierce Jennings

Find rest and relaxation for mind, body and spirit! This tranquil day features your choice of two services, group guided meditation, singing bowl prayer, a private guest room, a fresh lunch, and access to the labyrinth and all that Prairiewoods has to offer. (Choose from massage, head and shoulder massage, reflexology, healing touch, spiritual direction, Nature & Forest Therapy Walk, yoga or chair yoga.) Registration, a nonrefundable, nontransferable deposit of \$50 and your top three services choices are required five days in advance. (At this time, massage, reflexology and healing touch are available for vaccinated individuals. Availability of private guest rooms is limited in November.)

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

Singing Bowl Prayer

Mondays, Nov. 8 & Dec. 6, 12:45–1:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Kathy Broghammer

Throughout history, singing bowls have been used around the world to foster meditation, relaxation, prayer and mind-body-spirit wellness. In these in-person sessions, we will let the resonant sounds of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls relax the entire body and create a pathway for clearer connection with the divine. We will be invited to just receive and breathe. Registration is required by noon on the day of the session.

Fee: \$5 per session

Nature & Forest Therapy Walks

Afternoon Walks: Mondays, Nov. 8 & Dec. 6, 2:30–3:45 p.m.

Full Moon Evening Walk: Friday, Nov. 19, 6–8 p.m.

Facilitator: Emelia Sautter

We invite you to join the land at Prairiewoods and certified Nature and Forest

Therapy

Guide

Emelia

Sautter for

a walk with

the natural

world.

Experience

Forest

Therapy,

a sensory-focused practice that invites us to slow down and be present with self and the natural world around us.

According to the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy, “Forest Therapy

is a practice that supports health and wellness through guided immersion

in forests and other environments to promote the well-being of both people

and the land. It is inspired by *shinrin yoku*, the Japanese practice of ‘Forest

Bathing.’” Much research has been

done on the healing and therapeutic

benefits of Forest Therapy. Hundreds of

studies show numerous positive effects,

including reductions in stress, anxiety,

depression, mental fatigue, anger and pain.

Improvements include better cognitive

functioning, sleep, mood, confidence and

creativity. Time with our nature kin also

boosts our immune system, regulates

blood pressure, improves relationships,

increases feelings of gratitude and much

more. Registration is required by the day

before the session. Please bring a water

bottle and dress for being outdoors.

The Full Moon Evening Walk will be

experienced in the dark, so please bring

a walking stick if that will help you feel

more comfortable on the trails at night.

Please dress extra warm for being

outdoors. There will be an optional

bonfire afterward.

Fee: \$20 per session (\$15 for shorter

afternoon sessions)



Prairiewoods Knitters & Stitchers

Tuesdays, Nov. 9 & Dec. 14, 9:30–11 a.m.; & Wednesday, Dec. 22, 6:30–8 p.m.

Facilitators: participants

Practice knitting and stitching in the company of new friends! This is a group of crafters of various skill levels who create handmade goods for charity.

New participants are always welcome, including those who are new to knitting and crocheting. Together we create hats, mittens, blankets and baby items for charity.

Grab your needles and join us! This group meets in person on the second Tuesday and fourth Wednesday of each month.

Registration is not necessary.

Fee: Free

Evening Centering Prayer

Tuesdays; Nov. 9, Nov. 23 & Dec. 14; 5:30–7 p.m.

Facilitator: Judith Edwards

Come to Prairiewoods for Evening Centering Prayer on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month. This

is a prayer/support group for people who enjoy centering prayer, a form of meditation focused on silent prayer.

In this time of silence, we will relax, empty our minds and find God’s presence within us.

Sessions stand alone, so you may join us any time you are available.

Fee: Free-will offering

Men Exploring Faith

Thursdays, Nov. 11 & Dec. 9, 4–5:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Linzy Martin

Behavioral scientists and spiritual guides have noted a major transformation in the life direction of many men as

we mature. It may happen gradually or

abruptly, as early as our 20s or in our

50s or 60s. Some men never make this

shift, described as a change from goal

drivenness to receptivity, from ego to

wisdom. The transition can start from the

inside (*Why am I doing what I’m doing?*)

or the outside (from a loss or threat),

and it may seem disruptive while on the

way to being life-enhancing. Join with a

small group of reflective men in honest

conversation about these changes. This

group meets in person the second and

fourth Thursdays of each month. (This

group will not meet Nov. 25 or Dec. 23.)

Fee: Free-will offering

Offered in Partnership with Unity Point Hospice

Soul Care: Creative Arts Grief Support Group

Wednesdays, Nov. 17 & Dec. 15, 5:30–7 p.m.

Facilitators: Jamie Siela, LISW, &

Kristine Shultis, MDiv, LMT, CHT

In grief, our very foundation can be rocked. Take time to connect with others in grief and engage the creative spark.

This online monthly grief group is open to anyone grieving loss through death.

On the third Wednesday of each month, explore a different creative art medium.

For our November artwork, we will create a grief house that will help us in

conversations about grief, with how to utilize support and with how to continue

our grief process. Paper and colored

pencils will be used for this activity. In

December, we will be weaving memory

on a simple

loom as our

artwork. As

we weave

grief and

loss into

our lives, we

remember

the life of

the one we

loved so

much. Weaving is a metaphor for how we live our lives with loss. We weave the

loss into our lives, we leave messy edges and we see beauty in it all. Registration is

required by noon eight days in advance. This group will meet online only.

Fee: Free includes all art supplies



It is our sincere hope to host these programs and retreats as stated here. However, if changes need to be made to keep our guests, staff and volunteers safe, we will communicate those changes on our website and Facebook page and are available by phone. Please visit www.Prairiewoods.org, like PrairiewoodsFSC on Facebook or call 319-395-6700 for the latest information.

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

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*In honor of Nancy Hoffman,
FSPA, & Ann Jackson, PBVM*
Anonymous
*In honor of Jack Kestel;
Carter & Michael Van Beek*
Annette Kestel, PBVM
In honor of my girls
Jackie Mikulka
*In honor of Prairiewoods' 25th
Jubilee* Diane Gudenkauf
Rose Mary Kucera, RSM
Susanne Myres
*In honor of the Prairiewoods
staff*
M.L. Folkedahl-meehleder

MEMORIALS

*In memory of Gertrude
Daugherty, FSPA*
Theresa & Clete Weber
In memory of Pat Hill
Jan Reiger
In memory of Tara King
Shannon Finnegan
In memory of Joseph Koenig
Rebecca Picard
*In memory of Antoni & Dorene
Moreau*
Colleen & Jim Nieman
In memory of Kathleen Sullivan
Roseann Hayek

IN-KIND DONATIONS

Mary Ann Barry
Martha Donnelly, PBVM
Trish Peebles
Kathy Petsche
Linda Ponder
Gian Luc Sison
Dorothy Speight

VOLUNTEER SERVICE

Cora Aiels
Jan Aiels

Karla Aiels
Susan Armitage
Alyssa Baker
Mary Ann Barry
Doug Beadle
Duane Beaudry
Martha Beaudry
Madeline Berg
Rose Blank
Taraca Brown
Zoey Brown
Carole Butz
Catharine Cashner
Marie Chaon
Paul Coe
Paul Crawford
Marie Desjarlais, FSPA
Judith Edwards
Gina Errico
Jayden Fiance
Connie Fillenworth
Shannon Finnegan
Ryan Flanery
Ginny Fleming
John Fletcher
John Frankhouse
Jolene Frankhouse
Barb Gay
Lydia Gehling
Robyn Ginther
Green Iowa AmeriCorps
Christine Gust
Dick Heaverlo
Noelle Holmes
Bill Holtz
Milinda Hopp
David Janssen
Diane Karr
Linda Keefe
Christine Kirpes
Rachel Kirpes
Jo Lilledahl
Jane Lonergan-Highley
Lovely Lane & St. Paul's
United Methodist Churches
Youth Service Group
Linda Martin

Cara Matteson
Mark McCright
Noah Meeker
Ed Meissner
Gina Milroy
Mary Mockler
Jan Monk
Mary Moore
Mike Morman
Diane Morris
Mount Mercy University
Women's Golf Team
Mount Mercy University
Women's Volleyball Team
Pat Myers
Mike Nesslage
Laura Nettles, FSPA
Kathleen Newhouse
Bette Niccolls
Matt Novak
Vince O'Connor
Diane Olsen
Tom Patterson
Kathy Petsche
Bob Pinchotti
Rose Rhinehart
Conti Roberts
Jeanette Rops
Suzanne Rubenbauer, FSPA
Terrie Seibert
Sam Seyfer
Gian Luc Sison
Gina Sison
Samantha Slaymaker
Lucy Slinger, FSPA
St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Youth
Retreat
Jane Stevens
Georgia Stoeber
Jay Stolba
Noreen Tonkin
Ashley VanDerkamp
Alina Warner
Leslie Wright
Connie Zenisek
Tom Zenisek

Thank you!



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Hiawatha IA 52233

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1996



1996

planting
trees **THEN
&
NOW**

Planting trees to ensure a healthy future has been one of Prairiewoods' focuses since the 1990s. In the pictures above, Sisters Lucille Winnike and Betty Daugherty, FSPA, help youth plant new saplings around 1996. To the right, August Stolba and volunteers help us recover from the damage of last summer's derecho by planting dozens of new trees on our grounds.

Trees emit oxygen, which we need to breathe; reduce stormwater runoff; provide habitat for wildlife; and provide beauty and shade for us all.



2021



2021