

January/February 2023

Prairiewoods

A CATHOLIC, FRANCISCAN ECOSPIRITUALITY RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER

an examen of CONSCIOUSNESS

a vortex by Renzo Ferrante

This is the season for an Examen of Consciousness. *The examen is an exercise in the practice of attentiveness to lived experience and also in the art of discernment* (the Jesuit Institute).

An important part of this practice is to attend to the evidence of consolation and desolation. As Prairiewoods begins a collective examen this year, we have spent time listening to the world around us. As we examine our consciousness, we have to ask ourselves: how are we cultivating resilience amid the disturbing and compelling stories that are emerging?

There is much desolation for both people and planet. Data from an American Psychological Association study suggests that the majority of U.S. adults agree the nation's future looks bleak. A majority of adults (62%) disagreed with the statement, "our children are going to inherit a better world than we did," and 63% disagreed with the statement, "I feel our country is on the path to being stronger than ever." More than three-quarters of adults

“Do not lose heart, we were made for these times.”

—Clarissa Pinkola Estes,
moonmagazine.org,
March 13, 2020

(76%) said that the future of our nation is a significant source of stress in their lives, while 68% said this is the lowest point in our nation's history that they can remember. In the same study, 27% of all adults said that most days they are so stressed they can't function (APA Stress in America 2022, www.apa.org/news/press/releases/stress/2022/concerned-future-inflation).

The data for adults under the age of 35 are even more stark. Almost 50% say they are so stressed they can't function. Umair Haque, in his article "The Age of Progress is Becoming the Age of Regress," suggests that these are the symptoms of our loss of faith in a better future. Our myths of progress, power and certainty have failed us. Haque suggests (as have many others) that the result of these losses are manifested in increasing isolation, addiction, depression, hatred and fear. These are signs of a loss of resilience in the face of uncertainty and unpredictable change.

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PRAIRIEWOODS STAFF

Rose Blank
Spiritual Director

Joann Gehling, FSPA
Holistic Services, Spiritual Director

Trace Harshman
Housekeeper

Brydon Hill
Cook

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

Ann Jackson, PBVM
Spiritual Services
Coordinator, Spiritual Director

Andi Lewis
Marketing Coordinator

Erik Meggers
Maintenance Coordinator

Mary Rasmussen
Hospitality Assistant

Sandy Rosenberger
Development Coordinator

Nancy Schrimper
Office Administrator

Kim Seward
Spiritual Director

August Stolba
Land Care & Holistic
Ecology Coordinator

Jean Sullivan
Outreach, Engagement &
Hospitality Coordinator

Dan Sutherland
Chef/Kitchen Manager

Laura Weber
Retreats Coordinator,
Associate Director

Lucille Winnike, FSPA
Retreats, Spiritual
Director

Leslie Wright
Director



“Winter here is a demanding season ... And yet, the rigors of winter, like the diminishment of autumn, are accompanied by amazing gifts. One gift is beauty, different from that of autumn but perhaps more beautiful still. I am not sure that any sight or sound on earth is as exquisite as the hushed descent of a sky full of snow. Another gift is the reminder that times of dormancy and deep rest are essential to all living things ... But, for me, winter has an even greater gift to give. It comes when the sky is clear, the sun brilliant, the trees bare, and the first snow yet to come. It is the gift of utter clarity.”

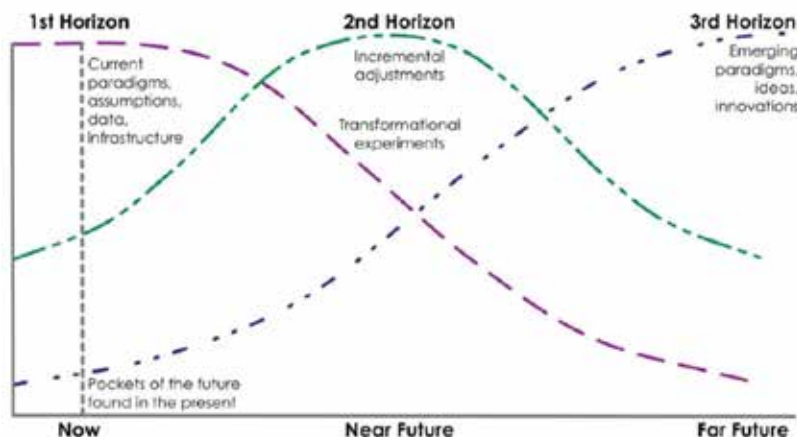
—Parker Palmer, excerpts from *There is a Season: A Meditation on the Cycles of Our Inner Lives*

As I sit down to write this Director's Corner, the first snow is falling softly outside my window, covering the trees with a dusting of white. The pavement remains wet and clear—evidence of the precipitous slide into winter. Parker Palmer's words, as always, seem to name my experience so much more eloquently than I might have done. The temptation as winter approaches is to grieve the end of summer sun and green and growing things. Instead, Palmer encourages us to attend to the seeds of the new season being nurtured by the quiet and the dark.

Here at Prairiewoods, we will be using this winter time to reflect and prepare for the new seasons ahead. We have been reflecting on who we are, what we do and what we are called to become, both for ourselves as Prairiewoods and also as part of a wider network of spirituality centers. We gathered with our sister spirituality centers—Marywood in Arbor Vitae, Wisconsin, and the Franciscan Spirituality Center in La Crosse, Wisconsin—in November to explore our future potential using the Three Horizons framework. We described our sense of the first horizon—what is changing and declining. We spent time imagining in the third horizon—making sense of the signposts of the emerging future. And finally, we brought together our ideas about how to transition and innovate to move into the future potential that calls to us. (The ITC Foresight Toolkit can be found at training.itcilo.org/delta/Foresight/3-Horizons.pdf.)

Often discussions of the changing environment can be full of darkness, heaviness and grief. Instead our conversation was unexpectedly lively and energizing—full of a sense of possibility and opportunity. In the months ahead, we will be reaching out to you to invite you to participate in these forward-looking explorations. We hope you will join with us and help us to shape the emerging future of Prairiewoods.

Sincerely,
Leslie A. Wright



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:
Prairiewoods
120 E Boyson Rd
Hiawatha, IA 52233
319-395-6700
www.Prairiewoods.org
Ecospirit@Prairiewoods.org



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"I urge you, ask you, gentle you, to please not spend your spirit dry by bewailing these difficult times. Especially do not lose hope. Most particularly because, the fact is—we were made for these times"

—Clarissa Pinkola Estes,
moonmagazine.org, March 13, 2020

A cacophony of dire narratives resounds globally, thanks to 24/7 social media and fewer common spaces that unify and inspire us. With fewer people attending religious services, there is a loss of shared ritual, community and meaning making, especially for younger generations.

We yearn for a sense of community, rituals that bring us together, and a larger story in which we can ground ourselves and engage in shared meaning making. These are the practices that help us navigate challenging times.

The secular world calls for building resilience. The learning community of Prairiewoods receives it as a call for consciously increasing our reservoirs of adaptability and "active hope."

"Ours is not the task of fixing the entire world all at once, but of stretching out to mend the part of the world that is within our reach. Any small, calm thing that one soul can do to help another soul, to assist some portion of this suffering world, will help immensely."

—Clarissa Pinkola Estes, moonmagazine.org,
March 13, 2020

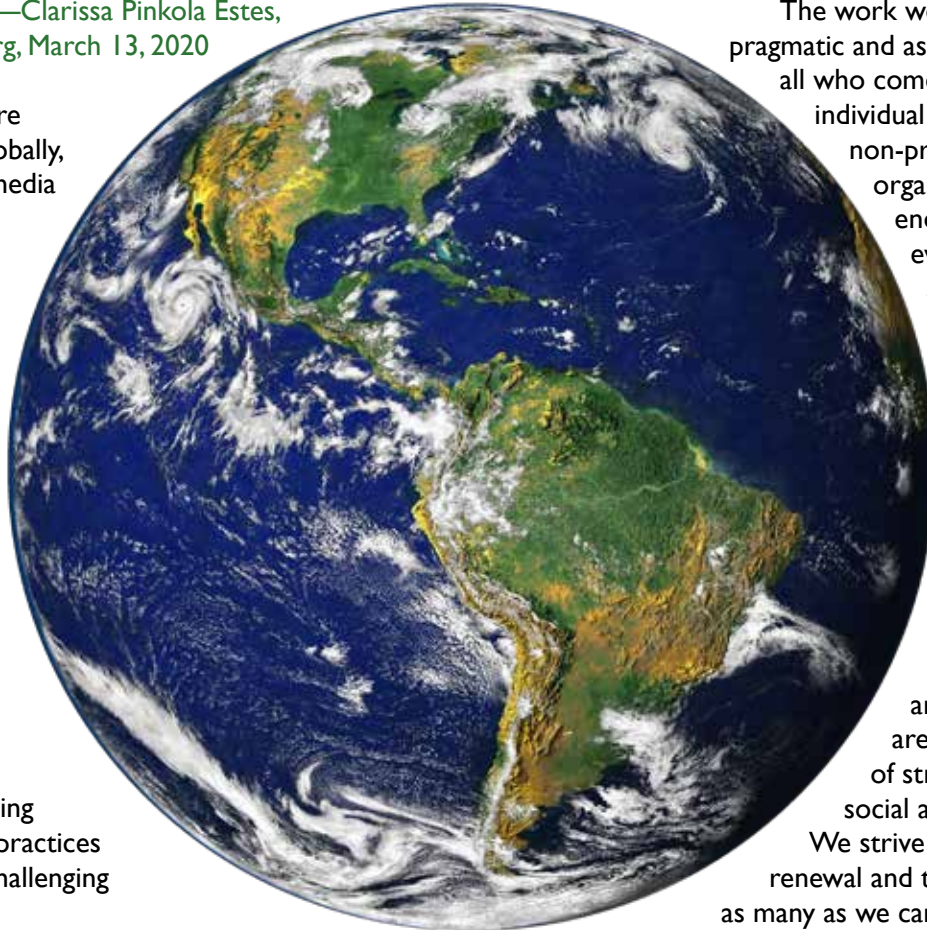
For over twenty-five years, Prairiewoods has been anticipating this time. And science has begun to catch up with what has long been practiced here. Research has shown that human resilience rests upon seven factors. Five of the seven are integral to offerings

here, such as connecting with nature, strengthening relationships, connecting with something larger than yourself, a sense of your own resilience and ability to bounce back, and finally mindfulness and meditation (WeCanPROSPER, Partnerships in Prevention Science Institute, Iowa State University).

The work we do here is both pragmatic and aspirational. We help all who come to Prairiewoods—individual seekers, for-profits, non-profits, faith and civic organizations—build endurance for the everyday. We also actively connect with this great unfolding story and the sure hope in the ongoing creative forward movement of the Universe and the Source of All Being. More than ever, we must reach out and open our arms to those who are on the front lines of struggle—personal, social and environmental. We strive to share this gift of renewal and transformation with as many as we can through:

- the experience of a sense of belonging—you are part of a community over 7,000 strong, full of people like yourself—seeking, renewing, questioning, imagining, evolving.
- an opportunity to become your unique selves—discovering your purpose, giftedness and resilience.
- time to rediscover connection to something larger than yourself—the wider "We."
- practices that support individual and collective "Active Hope."

There are signs that a new consciousness is being born. This awakening, while tumultuous, offers renewed hope for the future of people and the planet. This awakening requires greater resilience and the fortitude to choose a new path forward. Join us on the journey, as part of this unfolding story. *This is definitely not the time to lose hope. We were made for these times.*



CULTIVATING RESILIENCE at PRAIRIEWOODS

“We are needed, that is all we can know. And though we meet resistance, we more so will meet great souls who will hail us, love us and guide us, and we will know them when they appear. Didn't you say you were a believer? Didn't you say you pledged to listen to a voice greater? Didn't you ask for grace? Don't you remember that to be in grace means to submit to the Voice greater? You have all the resource you need to cultivate a new consciousness.”

—Clarissa Pinkola Estes, moonmagazine.org, March 13, 2020

Explore a few of the many ways in which to cultivate resilience here at Prairiewoods ...



Practice mindfulness ...

“Educators in today’s schools are facing unprecedented stress. From dealing with post-pandemic issues such as student trauma and gaps in students’ academic achievement to an unrelenting attack on the profession as a whole, teachers are being called upon to give of themselves to the point of exhaustion. I was one of those educators, and I found myself losing my passion for education. My job, which I adored prior to the pandemic, was no longer bringing me joy and fulfillment. I realized that if I was going to continue in education, I needed to prioritize my own self-care. Attending the Holistic Healing for Educators workshop at Prairiewoods dramatically changed my path. I was able to learn easy strategies that allowed me to continue on a more mindful journey. In addition, I also learned how to share those strategies with other staff in my building who were juggling the same stressors. Staying at the beautiful and serene Prairiewoods campus for the week allowed me to singularly focus on my needs without the intrusion of my daily tasks. We can’t be present for students, until we are present for ourselves. Thank you Prairiewoods for enveloping me in your love, care, and compassion. I can’t wait to visit you again.”

—Amy Andreassen, Holistic Healing for Educators participant

Be in nature ...

Perhaps when we gaze upon Grandmother Oak and remember the resilience of Earth we can reconnect with our own resilience. As we spend time on the land, we remember that after the darkness and chill of winter, there is the promise of abundant new life found in spring.



Practice rituals of remembrance ...

We recently hosted a memorial tree planting in remembrance of our dear friend and volunteer Vince O'Connor. His wife, Michele, says, "This ritual and the presence of the maple and linden trees mean so much to our family and friends."



Connect with others ...

"Initially we chose Prairiewoods for the outdoor space and interest in the 70 acres located conveniently in town. The values align with our company's desire to be a force for good and leave things better than we find them. Once our team started



working with Prairiewoods, we saw the benefits of the indoor space as well as the exceedingly welcoming and gracious staff. Sister Nancy's love of the land and example she sets in working along side us is particularly inspiring. Bonus is the freshly prepared healthy meal provided by the kitchen staff. Our group is amazed to see the impact from the volunteer projects year after year."

—Heather Meggers,
TransAmerica Day of
Caring project organizer

Help Prairiewoods discern the path forward ...

This year Prairiewoods will be reaching out and engaging in deep listening. It is time to refresh our Evolutionary Plan. We hope you will lend your voices to this process. We plan to host focus groups and send out surveys, and we'd love to include your voice!

"In a culture where we are increasingly taught only to speak, listening is a radical act, especially when oriented towards silenced voices, nonhuman voices, and the voice of the Earth herself—all of which have essential stories to tell."

—Emergence Magazine, Volume 3,
"Living with the Unknown"

Weaving a New Story of Meaning Spirituality in the 21st Century 2023

**Friday, April 28, 7–9 p.m., & Saturday,
April 29, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.**

(in person at Wanatee Park's Prairie Oak Lodge in Marion, Iowa, and online via Zoom)

Please welcome esteemed author and facilitator Jeremy Lent! Jeremy is the author of *The Patterning Instinct, A Cultural History of Humanity's Search for Meaning* and *The Web of Meaning, Integrating Science and Traditional Wisdom to Find Our Place in the Universe* (www.jeremylent.com). It is a delight for Prairiewoods that he will be joining us LIVE and in person in spring 2023, along with our favorite musician-of-Earth, Sara Thomsen (www.sarathomsen.com).

Jeremy is well known for his eclectic approach to the integration of science and holistic spirituality, and he is also quite adept at presenting embodied spiritual wisdom streams across many traditions. His arc of presentation for the weekend will be a brief introduction on Friday evening on how we construct our worldviews. On Saturday morning, he will explore with us the implications of a worldview of deep interconnectedness, followed by embodied practices based on Liology (www.jeremylent.com/liology.html), an integrated, embodied framework for well-being and spiritual groundedness. On Saturday afternoon, he will introduce us to the inspiring vision of, and pathways to, a life-affirming "Ecological Civilization."

Sara's soulful music will be woven throughout, moving us all into sacred, shared "We" space, where our imagination and dreams will meet the world's great needs. We are the one we've been anticipating!

Please join us for what promises to be an inspiring, soul-transforming event!

The early-bird cost is just \$90, and limited lodging is available for an additional fee. Register today at www.Prairiewoods.org/Spirituality-in-the-21st-century.

Unpack Jeremy Lent's The Web of Meaning in a six-part book study series in January and February. See p. 9 for details.



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.

Wild Soul, Wider We Retreat: Reweaving Our Stories of Belonging

Friday, Jan. 13, 6:30 p.m.–

Sunday, Jan. 15, 1 p.m.

Facilitator: Thomas Dean

The wildness of creation forever unfolds—and tells—its story. Wildness is also within us as members of the wider “We”—the web of existence that binds us to the squirrel in our backyard, the bluestem of our prairies, the flowing waters of our streams, the towering trees of our forests, the generativity of our soil’s microorganisms, and the flaring forth of stars and galaxies. But are we hearing the stories of wildness? Are we understanding our part in the great conversation? In this time of nature’s distress, creation is speaking. How are we listening?

Through stories, poetry, music and art—others’ and our own—we are invited to answer creation’s alluring call, to listen closely to the languages of our creature kin and arbor elders, to sense deeply the harmony of our interbeing, and to respond with our unique expression and spirit. Winter’s darkness and the new year are times for rekindling our stories, our commitments, our vocations and avocations, our spirituality—all of our relationships with the web of creation. Join us for a weekend of contemplation, creativity, dreaming and sharing as we reweave our individual and collective wild souls into nature’s story and the unfolding universe’s song.

Thomas Dean is a writer and teacher from Iowa City. He is senior presidential writer/editor at the University of Iowa, where he also teaches interdisciplinary and writing courses. He has given numerous presentations and conducted workshops and retreats on writing, our relationships with the natural world and the inner teacher. His books include *Under a Midland Sky* and *Tallgrass Conversations: In Search of the Prairie Spirit* (co-authored with Cindy Crosby), both from Ice Cube Press. He is currently in the process of becoming a Circle of Trust facilitator with the Center for Courage and Renewal.

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

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



Rooted Emergence: Spiritual Operating Systems 2.0 Retreat

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

Facilitators: Ellen Bruckner and Laura A. Weber, Ph.D., co-hosts of Prairiewoods’ Go Deeper Thursdays

We are aware of life emerging, changing, and regenerating all around and within us. Our understanding of who “We” are is shifting. Humanity is on the cusp of a new ontology (nature of being) and a spiritual renaissance. Biologically, we are merged more and more with technology, truly becoming cybernetic organisms—“cyborgs.” Some are quite comfortable with the merger, especially those called “digital natives.” What if we were born prior to digital immersion, struggling to connect with those whose lives flourish in the tech milieu? How do we understand our deeper, interior selves and our evolving relationships? What does spirituality look like in this context?

A new “spiritual operating system 2.0” may be required. Join us in going deeper into the mystery of rooted emergence, our journey of interior awareness in today’s complex world. On this weekend odyssey, we will take a first fierce step. Friday evening will find us exploring personal and communal stories that have grounded us spiritually. As we listen to the wisdom of ancient traditions, we will note the generative wellsprings of our common roots and trace their sources. Celebrating our rootedness, we will engage Saturday morning’s reflection on the nature of “roots” as an analogy for organic growth, malleability and dynamism in the spiritual life. Saturday afternoon will offer an experiential exercise to hone and deepen our awareness, creativity and integration of many sources of spiritual nourishment, from what we perceive and how we interact with the expressions of emergent spirituality in our midst. Finally, Sunday morning will help us unveil what is emerging in respect to our vulnerabilities and our freedoms as we experience this unprecedented time of spiritual awareness and growth. Ready to make the leap? This is “one small step” for each of us, and “one giant leap” for all of us, the wider “We.”

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

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



New Year’s Retreat Flash Sale!

Bring one friend and come rest and retreat for two nights and three days during the week. Each of you will receive 20% off your lodging! Offer available **weekdays only**, Monday through Friday, Jan. 2–Feb. 17. Add a massage (\$65 per hour) or spiritual direction (\$50 per hour) if you choose. See you in 2023!

Metta Yoga

Mondays & Thursdays; Jan. 2–Feb. 27; 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. Registration is required for each session. **Fee:** \$99 for eleven-punch card or \$60 for six-punch card, one punch per session

Going Inward with Sounds & Vibrations

Mondays; Jan. 2, Jan. 16, Feb. 6 & Feb. 20; 6:30–7:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

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

During this in-person hour, we connect with our inner selves through the song of bowls. We are invited to sit or lie down to listen and just be. We 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! Registration is required.

Fee: \$10 per session

Prayer Experience Series

Tuesdays, Jan. 3–Feb. 28, 11:30 a.m.–12 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Jean Sullivan

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.

Fee: Free-will offering

Go Deeper Thursdays

Thursdays; Jan. 5, Jan. 19, Feb. 2 & Feb. 16; 4–5 p.m.

Facilitators: Ellen Bruckner & Laura A. Weber, Ph.D.

Go Deeper Thursdays emerged in the context of the global pandemic, or as Prairiewoods calls it, the *PanDeepening*. Our reflective and lively conversations opened us to spiritual deepening, providing a sacred space to share our PanDeepening awareness, a place where we explored venues for collective presencing and delving into the wider "We" space. As our journey meandered through topics associated with inter-breathing and collective consciousness, we embraced diverse resources for consideration. Through simple breathing meditations, poetry, practicing mindfulness, storytelling, re-languaging, listening to creation's song and many small group experiences, we have been learning to read the collective and listen deeply to our emergent, inter-connected wisdom. In the process, we are becoming more expansive, more inclusive, recognizing our place in the wider "We." 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. A one-time registration for January and February is required.

Fee: \$10 per month

Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton

Thursdays; Jan. 5, Jan. 19, Feb. 2 & Feb. 16; 7–8:30 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 Thursdays 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. Book purchase is required after your first session. Please register for your first session to get the Zoom link.

Fee: Free-will offering

Day of Self Renewal

Mondays, Jan. 9 & Feb. 13, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Jean Sullivan

Find rest and relaxation for mind, body and spirit! This tranquil day features your choice of two services, group guided meditation, singing bowl 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, yoga or chair yoga.) Registration, a nonrefundable/nontransferable deposit of \$50 and your top three services choices are required eight days in advance. (Masks and vaccination may be required by the holistic provider.)

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, Jan. 9 & Feb. 13, 12:45–1:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

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 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 are invited to just receive and breathe. Registration is required by noon.

Fee: \$8 per session



Nature & Forest Therapy Experiences

Afternoon Nature & Forest Therapy Experiences: Mondays, Jan. 9 & Feb. 13, 2:30–3:45 p.m.

Celebrate Imbolc with Nature & Forest Therapy: Thursday, Feb. 2, 1–2:30 p.m.

Full Moon Nature & Forest Therapy Experience: Saturday, Feb. 4, 6–8 p.m.
Facilitator: Emelia Sautter

Join certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide Emelia Sautter and the land for a walk with the



natural world. Experience Forest Therapy, a sensory-focused practice that invites us to slow down and be present with self and the natural world around us. According to the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy, “Forest Therapy is a practice that supports health and wellness through guided immersion in forests and other environments to promote the well-being of both people and the land.” Time with our nature kin reduces stress and depression, improves cognitive functioning, boosts our immune system, regulates blood pressure, improves relationships, increases feelings of gratitude and much more. Registration is required by the previous day. Please bring a water bottle and dress for being outdoors.

Fee: \$20 for Imbolc & Full Moon sessions, \$15 for afternoon sessions

Prairiewoods Knitters & Stitchers

Tuesdays, Jan. 10 & Feb. 14, 9:30–11 a.m.; & Wednesdays, Jan. 25 & Feb. 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 morning and fourth Wednesday evening of each month.
Fee: Free

Evening Centering Prayer Tuesdays; Jan. 10, Jan. 24, Feb. 14 & Feb. 28; 5:30–7 p.m.

Facilitator: Judith Smith

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 relax, empty our minds and find God’s presence within us. Sessions stand alone.

Fee: Free-will offering

Men Exploring Faith Thursdays; Jan. 12, Jan. 26, Feb. 9 & Feb. 23; 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 with an online option available on the second and fourth Thursdays monthly.

Fee: Free-will offering

Sweat Lodge (Inipi) Ceremony Saturday, Jan. 14, 4–7 p.m. (setup begins at 2, ceremony starts at 4)

Facilitator:

Kerry Batteau

The Sweat Lodge Ceremony pre-dates recorded history and was



Web-Weaving: Pre-Launch Study Series for Spirituality in the 21st Century Tuesdays; Jan. 10, Jan. 17, Jan. 24, Jan. 31, Feb. 7 & Feb. 21; 4–5 p.m.

Facilitators: Ellen Bruckner & Laura A. Weber, Ph.D., co-hosts of Prairiewoods’ Go Deeper Thursdays



Together, let’s begin tilling the soil and rooting ourselves for *Spirituality in the 21st Century 2023* with Jeremy Lent (coming April 28–29) in this online series. (See p. 6 for details.) We will begin with the six parts of Jeremy’s book, *The Web of Meaning*. Six essential questions for the wider “We” include:

- Who Am I?
- Where Am I?
- What Am I?
- How Should I Live?
- Why Am I?
- Where Are We Going?

These are six essential questions for the spiritual sojourner embedded in the great web of life. Jeremy’s work in Liology, a world-view for sustainable flourishing, will help us tap into the web of meaning with our full sensorium, with an eye toward integration and wholeness. We are seeking communal wisdom to help prepare for *Spirituality in the 21st Century* in April by hosting these critical conversations. This is an invitation to come together online and explore together the topics that define us. We welcome your participation, either for one or two sessions, or for all of them. You may find Jeremy’s book, *The Web of Meaning*, helpful in these conversations (available at Prairiewoods or online), as well as his website (www.jeremylent.com). This is an online class. Please register to get the link.

Fee: \$10 per session or \$50 for six-session series

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

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

Soul Care: Creative Arts Grief Support Group

Wednesdays, Jan. 18 & Feb. 15, 5:30–7 p.m.

Facilitator: Jamie Siela, LISW

Offered in Partnership with UnityPoint Hospice

In grief, our very foundation can be rocked. Take time to connect with others in grief and engage the creative spark. 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. On Jan. 18, we will spend our time together creating gnomes in holiday colors. On Feb. 15, we will explore sand art, creating optical illusions. In grief, we often experience unexpected emotions; this project is an opportunity to develop unexpected layers of creativity. Registration is required nine days in advance. This group is a hybrid, offered both online and in person.

Fee: Free includes all art supplies

Naming the Unnameable: 89 Wonderful & Useful Names for God

Thursday, Jan. 19, 6–8 p.m.

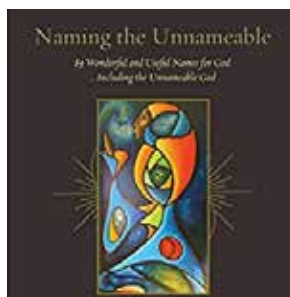
Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Matthew Fox

Offered in Partnership with Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat Center

Ignite your imagination by

considering a colorful range of names for the Divine. What do we mean by “God” in today’s world?

How many names for Divinity are there? In *Naming the Unnameable*, renowned theologian and author Matthew Fox ignites our imaginations by offering a colorful range of Divine Names gathered from scientists and poets and mystics past and present. Ultimately, no name for God suffices. We will explore and discuss some of the rich teachings and ideas in *Naming the Unnameable*. This online program is offered via Zoom in partnership with Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat Center. **Fee:** \$20



Rock Mandala Painting for the Whole Family

Saturday, Feb. 18, 10 a.m.–12 p.m.

Facilitator: Andi Lewis

Spend a few hours creating art with your favorite people! We will spend fun time together as we learn the art of rock painting with mandalas, which are sacred works of art in the form of a circle. Using smooth stones, paints and fine dotting tools, we will make beautiful, detailed mandalas. This is a fun, relaxing process that can be done by anyone, regardless of age. We will have time to paint several rocks and will be encouraged to take one rock home and leave one as a secret gift for a stranger to find. No experience or artistic skill is necessary, but kids 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult. (It is ideal for ages 10 and older.) This



program usually fills up early, so register today!

Fee: \$13 includes rocks and all art supplies

Holistic Healing for Educators & Classrooms, Credit 1

Friday, Feb. 24, 5:30–9 p.m.;

Saturday, Feb. 25, 8 a.m.–5:30 p.m.;

& Sunday, Feb. 26, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.

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

Mindfulness practices restore holistic healing and build resiliency, joy, optimism and curiosity. All lead to increased health and well-being. Highly participative and reflective, this online retreat offers educators opportunity to build personal plans for mindfulness and self-compassion. This course provides educators with research-based theory, collaborative design and opportunities to practice. Participants will need to order their own copy of the text *Practicing Presence*.

Fee: \$50 to Prairiewoods and \$35 paid to Grant Wood Area Education Agency (Thanks to a generous donation by the Sisters of the Presentation, Dubuque, all additional costs will be covered.)



Quotes from Holistic Healing for Educators participants:

“This is a great class. Every teacher would benefit from it right now. This has been an incredibly challenging year. I certainly needed it. Thanks again.” (Brian B.)

“Thank you so much for sharing your wisdom with our class. I thought the people in the class were absolutely delightful to talk with and listen to. The information you shared with us was invaluable and I cannot thank you enough. I will be sharing this with my family and my classes.” (Becky O.)

“My Prairiewoods experience last summer brought about a monumental shift in my soul—and it restored my passion for education.” (Principal Amy A.)

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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“ Nothing has ever been said about God that hasn't already been said better by the wind in the pine trees. ”
—Thomas Merton

Merry Christmas
from **PRAIRIEWOODS**

March/April 2023

Prairiewoods

A CATHOLIC, FRANCISCAN ECOSPIRITUALITY RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER

Alive in the Web

*“What’s it all about, Alfie?
Is it just for the moment we live?
What’s it all about
When you sort it out, Alfie?
Are we meant to take more than we give?
Or are we meant to be kind?”*

—lyrics from “Alfie,” by Burt Bacharach & Hal David

How often in our lives do we reach a point at which we ask—and ask again—our foundational questions? As the old song goes, “What’s it all about, Alfie?” In other words, what is our world-view? What is the story we tell ourselves about what is real, what matters most, who we are, and how we exist in relationship with everyone and everything? If we can imagine a story that could be told from a third-person, omniscient point of view, we might find an exquisite, all-perspectives-included, inter-woven story. As it is, the art of interpretation requires us to tell—and interpret—any story from a perspective, and it matters greatly what

informs our perspective, and where we locate ourselves in the web of meaning. For example, what if we were to tell the story as first-person integrated subjects, a wide, wide, “We,” embedded in the web of life we hope to grasp and interpret? What if we found ourselves alive and entangled in a web of meaning, rather than detached observers forming judgments about the web, as though we alone were the arbiters of truth and meaning for the entire web?

The story we tell—and how we tell it—matters. In order to tell and integrate the story of our widest “We,” we need many perspectives, as many as possible.

This year’s *Spirituality in the 21st Century’s* featured facilitator, author Jeremy Lent, invites us to consider an integral way of telling the story, or constructing a world-view. He invites us to tell our story from within the web in order to help us to thrive as a whole, sustainably and graciously abiding in relationship with one another.

(continued on page 3)

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"One might argue that the heart of modern civilization, its supreme fetish, is the notion of the individual. The independent self."

—Bayo Akomolafe

Instead, we are part of, in fact woven into the very threads of a continuously creating universe. We get caught up in notions of our separateness, our aloneness on this earth. It even becomes for us a source of pride. We are convinced of the primacy of the human race. Instead I would invite you to consider, as Judy Cannato, Jeremy Lent and others have done, the evolutionary and deeply connected nature of life on this planet. Lent, in his book *The Web of Meaning*, offered me new language with which to think of this "unity with differentiation" (p. 170) and a new image "nature is a complex, layered fractal" (p. 167).

It is time to reexamine our ideas about self. Bayo Akomolafe and Indy Johar in a recent webinar challenged listeners to place themselves not as individual, separate selves but as part of this larger planetary self. Then they posed questions about how this might change culture, politics, our sense of ownership and the divisive trends around identity. Because the real truth is that none of us could survive on our own. Not as individuals, not as a species, not even as discrete municipalities. We are part of a living, breathing web—interdependent.

How do your ideas change as you think of yourself first as part of this larger, living, planetary self? Then as part of a human species and only after that on to your geographic, political and biological categorization. It is both a mystery and a consolation for me to contemplate this different perspective. It calls into question our human inclination to categorize and prioritize each other and the rest of creation.

In this issue, you will read our reflections on "who is Prairiewoods." When I am here at Prairiewoods, walking in the tall grass and among the trees, I am viscerally aware of being "within" and not separate from the earth and all created things. I have the experience of sharing breath with all that is. Prairiewoods itself allows me to imagine what it might be like if we all awakened to our place in this web of life.

"In a truly integrated system ... each entity possesses intrinsic dignity and worth, pursuing its own purpose as part of the larger whole"

—Jeremy Lent, *Web of Meaning*, p. 174

The new question we must ask is how do we become an "amplification point" (Lent, p. 181) of this life giving and hopeful perspective. How can our "gaze" and our shared intention make possible a shift in collective attention and intention.

Sincerely,
Leslie A. Wright



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:

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

www.Prairiewoods.org
Ecospirit@Prairiewoods.org



(continued from page 1)

He calls this approach “liology,” from the ancient Chinese concept *li*, meaning “organizing principles,” and the Greek root *logos*, which is “word.” *Liology is a study of the organizing principles by which we construct a world-view, a web of meaning* (www.liology.org).

Jeremy maintains that we need not characterize the meaning of existence from one of two camps: one that promotes an entrenched dualism of “spirit” and “matter,” or other such oppositional constructs, and another that reduces reality to atomistic meaninglessness. We have inherited the first option from some traditional religious sources that have effectively dichotomized “secular” and “sacred,” while the second option, promoted by Western science, often relegates meaning to discrete components of measurable data. Liology celebrates and explores our deep and expansive inter-connection with everything that exists in the universe. It neither polarizes the material and spiritual realms, nor does it reduce meaning to quantifiable units. It represents an embeddedness in the web of life that takes seriously and integrates the findings of evolutionary biology and cognitive neuroscience, as well as insights from Buddhism, Taoism and Indigenous wisdom, along with systems thinking and embodied practice. Where do we begin to tell this inter-woven story with so many perspectives available to us?

We begin our journey into the web of meaning with the concept of oneness. We may be familiar with the notion of the oneness of the divine (and the oneness of all Being) because it resides at the heart of many religious and spiritual traditions. “Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4). However, such a concept is not without challenges for interpretation. “A critical step is to recognize that even among those who describe a vision of oneness, different cultural assumptions generate important distinctions over what that oneness signifies. Some traditions—such as Vedic, Neoplatonic and Christian—emphasize transcendence as the route to the realization of oneness.



photo by Joni Reed Cooley

Transcendence, which means literally to ‘climb over,’ implies that the world as we see it, with all its messy details, must be left behind to achieve a state of unity. The higher you go, the purer and more visionary you become, until ultimately you might reach a state of communion with divinity up in the heavens” (Jeremy Lent, *The Web of Meaning, Integrating Science and Traditional Wisdom to Find Our Place in the Universe*, p. 303).

Essentially, how we perceive oneness affects everything we think and believe about how we are all connected in the context of the wider “We.”

Prairiewoods was founded as a sanctuary for exploration and embodiment of this integrating principle, how we are all one with Source, self, others and creation. Prairiewoods’ mission invites us all to find ourselves alive in the web of life and meaning. Our mission is “to provide 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.” If we are to weave a new story of meaning for spiritual enlightenment and practice in the twenty-first century, it will require a commitment to acknowledging and practicing our embeddedness in the whole web of life and re-framing the story for a much wider, inherently wilder “We.” If we keep asking foundational questions, and we stay connected in the wider “We,” perhaps we can weave the story anew for a fragile, resilient and evanescent web.

So, “What’s it all about?”

“I believe in love, Alfie.

Without true love we just exist, Alfie.

Until you find the love you’ve missed

You’re nothing, Alfie.

When you walk let your heart lead the way

And you’ll find love any day Alfie, Alfie.”

To learn more about Jeremy’s arc of presentation, *Spirituality in the 21st Century: Weaving a New Story of Meaning* on April 28–29, see p. 6. We hope you’ll join us!

The Web of Meaning at Prairiewoods

“The universe as we know it is a joint product of the observer and the observed.”

—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Prairiewoods, like each of us, has an identity, personality, character, charisma of its own. If Prairiewoods could speak in a language that we humans could understand, how would it identify? What traits would it share and express to others? Would it talk of the oxygen its trees produce, like we talk of the gardening our hands do? Would it talk about how it helps people heal through consoling conversations of a non-verbal nature? Would it talk about how it interacts with the roads of flowing cars, and people, and how they sometimes stop in, or pass through? Maybe it would humbly defer to you to describe it as opposed to describing itself? Where would you start?

Prairiewoods is located at the coordinates 42.02 degrees north by 40.09 degrees west based on the standard global geographic coordinate system. It is on the North American continent of Earth, nestled between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. It is in the state of Iowa within the United States, straddling the border of the cities of Cedar Rapids and Hiawatha. To its south is Boyson Road, to its north is Bali Hai Estates, to the east is Robins Road and to the west, the back yards of a residential development. Prairiewoods is part of the Mississippi watershed via the Cedar River watershed via the Indian creek watershed via Dry creek, which originates in the row-cropped farm fields to the north.

Prairiewoods can be described in many ways, most simply as 70 acres of land that is the site of a retreat and conference center. This definition can be expanded to define the landscape and infrastructure within these 70 acres confined by its geographic borders. It is 27 acres of woodland, 35 acres of prairie, with a quarter mile stretch of a creek named Dry Creek. It has six buildings, a labyrinth, a sweat lodge, a production garden, a community garden, edible landscapes and perennial gardens. This expanded definition could go on forever in this fashion, describing the things that hold physical space. But it can never begin to describe Prairiewoods. Just like you, a human, your height, weight and gender is not all you are—we are defined by our relationships and interactions that integrate us into the wider “We.”

“We are one, after all, you and I, together we suffer, together exist, and forever will recreate each other.”

—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

This land was once mountainous, with streams and oceanic environments. It broke off from present day Africa and migrated from the southern hemisphere to its current location. Sea levels then rose, making it a vast network of shallow seas and saw an explosion of marine life forming the sandstone filled with fossils we see today. As glaciation occurred and retreated it became a tropical environment with stable temperatures. This resulted in a blossoming of species diversity within its shallow seas. As the environment bounced between coastal seas and tropical swamps, reptiles and amphibians evolved and flourished before a giant meteorite drastically altered the environment once again. This led to the age of mammals. This brings us to the ice age

photo by Joni Reed Cooley

The Web of Meaning at Prairiewoods

and the glaciers that tilled our land, producing the flat planes of fertile soil we benefit from today.

For thousands of years, this land was home to a beautiful and harmonious diversity of people, plants and animals until it was colonized by European settlers. The land was a French-owned colony, largely unsettled until the plight of Manifest Destiny was unleashed upon it with the Louisiana Purchase, and it was stolen from first peoples such as the Sauk, Meskwaki and Ioway. People who never claimed to own it, as it seems it is imperative for humans to do today. Before becoming Prairiewoods, the land was pastoral farmland grazed by cows. That trend continued after being purchased by Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in the 1960s, who leased it to a bovine farmer. Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration asked year after year, *What are we going to do with "The Farm"?*

Inspired by Betty Daugherty, FSPA, who was herself inspired by the works of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme, *a cohort of six FSPA sisters listened to the dream of the beautiful land and researched its history.* They asked the land to name itself and shape its own future. This land became Prairiewoods, an ecospirituality center, a space that was as much defined by its natural resources as its built ones. The sisters went so far as changing architectural plans so no tree was cut down in its construction. Through trial and error, this space became the place of peace and transformation it is today with a foundational intent to maintain the integrity, health and wellbeing of the diverse array of species within and surrounding its borders.

"The time has come to realize that an interpretation of the universe—even a positivist one—remains unsatisfying unless it covers the interior as well as the exterior of things; mind as well as matter. The true physics is that which will, one day, achieve the inclusion of man in his wholeness in a coherent picture of the world."

—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*

Prairiewoods was once, and is becoming again, oak-hickory savannah comprised of tall grass prairie and stands of riparian woodlands, but the water that once ebbed and flowed through the lands is too controlled and contrived to return to its precolonial state. In a time of great turmoil, environmental degradation and food insecurity, it stands as a place of peace and transformation, a place where nature is being restored and celebrated, a place where food is grown and shared with not only our human kin but also our creature kin. It is a beacon of unity, across cultures, religions, economic backgrounds and geographic regions. It is not just the sum of its parts, but rather a synergetic culmination that is far greater than its components combined. It is you, it is me, it is our community and forever will be a place to explore the intersection of ecology, spirituality and holistic health. The dream of Prairiewoods is to continue to use all of its resources and gifts to benefit all creation. The present care taken nurtures this dream and strives to multiply all its gifts.

Weaving a New Story of Meaning Spirituality in the 21st Century 2023

Friday, April 28, 7–9 p.m., & Saturday, April 29, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. in person at Grant Wood Area Education Agency (4401 Sixth Street SW in Cedar Rapids, Iowa—**please note this is a new location**) and online via Zoom

Please welcome esteemed author and facilitator Jeremy Lent! Jeremy is the author of *The Patterning Instinct, A Cultural History of Humanity's Search for Meaning* and *The Web of Meaning, Integrating Science and Traditional Wisdom to Find Our Place in the Universe* (www.jeremylent.com). It is a delight for Prairiewoods that he will be joining us LIVE and in person in spring 2023, along with our favorite musician-of-Earth, Sara Thomsen (www.sarathomsen.com).

Jeremy is well known for his eclectic approach to the integration of science and holistic spirituality, and he is also quite adept at presenting embodied spiritual wisdom streams across many traditions. His arc of presentation for the weekend will be a brief introduction on Friday evening on how we construct our worldviews. On Saturday morning, he will explore with us the implications of a worldview of deep interconnectedness, followed by embodied practices based on Liology (www.jeremylent.com/liology.html), an integrated, embodied framework for well-being and spiritual groundedness. On Saturday afternoon, he will introduce us to the inspiring vision of, and pathways to, a life-affirming “Ecological Civilization.”

Sara’s soulful music will be woven throughout, moving us all into sacred, shared “We” space, where our imagination and dreams will meet the world’s great needs. We are the one we’ve been anticipating!

Please join us for what promises to be an inspiring, soul-transforming event!

The early-bird cost is just \$90 until March 1, so register today at www.Prairiewoods.org/Spirituality-in-the-21st-century.



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.

Restoring Balance in Times of Change Retreat Friday, March 17, 6:30 p.m.–Sunday, March 19, 1 p.m.

Facilitator: Karen Hering

As the spring equinox balances darkness and light and the Earth tilts toward new growth, what rebirth is stirring in the chaos of change today? Karen Hering, author of *Trusting Change: Finding Our Way through Personal and Global Transformation*, will facilitate this weekend retreat. It will include guided reflection, writing, conversation, embodied practices and ritual. We'll honor the new life stirring in the natural world on the cusp of spring and explore what is preparing to grow in our own lives after a season of loss and letting go. Whether you're navigating personal transitions or a world reshaping itself faster than ever, this retreat offers community, spiritual practices and deep time for accessing your own threshold wisdom and hopes, both fierce and fragile. Nested in Karen Hering's online conversations, Threshold Conversations, this in-person retreat can stand alone or be supported by an online community of threshold seekers. (See *Threshold Conversations at right for monthly conversations.*)

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

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



Save the date!

The Power of Silence: Summer Silent Directed Retreats Sunday, June 18, 4 p.m.–Saturday, June 24, 1 p.m., & Monday, July 31, 4 p.m.–Sunday, Aug. 6, 1 p.m.

Facilitators: Lucille Winnike, FSPA; Rev. Rose Blank; Kim Seward (June); Deb Hansen & Ann Jackson, PBVM

Perhaps you've participated for years in Prairiewoods' Silent Directed Retreats. Or maybe you have seen these advertised and considered scheduling one for yourself, but aren't sure what a Silent Directed Retreat is. If you've made a silent, directed retreat, we welcome you back. If you've never made a retreat like this, we invite you to consider this question: *What's the deepest silence you've ever known?* Silent Directed Retreats offer opportunities to enter into deep silence in order to sense what it feels like to awaken a quiet and palpable connection and deepen your relationship with the Source of All being.

Each day you will receive ongoing direction as you and a professionally-trained spiritual director listen intentionally to the movement of the Source of All Being in your heart. Listening in such profound silence assists you to get in touch with feelings, thoughts and actions as you reflect, meditate, pray and rest. The practice of this daily meeting assists in developing the capacity to discern, notice, sense the movement of the Source of All Being in light of your motivations, attachments, responses to that movement within the whole of your life. To share with a professional your divine experiences brings clarity, deepens your commitment and accountability to the direction of your life, surprises and offers insight into that direction.

Fee: \$495 includes lodging, meals and spiritual direction (*Partial scholarships are available.*)



Threshold Conversations Tuesdays, March 21 & April 18, 7–8:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Karen Hering

Whether you're living through significant personal transitions or navigating a world reshaping itself faster than ever, you are invited to join a yearlong conversation about how to make change more trustworthy. Join monthly online conversations focused on one of the ten threshold skills featured in Karen Hering's book, *Trusting Change*. Karen will present selected content from her book and offer a focusing question and silent time for writing or reflection. Then we'll move into small groups to share how we each experience and engage that month's threshold skill in the context of change. You are invited to join all the monthly online offerings or attend selectively, based on your time and interest. Additional in-person weekend retreats, on the spring and fall equinoxes, will offer a deeper dive into the material for those who are interested and able to attend (at Prairiewoods March 17–19 and at the Christine Center in Wisconsin Sept. 22–24). Your voice will bring wisdom for others, while theirs may offer just the perspective you need on your threshold.
Fee: \$15 per session

Concert Under the Stars Saturday, April 15, 7–9 p.m.

Facilitators: Jonny Lipford, Peter Phippen & Victoria Shoemaker

Experience an unforgettable night under a blanket of twinkling stars, serenaded by the melodic sounds of three award-winning musicians specializing in Native-style flute, Puebloan flute and Japanese shakuhachi. Immerse yourself in a sonic journey like no other and enjoy one complimentary drink ticket with additional beer, wine and soda available for purchase. This enchanting evening will be filled with soothing music and blissful merriment, making it an experience you won't soon forget!

Fee: \$10 includes one drink ticket, free for kids 10 and under



Metta Yoga

Mondays & Thursdays;

**March 2–April 27; 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. Registration is required for each session. **Fee:** \$120 for eleven-punch card, \$72 for six-punch card or \$15 for single class

Go Deeper Thursdays

**Thursdays; March 2, March 16,
April 6 & April 20; 4–5 p.m.**

Facilitators: Ellen Bruckner & Laura A. Weber, Ph.D.

Go Deeper Thursdays emerged in the context of the global pandemic, or as Prairiewoods calls it, the *PanDeepening*. Our reflective and lively conversations opened us to spiritual deepening, providing a sacred space to share our awareness, a place where we explored venues for collective presencing and delving into the wider "We." Through simple breathing meditations, poetry, practicing mindfulness, storytelling, re-linguaging, listening to creation's song and many small group experiences, we have been learning to read the collective and listen deeply to our emergent, interconnected wisdom. In the process, we are becoming more expansive, more inclusive, recognizing our place in the wider "We." A one-time registration for March and April is required.

Fee: \$10 per month

Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton

**Thursdays; March 2, March 16,
April 6 & April 20; 7–8:30 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 Thursdays 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. Book purchase is required after your first session. Please register for your first session to get the Zoom link.

Fee: Free-will offering

Going Inward with Sounds & Vibrations

**Mondays; March 6, March 20, April
3 & April 17; 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, we connect with our inner selves through the song of bowls. We are invited to sit or lie down to listen and just be. We 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! Registration is required.

Fee: \$10 per session



Prayer Experience 2.0

**Tuesdays, March 7–April 25,
11:30 a.m.–12 p.m.**

Facilitator: Rev. Jean Sullivan

Join with others as we pause in the midst of our week for just a half hour of prayer or meditation. During March and April, we will explore the ways our images of the divine impact our prayers, focusing on feminine images for God in March and our relationship to Creation in April. All are welcome to stop in via Zoom. You are welcome to enjoy this as a series or as individual sessions.

Fee: Free-will offering

Resting in Awareness: The Art & Practice of Mindfulness Meditation

**Mondays; March 20, March 27,
April 10, April 17, April 24 &
May 1; 5:30–7 p.m. (via Zoom); &
Sunday, April 2, 9 a.m.–3:30 p.m.
(in person)**

Facilitator: Chris Klug
*Offered in Partnership with
Cedar Memorial*

"Meditation is the cultivation of that gesture of welcoming unflinchingly whatever arises—of welcoming it wholeheartedly into awareness."

—Jon Kabat-Zinn

Are you interested in developing a mindfulness meditation practice, or in renewing the practice you began months or years ago, or in deepening the practice you have now? Join facilitator Chris Klug as we learn and practice mindfulness meditation as described by Jon Kabat-Zinn in his book *Mindfulness for Beginners*. Some of the topics to be explored include what mindfulness meditation is and isn't; the central role of intention and attitude in meditation practice; posture: standing, sitting, lying down or walking; silence; working with physical and emotional pain; breathing and the body; and thinking and thoughts. The class will meet online weekly for 90 minutes for practice, instructions and sharing (optional), with a daylong in-person retreat day.

Fee: \$130 (A reduced fee is available for those of limited means.)

Men Exploring Faith

**Thursdays; March 9, March 23,
April 13 & April 27; 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 is a hybrid group that meets both in person and via Zoom on the second and fourth Thursdays monthly.

Fee: Free-will offering

Day of Self Renewal Mondays, March 13 & April 10, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Jean Sullivan

Find rest and relaxation for mind, body and spirit! This tranquil day features your choice of two services, group guided meditation, singing bowl 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, yoga or chair yoga.) Registration, a nonrefundable/nontransferable deposit of \$50 and your top three services choices are required eight days in advance. (Masks and vaccination may be required by the holistic provider.)

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, March 13 & April 10, 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 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 are invited to just receive and breathe. Registration is required by noon.
Fee: \$8 per session

Nature & Forest Therapy Experiences

Afternoon Nature & Forest Therapy Experiences: Mondays, March 13 & April 10, 2:30–3:45 p.m.

Celebrate the Return of Spring with Forest Bathing: Thursday, March 16, 6–8 p.m.

Celebrate Earth with Nature & Forest Therapy: Friday, April 21, 6–8 p.m.

Facilitator: Emelia Sautter

Join certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide Emelia Sautter and the land for a walk with the



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

According to the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy, “Forest Therapy is a practice that supports health and wellness through guided immersion in forests and other environments to promote the well-being of both people and the land.” Time with our nature kin reduces stress and depression, improves cognitive functioning, boosts our immune system, regulates blood pressure, improves relationships, increases feelings of gratitude and much more. Registration is required by the previous day. Please bring a water bottle and dress for being outdoors.

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

Prairiewoods Knitters & Stitchers

Tuesdays, March 14 & April 11, 9:30–11:30 a.m.; & Wednesdays, March 22 & April 26, 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 morning and fourth Wednesday evening of each month.
Fee: Free

Evening Centering Prayer

Tuesdays; March 14, March 28, April 11 & April 25; 5:30–7 p.m.

Facilitator: Judith Smith

Come join a supportive group of people for Evening Centering Prayer. This contemplative prayer form assists people in deepening relationships with God or Source of All Being. Each evening invites participants to an opening check-in and two twenty-minute silent, centering sessions. Together we relax and attune our body, mind and spirit to the Indwelling Presence. At the end of each gathering, we have an opportunity to share insights regarding our experience and practice. Maybe you’ve practiced centering prayer for years or maybe you are just discovering this form of meditation focused on silent stillness. These centering prayer gatherings serve

all! Centering Prayer is offered on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month, and sessions stand alone.

Fee: Free-will offering

Being with Plants: Expanding Fields of Compassion Tuesday, March 21, 4–6 p.m.

Facilitator: August Stolba

Keynote Speaker: Paul Moss

Panelists: Kerry Batteau, Shannon Ramsay, Emelia Sautter & Mari Margil

For many of us, it is hard to turn compassion into action simply because we don’t know where to start. Plants are more than something to harvest food or fibers from. We value their beauty and want to preserve plant communities, but how do we take that level of respect and turn it into impactful action? Join us as we explore this question with leaders who work to remind us of the sacredness of plants, build awareness about plants, be present with plants and protect plants. This is a two-hour virtual program via Zoom with a keynote address by Paul Moss, founder of The Plant Initiative. It will feature a panel discussion with Blackfoot Inipi Water Purer Kerry Batteau, Trees Forever Founder Shannon Ramsay, Nature and Forest Therapy Guide Emelia Sautter, and Center for Democratic and Environmental Rights Executive Director Mari Margil.
Fee: \$20

Soul Care: Creative Arts Grief Support Group

Wednesdays, March 15 & April 19, 5:30–7 p.m.

Facilitator: Jamie Siela, LISW

Offered in Partnership with UnityPoint Hospice

In grief, our very foundation can be rocked. Take time to connect with others in grief and engage the creative spark. 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. On March 15, we will paint wooden eggs and add decorative metallic foil. This is a time to be creative with others who are also experiencing grief and loss. On April 19, we will create a safe place tied pillow. A physical object that reminds us of our loved one can be very important to have during the grief process. These pillows can be that object to remember and squeeze when missing our special person. Registration is required nine days in advance. This group is

a hybrid, offered both online and in person.
Fee: Free includes all art supplies

Candle Making Class

Saturday, April 1, 2-3 p.m.

Facilitator: Sandy Rosenberger

Did you know that soy wax candles are better for the environment and can be made in less than 30 minutes with items that you have in your kitchen? Join us for this fun class where we'll make a soy wax candle to take home! We'll be able to pick from different scents and colors for our candle. Facilitator Sandy Rosenberger will also teach us about candle dyes, fragrances, wicks and the different types of waxes available. Kids age 10 or older are welcome but must be accompanied by an adult. Stick around for Rock Mandala Painting for the Whole Family



and make it a full afternoon of creativity! (The finished candle and painted rocks also make great early Mother's Day gifts!)
Fee: \$15 per person includes all supplies (or stay for Rock Mandala Painting for a discounted rate of \$25 for both)

Rock Mandala Painting for the Whole Family

Saturday, April 1, 3:15-5:15 p.m.

Facilitator: Andi Lewis

Spend a few hours creating art with your favorite people! Learn the art of rock painting with mandalas, which are sacred works of art in the form of a circle. Using smooth stones, paints and fine dotting tools, we will make beautiful, detailed mandalas. This is a fun, relaxing process that can be done by anyone, regardless of age. We will have time to paint several rocks and will be encouraged



to take one rock home and leave one as a secret gift for a stranger to find. No experience or artistic skill is necessary, but kids 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult. (It is ideal for ages 10 and older.) This program usually fills up early, so register today!
Fee: \$13 per person includes all supplies (or come early for Candle Making Class for a discounted rate of \$25 for both)

Spirituality in the 21st Century: Weaving a New Story of Meaning

Friday, April 28, 7-9 p.m., & Saturday, April 29, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Facilitators: Jeremy Lent & Sara Thomsen
 See p. 6 for details.

Save the date! Garden Party 2023

Saturday, June 10, 5-8 p.m.

Watch www.Prairiewoods.org for details about our reimagined annual fundraiser. It will be a night you won't want to miss!

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



Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Prairiewoods' sponsoring organization, recently encouraged us to participate in a Simple Living Challenge. All sisters, affiliates, prayer partners and partners in mission (like those of us at Prairiewoods) were invited to join a four-week challenge hosted by the FSPA EcoPact team. This challenge encouraged us to complete small tasks each week in order to promote the adoption of a simplified lifestyle. The weekly themes included decluttering/ donating, second-hand purchasing/homemade alternatives, simplified eating and eliminating junk mail/reducing waste.



Help us reduce
our paper waste
by switching
to our email
newsletter!

To that end, we've been thinking a lot about reducing our waste and our paper consumption. We'd love it if you'd join us! *Are you willing to read your bimonthly newsletter online rather than in paper form?* If you are, please scan the QR code above with your phone's camera and give us your name, address and email address. We'll do the rest! (You can also call us at 319-395-6700 or email ecospirit@prairiewoods.org to let us know you're willing to transition from our print to our email list.) *Thank you in advance for helping us reduce our paper waste and costs!*

May/June 2023

Prairiewoods

A FRANCISCAN ECOSPIRITUALITY RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER

The Peace of Wild Things by Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

The Power of Resting Well

As many across the world find themselves vacillating between despair and concern about the state of world's impact on this and future generations, Wendell Berry reminds us, at a cellular level deeper than words, that making a living and making a life seemingly point in opposite directions. A remedy for such global dis-ease may just be an intentional choice to "lie down," "come into peace," "into the presence"... to R-E-S-T.

Rest. If you feel like you're constantly on the go, you're not alone. The BBC reported in a 2019 survey of more than 18,000 people from 134 countries that 68% of people feel they don't get enough rest. And that's before the stress of Covid! Rest. Let's take a close look. It's not sleep exactly, according to the Oxford dictionary, but its denotation is to "cease work or movement in order to relax, refresh oneself, or recover strength." In music, "rest is an interval of silence of a specified duration." While the literal definition suggests inaction for the purpose of enhancing one's existence, the use of the term in the musical sense suggests intentionality that John O'Donohue, the late great philosopher-poet and author of *Anam Cara*, captured when he wrote: "A world lives within you. No one else can bring you news of this inner world."

Essential. Rest is necessary. When we embrace the practice of resting, it enhances our lives and as a result, the lives of others. The Fetzer Institute describes retreat in this way: "It is not so much a retreat from the demands of the world as an engagement with its deepest possibilities" (www.fetzer.org/work/retreat-facilities). Restful spaces invite reflection; foster

(continued on page 3)



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Last month while in a workshop, I was struck anew by the many ways that Prairiewoods provides opportunities to build well-being and resilience. The workshop introduced me to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) Eight Dimensions of Wellness. I was both delighted and surprised to discover that the web of offerings at Prairiewoods easily supports seven of the eight dimensions. Here are several intersections between SAMSHA's recommendations and our offerings:

8 Dimensions of Wellness

Emotional: attend to self-care and stress management

Spiritual: explore your values, principles and beliefs and take time to meditate and reflect

Intellectual: engage in lifelong learning and meaningful conversation

Physical: move your body and rest

Environmental: practice green living, get a change of scenery

Occupational: foster work relationships and work/life balance

Social: participate in community, meet new people and spend time with people socially

(www.store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma16-4958.pdf)

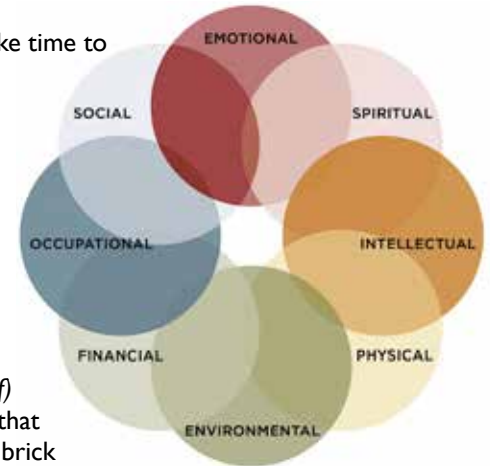
Research has begun to catch up with the deep knowing that has been present here at Prairiewoods since before the first brick was laid. Even the images of SAMSHA's interlocking circles echo the long-held Franciscan belief in the connectedness of all things. These intersections remind me again of the integral nature of a healthy life. Individuals, organizations, communities—are webs within webs of life. When any one strand of this web is weakened, the whole becomes more vulnerable.

Jeremy Lent—the featured speaker at Prairiewoods' signature event, *Spirituality in the 21st Century*—will highlight the intersection of spiritual, intellectual and ultimately environmental wellbeing. We will come together to reflect upon new ideas and grow our understanding as well as engage with new friends in meaningful conversation. We will have the opportunity to move our bodies and explore our relationship with Earth.

Prairiewoods itself attends to this web of well-being: in the cycles of rest and growth in the gardens, in the ways we engage in ongoing learning and strive to create a positive work environment for all, even in the way we build our budget and cultivate our resources. Hopefully our commitment to integral ecology speaks for itself in our efforts to tread lightly upon the Earth and regenerate prairie and woods. And our goal in 2023 is to stretch out our web of relationships and connections across the communities we serve and hopefully, like a Mother Tree, nourish others as well as ourselves.

I hope you find many ways to nourish your well-being this spring in the offerings you find in this newsletter. I wish you rest, renewal and wonder in the coming days!

Sincerely,
Leslie A. Wright



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:

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

www.Prairiewoods.org
Ecospirit@Prairiewoods.org



(continued from page 1)

community and well-being; and encourage a deeper sense of connection with the Source of All Being, ourselves, our many communities and our planet. In our rest, we remember loved ones, we can connect with our spiritual and creative selves and the divine, we can discover or uncover a lost purpose, and we can celebrate or contemplate life. Our lives are a web of connections.

“It’s about collectively refusing to run ourselves into the ground,” says Tricia Hersey, artist, poet, theologian, community organizer and author of New York Times best-seller *Rest Is Resistance*. Our worth doesn’t depend on how much we produce. “Rest, in its simplest form, becomes an act of resistance and a reclaiming of power because it asserts our most basic humanity. We are enough.” Influenced by this conviction, some people have decided to quit their jobs, take a sabbatical or slow down the growth of their business in service to their personal mental and physical well-being.

Scientifically, several studies suggest that consistent spiritual practices and retreats benefit intellectual, emotional, physical and psychological wellbeing. They can assist in creating new brain circuitry and literally affect levels of serotonin and dopamine, two important chemical messengers in our body that impact emotional and cognitive processes (Andrew Newberg, “How an intense spiritual retreat might change your brain”).

We might ask then, what are the best approaches to impel such transformative experiences. 18,000 people completed the world’s biggest survey on rest—“The Rest Test.” Devised by Hubhub, a group of researchers at Wellcome, the test asked people to choose which three activities they found most restful. Among the ten most restful activities were reading; being out in nature, being alone, listening to music, doing nothing in particular, walking, taking a shower or bath, daydreaming, watching TV (though this came way behind reading), and meditating or practicing mindfulness.

Serenity is rest-fulness. David Whyte in *Consolations: The Solace, Nourishment and Underlying Meaning of Everyday Words* writes, “Rested, we are ready for the world but not held hostage by it ... In rest we establish the goals that make us more generous, more courageous, more of an invitation, someone we want to remember, and someone others would want to remember too.” Rested, we care again for the things, people, events at the heart of the matter.

To stop in order to start. That concept is seeded deeply in the mission of Prairiewoods. In this age of speed and distraction, nothing may be more important than slowing down and paying attention. In this global society of constant movement, nothing may be more urgent than “resting in the grace of the world.” Prairiewoods offers a variety of opportunities to engage in rest—as a group or individually. We welcome all. As an ecospirituality center, we trust you will experience “The Peace of Wild Things” that Berry so beautifully captures.

Need rest? Check out Prairiewoods’ Top 10:

- Reserve retreat space for any length of time
- Visit the Meditation Room
- Get a massage, healing touch or reflexology
- Visit with a spiritual director/companion
- Hike the woods or prairie
- Enjoy a nutritious, flavorful meal prepared for you
- Register for a Day of Self Renewal
- Paint rock mandalas with your kids
- Curl up with a great read from the Media Center
- Claim a plot in the community garden and grow ...

Treat yourself to some rest. Visit Prairiewoods. “Behind your image, below your words, above your thoughts,” writes spiritual author John O’Donohue, “the silence of another world waits.”

—by Ann Jackson, PBVM



Partnering with Iowa BIG

Students from Iowa BIG and Prairiewoods have been partnering for the last couple of years on some amazing projects. Iowa BIG is a public-school program in the metro area that promotes learning through working on project teams to develop initiatives the students care about. Students get to experience learning in real-life, hands-on situations while working toward graduation.

Iowa BIG social studies instructor Dennis Becker says: “Bringing students out to Prairiewoods is like taking a break from the hustle and bustle of daily life. The serene surroundings, supportive staff, and emphasis on sustainability and ecology make them valuable community partners for our students to collaborate with. At Iowa BIG, we are fortunate to have the opportunity to work with organizations such as Prairiewoods to showcase the wonderful people and places in our community. By partnering with Prairiewoods, our students are able to learn about and experience the importance of environmental stewardship, mindfulness, and personal growth. We are grateful to have Prairiewoods as a partner in our mission to provide our students with diverse and meaningful learning experiences.”

This spring semester we're thrilled to be hosting seven different Iowa BIG teams! They're working on the following projects for us:

Natural Playscape: This team is helping us build a natural playscape at Prairiewoods that will be accessible to the public and will feature play structures and areas that are made from materials found in nature.

Screened-In Porch Restoration: One of our teams will be fixing our screened-in porch that has been in disrepair for quite some time. This space, which is located behind our Guest House, will be a beautiful place for our guests to sit and enjoy our woods while being protected from the elements.

Woodshed Construction: This team will be building a simple woodshed near our shop to properly store all of our extra lumber and construction materials.

Root Cellar Restoration: This project will involve helping us repair and rebuild our root cellar so that we can use it to store produce that we've grown in our gardens.

Four Winds Food Forest Planting: This is phase two of our ongoing project to convert our orchard into a food forest. This group will help us continue with our ongoing plantings.

History of Prairiewoods Documentary: The two Iowa BIG students on this team will be interviewing two of our founding sisters, researching and filming the history of Prairiewoods.

Signs in the Woods & Prairie: This group of three students is touring our grounds to see where we could use better informational signage. Then they will write and design several signs to be added to popular places in the woods and prairie.

We are also so grateful to New Leader Manufacturing located in Cedar Rapids for their donation of \$4,000 that will be used to purchase the materials needed for the Iowa BIG projects!



Natural Playscapes Team



Woodshed Construction Team



Signs in the Woods & Prairie Team



New Leader Manufacturing donation

Out in the Community

Prairiewoods has been out in the community at a number of events in recent months. We've made new friends at Kiwanis Clubs and Rotary Groups, and at a variety of fair booths, including at Mount Mercy University, Coe College, Xavier High School and Iowa Women Lead Change. In coming months, we're looking forward to meeting new people at EcoFest, CR Pride Festival and Festival Latino, among others.

We were honored to be asked to talk about Prairiewoods at the Iowa Retired School Personnel Association meeting and luncheon in March. Staff members Ann Jackson, PBVM, and Sandy Rosenberger talked to the group about the history of Prairiewoods, as well as our programming and volunteer opportunities. One of our own volunteers, Jane Lonergan-Highley, is a member of the group, and she spoke about her experiences of volunteering at Prairiewoods. If you have a group you think would benefit from hearing about Prairiewoods, please reach out to Andi Lewis at alewis@prairiewoods.org. We'd love to come meet your group!



staff member Sandy Rosenberger



volunteer Jane Lonergan-Highley



staff member Ann Jackson, PBVM

Book Review

Golden: The Power of Silence in a World of Noise by Justin Zorn & Leigh Marz

The authors speak of noise as "unwanted distraction." In our rushing, noisy world of cell phones we carry everywhere, Facebook checking, emails and news from many sources, it's important to understand that information "consumes the attention of it's recipients. Hence, a wealth of information creates a poverty of attention."

With all the noisy negativity and division all around us, there is a comforting calm that comes with Facebook surfing, etc. As I read the book I noticed what I was giving my attention and time to as the authors reminded me "our biggest goal of all: *to consciously choose how we spend our time on this planet.*"

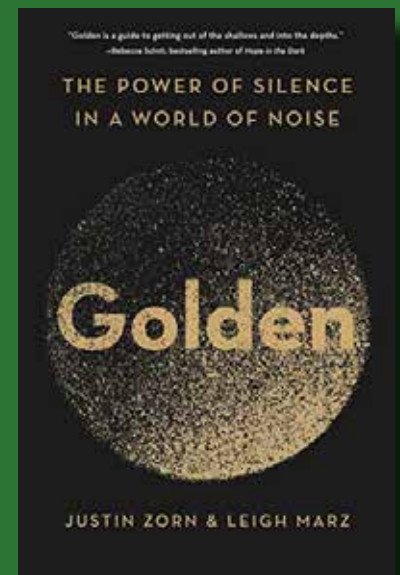
It's helping me get back on my path. We need to be strong to move forward.

My goal? To be strong and live on purpose in my walk with God. To take the time every morning to ground and center (not check Facebook) so I can be aware of but not distracted by all the negativity. I want to respond to life as gift filled with gratitude and compassion—to learn from nature and be moving forward with the flow of the river versus getting caught in meaningless snags along the way.

This book has been an amazing light and tool.

—review by Marie Stratford

You will find many great reads in our Gift Shop. Come in to find new inspiration!





PRAIRIEWOODS garden party

GROWING OUR ROOTS

Saturday, June 10, 4:30–8 p.m., at Prairiewoods

The Garden Party returns to the beautiful grounds at Prairiewoods! Join us on Saturday, June 10, for a night of music, food and nature. Help our garden grow! All of the proceeds from this event will go toward supporting and expanding our beautiful outdoor spaces as well as our gardens that produce thousands of pounds of fresh, organic produce each year. Once harvested, it's donated to a local food pantry that serves those facing food insecurity in our community.



We have lots of fun things planned for our event including our popular Dough for Dough raffle. Buy a wonderful fresh baked loaf of bread for \$30 and have your name entered for a \$300 cash prize! Buy early because the loaves sell out fast.

Find Unexpected Treasures!

We'll also have a silent auction with some fantastic items that you'll be sure to want to bid on.

Listen to Great Music!

During the evening you'll also be serenaded with beautiful music by Jonny Lipford, a world-



renowned musician of extraordinary talent with more than 20 years of experience with the Native American flute and

various world flutes. He has amassed dozens of accolades for his work, having written more than 200 original songs, released 18 commercial albums, and toured nationally, appearing for audiences of up to 14,000 people.



Walk the Camino de Prairiewoods

Once you arrive, we encourage you to take in our "Camino de Prairiewoods," a self-guided exploration of our beautiful grounds. If you've always wanted to explore everything that Prairiewoods has to offer, this is your chance! From 4:30–5:30,



you can meander along our trail system and find all of the hidden treasures on our grounds, including a labyrinth and our Grandmother Oak tree. If walking isn't

your thing, we'll also have rides on our ATV every 15 minutes to take you around in comfort. If you get out to all seven of the stops, we'll put your name in for a fantastic drawing!

To register for our Garden Party or to donate, go to www.Prairiewoods.org/Garden-Party. The cost is \$60 per ticket and will include wine, beer or non-alcoholic beverages, as well as a delicious tapas-style buffet at 6 p.m. We hope you'll join us!

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.

Nourish Your Soul: A Retreat for Caregivers & Those Working in Healthcare

Friday, May 19, 7 p.m.–Saturday, May 20, 4 p.m.

Facilitator: Leslie Schwarting

While healthcare systems, structures and technologies are evolving frantically, the people delivering care in hospitals, clinics, nursing homes and other settings remain the bedrock of healthcare. Many of these caregivers are depleted and running on empty. There is no more to give. During this overnight retreat, Leslie Schwarting will help us to honor the journey of caregiving and explore spiritual and psychological practices that help caregivers to find restoration. Three core domains can restore and support individuals when integrated. Participants will explore Coping and Control, Sense of Purpose and Human Connection. Join other caregivers for a retreat to nourish your soul.

Fee: \$200 includes sessions, Friday night lodging, and Saturday breakfast and lunch

Commuter fee: \$150 includes sessions and Saturday lunch



The Power of Silence: Summer Silent Directed Retreats

Sunday, June 18, 4 p.m.–Saturday, June 24, 1 p.m., & Monday, July 31, 4 p.m.–Sunday, Aug. 6, 1 p.m.

Facilitators: Lucille Winnike, FSPA; Rev. Rose Blank; Kim Seward (June only); Deb Hansen; & Ann Jackson, PBVM

Perhaps you've participated for years in Prairiewoods' Silent Directed Retreats. Or maybe you have seen these advertised and considered scheduling one for yourself, but aren't sure what a Silent Directed Retreat is. If you've made a silent, directed retreat, we welcome you back. If you've never made a retreat like this, we invite you to consider this question: *What's the deepest silence you've ever known?* Silent Directed Retreats offer opportunities to enter into deep silence in order to sense what it feels like to awaken a quiet and palpable connection and deepen your relationship with the Source of All being.



Each day you will receive ongoing direction as you and a professionally-trained spiritual director listen intentionally to the movement of the Source of All Being in your heart. Listening in such profound silence assists you to get in touch with feelings, thoughts and actions as you reflect, meditate, pray and rest. The practice of this daily meeting assists in developing the capacity to discern, notice, sense the movement of the Source of All Being in light of your motivations, attachments, responses to that movement within the whole of your life. To share with a professional your divine experiences brings clarity, deepens your commitment and accountability to the direction of your life, surprises and offers insight into that direction.

Fee: \$495 includes lodging, meals and spiritual direction (*Partial scholarships are available.*)

Y.O.L.O. (Your Other Lunch Option!)

Wednesdays, May 3 & June 14,

11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

Facilitators: Daniel Sutherland & Brydon Hill

Tired of the same old lunch places? Let's renew our bodies and refresh our spirits in a beautiful setting! Join us for Y.O.L.O. (*Your Other Lunch Option!*)—a lunch choice celebrating wholesome, fresh



food made from scratch by chefs Dan Sutherland and Brydon Hill in Prairiewoods' no-waste kitchen. We dine in a community setting (at small-group or communal tables) with friends we bring with us or new friends we meet over a delicious themed lunch. On May 3, celebrate an early Cinco de Mayo with delicious Mexican food. On June 14, indulge in the best of spring as we celebrate this beloved season. Spring will be in the air, and we'll be surrounded by good friends and delicious food! Arrive at 11:30, and the buffet line opens at noon. Registration is required at least two days in advance, and each lunch is limited to 35 people.

Fee: \$15

Day of Self Renewal

Thursdays, May 4 & June 1; & Mondays, May 8 & June 12; 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

This popular program is now offered twice a month!

Facilitator: Rev. Jean Sullivan

Find rest and relaxation for mind, body and spirit! This tranquil day features your choice of two services, group guided meditation, Singing Bowl Prayer or Healing Sound Bath & Yogic Sleep, a private guest room, a fresh lunch, and access to the labyrinth and all that Prairiewoods has to offer. (Depending on the date, you may choose from massage, head and shoulder massage, reflexology, healing touch, spiritual direction, qigong, Nature & Forest Therapy, yoga or chair yoga. Visit www.Prairiewoods.org for details) Registration, a nonrefundable/nontransferable deposit of \$50 and your top three service choices are required eight days in advance. (Masks and vaccination may be required by the holistic provider.)

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

Into the Oneness: Qigong for Energy, Equanimity & Peace
Thursdays, May 4–June 29,
12:45–1:35 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

Based on age-old Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), this gentle and accessible class involves meditative, healing energy and compassion-based standing movement, breath work, visualization, acupressure and seated practice. We begin by opening, rebalancing and cultivating Qi (universal life force energy-Spirit) throughout the body's energy pathways, centers and organs to assist with mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being. Wisdom from the Tao Te Ching, TCM 5 Element Theory and beyond is sprinkled in to assist your practice of living life with greater ease, peace and harmony with the rest of nature in this One Reality of which we all are part. Class ends with seated meditation, which includes sending healing compassionate intention to others and the planet. Also vibrational sound medicine played near your heart to re-tune and raise your vibration.

Fee: \$12 per session

Healing Sound Bath & Yogic Sleep

Thursdays, May 4 & June 1,
1:45–2:35 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

Rebalance mind, body and spirit through the soothing, penetrating power of healing sound and vibration via singing bowls. Then drop into deepest levels of relaxation and peace through authentic, age-old Yogic Sleep (Yoga Nidra)—a reclined, meditative experience used by stress reduction clinics, integrative health care, as well as mystics who savor resting in blissful Oneness with The Sacred. We will close with prayerful sound healing, including a lower-octave bowl played on or near (your choice) the shrine of your heart.

Fee: \$8 per session



Prairiewoods Nature Arrangements: Community Supported Restoration
a year-long offering beginning May 4

Each month the Prairiewoods outdoors team will harvest and handcraft an ephemeral arrangement of natural goods that represents the beauty of the season, similar to a flower CSA. Whether you're someone who wants to develop a deeper connection with nature from the standpoint of understanding ecology, or you just want to experience the beauty of the season, this program is a great way to do both and help Prairiewoods in its mission of stewarding our beautiful 70 acres of woodland, prairie and wetland. Arrangements will be available for pickup on the first Thursday of each month during business hours.

Fee: \$120 for 12 monthly bouquets, May 2023–April 2024



World Labyrinth Day
Saturday, May 6, 12:30–2 p.m.

Facilitators: Marion Patterson & Leslie Wright (Veriditas facilitators)

Come participate in World Labyrinth Day at Prairiewoods. We will “Walk as One at 1,” joining with other communities across the globe to create a rolling wave of peaceful energy passing from one time zone to the next. If you are new to walking a labyrinth, join us at 12:30 for a brief introduction to labyrinth walking. World Labyrinth Day is an annual international event founded by The Labyrinth Society in 2009. We will walk the outdoor labyrinth, weather permitting.

Fee: Free-will offering



Nature & Forest Therapy Experiences

Afternoon Nature & Forest Therapy Experiences: Mondays, May 8 & June 12, 2:30–3:45 p.m.

Honor the Divine Mother with Forest Bathing: Wednesday, May 10, 6–8 p.m.

The Power of Presence with Forest Bathing: Friday, June 16, 3–5 p.m.

Facilitator: Emelia Sautter

Join certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide Emelia Sautter and the land for a walk with the natural world. Experience Forest Therapy, a sensory-focused practice that invites us to slow down and be present with self and the natural world around us. According to the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy, “Forest Therapy is a practice that supports health and wellness through guided immersion in forests and other environments to promote the well-being of both people and the land.” Time with our nature kin reduces stress and depression, improves cognitive functioning, boosts our immune system, regulates blood pressure, improves relationships, increases feelings of gratitude and much more. Registration is required by the previous day.

Fee: \$15 for May 8 & June 12 sessions, \$20 for longer May 10 & June 16 sessions

Threshold Conversations
Tuesdays, May 16 & June 13,
7–8:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Karen Hering

Whether you're living through significant personal transitions or navigating a world reshaping itself faster than ever, you are invited to join a yearlong online conversation about how to make change more trustworthy. Each session focuses on one of the ten threshold skills featured in Karen Hering's book, *Trusting Change*. Karen will present selected content from her book and offer a focusing question and silent time for writing or reflection. Then we'll move into small groups to share how we each experience and engage the threshold skill in the context of change. The May topic is Navigating the Unknown, and June is Preparing for the Journey. You are invited to join all the monthly offerings or attend selectively. Your voice will bring wisdom for others, while theirs may offer just the perspective you need on your threshold.

Fee: \$15 per session

Holistic Healing for Educators & Classrooms, Credit 1
Monday, June 26, 1 p.m.–Wednesday, June 28, 12 p.m.

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

Mindfulness practices restore holistic healing and build resiliency, joy, optimism and curiosity. All lead to increased health and well-being. Highly participative and reflective, this in-person retreat offers educators opportunity to build personal plans for mindfulness and self-compassion. This course provides educators with research-based theory, collaborative design and opportunities to practice. The registration fee includes a copy of the text *Practicing Presence*. This is a three-day in-person workshop.

Holistic Healing for Educators & Classrooms, Credit 2
Wednesday, June 28, 1 p.m.–Friday, June 30, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.

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

This second course in Holistic Healing for Educators & Classrooms offers 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. This is a three-day, in-person workshop.

Fee per Credit: \$100 for lodgers, or \$50 for commuters, paid to Prairiewoods, plus \$35 paid to Grant Wood Area Education Agency (*Thanks to a generous donation by the Sisters of the Presentation, Dubuque, all additional costs will be covered.*)

Rock Mandala Painting for the Whole Family

Saturday, June 24, 2–4 p.m.

Facilitator: Andi Lewis

Spend a few hours creating art with your favorite people! Learn the art of rock painting with mandalas, which are



sacred works of art in the form of a circle. Using smooth stones, paints and fine dotting tools, we will make beautiful, detailed mandalas. This is a fun, relaxing process that can be done by anyone, regardless of age. We will have time to paint several rocks and will be encouraged to take one rock home and leave one as a secret gift for a stranger to find. No experience or artistic skill is necessary, but kids 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult. (It is ideal for ages 10 and older.) This program usually fills up early, so register today!

Fee: \$13 per person includes all supplies

Ongoing Programs

Metta Yoga

Mondays & Thursdays; May 1–June 29; 9:30–10:30 a.m., 10:45–11:45 a.m. (chair yoga) & 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. Registration is required for each session.

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

Going Inward with Sounds & Vibrations

Mondays; May 1, May 15, June 5 & June 19; 6:30–7:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Kathy Broghammer

Experience sound, stillness, playfulness and relaxation through the enigmatic vibrations of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls. During this in-person hour, we connect with our inner selves through the song of bowls. We are invited to sit or lie down to listen and just be. We 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! Registration is required.

Fee: \$10 per session

Pause, Connect & Reflect

Tuesdays, May 2–June 27, 11:30 a.m.–12 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Jean Sullivan

Join with others as we pause in the midst of our week for a half hour of connection and reflection. Inspired by seasonal changes, concerns that surface in our daily lives and in our world-wide community of connection, each session will be unique, drawing on poetry, music, prayer, imagery and meditation. All are welcome to stop in via Zoom.

Fee: Free-will offering

Go Deeper Thursdays

Thursdays; May 4, May 18, June 1 & June 15; 4–5 p.m.

Convener: Ellen Bruckner

Go Deeper Thursday is an ongoing personal exploration and deepening in community. This group began during the pandemic as an opportunity to be in community while physically isolated. Over the years, we have seen many faces and heard many voices—all of us willing to open ourselves in order to “go deeper” in our own consciousness and spirituality. Topics emerge from the conversations and maintain a general focus on our spiritual lives. Registration is required to get the Zoom link.

Fee: Free-will offering

Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton

Thursdays; May 4, May 18, June 1 & June 15; 7–8:30 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 Thursdays 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. Book purchase is required after your first session.

Fee: Free-will offering

Singing Bowl Prayer **Mondays, May 8 & June 12,** **12:45–1:30 p.m.**

Facilitator: Kathy Broghammer

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

Fee: \$8 per session

Prairiewoods Knitters & Stitchers **Tuesdays, May 9 & June 13,** **9:30–11:30 a.m.; & Wednesdays,** **May 24 & June 28, 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 morning and fourth Wednesday evening of each month.

Fee: Free

Evening Centering Prayer **Tuesdays; May 9, May 23, June 13 &** **June 27; 5:30–7 p.m.**

Facilitator: Judith Smith

Join a supportive group of people for Evening Centering Prayer. This contemplative prayer form assists people in deepening relationships with God or Source of All Being. Each evening invites participants to an opening check-in and two twenty-minute silent, centering sessions. Together we relax and attune our body, mind and spirit to the Indwelling Presence. At the end of each gathering, we have an opportunity to share insights regarding our experience and practice. Maybe you've practiced centering prayer for years or maybe you are just discovering this form of meditation focused on silent stillness. These centering prayer gatherings serve all! Centering Prayer is offered on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month, and sessions stand alone.

Fee: Free-will offering

Men Exploring Faith **Thursdays; May 11, May 25, June 8 &** **June 22; 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 is a hybrid group that meets both in person and via Zoom on the second and fourth Thursdays monthly.

Fee: Free-will offering

Soul Care: Creative Arts Grief **Support Group** **Wednesdays, May 17 & June 21,** **5:30–7 p.m.**

Facilitator: Jamie Siela, LISW

Offered in Partnership with
UnityPoint Hospice

In grief, our very foundation can be rocked. Take time to connect with others in grief and engage the creative spark. 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. On May 17, we will use pressed flowers to make bookmarks. Flowers can bring sweet memories as well as an opportunity to remember our loved ones. On June 21, we'll make ugly art! We've got the supplies and are looking for atrocious creations. Let's explore art as a tool and not a means to a specific outcome. Registration is required nine days in advance. This group is a hybrid, offered both online and in person.

Fee: Free includes all art supplies



We're thinking a lot about reducing our waste and our paper consumption. We'd love it if you'd join us! *Are you willing to read your bimonthly newsletter online rather than in paper form?* If you are, please scan the QR code with your phone's camera and give us your name, address and email address. We'll do the rest! (You can also call us at 319-395-6700 or email ecospirit@prairiewoods.org to let us know you're willing to transition from our print to our email list.) *Thank you in advance for helping us reduce our paper waste and costs!*

Donors (January & February 2023)

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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Mother's Day is May 14 & Father's Day is June 18

If you're looking for a unique gift, check out the Prairiewoods Gift Shop. We carry a vast collection of books on ecology and spirituality, as well as a wide variety of gifts, including wind chimes, journals and singing bowls. Gift certificates also make great gifts and can be purchased for any dollar amount or for a specific service. Shop any time the Center is open!



Thank you!



120 E Boyson Rd
Hiawatha IA 52233

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



Jeremy Lent, described by Guardian journalist George Monbiot as "one of the greatest thinkers of our age," is coming to Cedar Rapids for a 2-day learning session for the community.



WEAVING A NEW STORY OF MEANING
spirituality in the 21st century
APRIL 28-29, 2023

Lent will help us explore compelling questions such as:
Who am I?
How should I live?
Why am I?
Where are we going?

Friday evening will begin with a brief introduction regarding how we construct our worldviews. Saturday will include exploring the implications of a worldview of deep interconnectedness and discussing an integrated framework for well-being and spiritual groundedness. Award-winning musician and composer **Sara Thomsen** will provide soulful music woven throughout the event.

Visit www.Prairiewoods.org for more information or to register.



July/August 2023

Prairiewoods

A FRANCISCAN ECOSPIRITUALITY RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER

SUMMER'S *Spiritual* INVITATIONS

“Each day, and the living of it, has to be a conscious creation in which discipline and order are relieved with some play and pure foolishness.”

—poet May Sarton

Nature comes to its fullness during summer. We plant seeds, start projects and embark on new beginnings in spring. As summer radiates the sun's de-light and energy, we experience the life those planted seeds produce, and we embrace inspired and newly cultivated ways of living. Perhaps the greatest invitation of summer for human nature is to learn to live the balance of which Sarton speaks: the fullness of summer's creative light and life, time for relaxation, creativity, joy, leisure, "play and pure foolishness."

Summer invites us to the pause of "timelessness"—to be fully present in the moment, to stop long enough to awaken, to really see and hear what lies around and within us. Routines defer to disruptions: quiet days in the mountains or beach, lake activity,

sweltering under the stars, and perhaps frenzied vacations from the normal and expected.

Summer reminds us that there is hope in the world. That light shines within and beyond us, spreading to the far reaches of the globe. It inspires growth. We nurture others and all of creation, just as Sun nurtures us. In the Christian tradition, summer follows a heavy liturgical lineup—Advent, Lent, Easter, Pentecost—and sits within "Ordinary Time" when the days are to be "counted ordinary," though not in the sense of commonplace. The liturgical calendar suggests that each day of this time is meaningful and worthy of being counted. Each day matters!

Summer invites us to be grateful for the cultivation of abundant beauty and bounty.

(continued on page 3)

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I gathered with a few others for a community conversation this week. The question we were exploring was about the meaning we attach to winning and losing. It didn't take long to find ourselves talking about how our story-telling and meaning making is connected to our human desire to belong, to find safety and a "good life." We soon became clear that our cultural emphasis on winning was built upon our beliefs about scarcity. "Winning" is essential when there isn't enough to go around—enough love, enough money, enough time, enough significance. Accumulation becomes the measure of our success. As we talked together, we discovered that all of us desired a different

way to experience and measure a good life.

What if, as this month's feature article suggests, we took our cue from summer? What if we learned from nature's exuberant response to the season and the moment? Summer invites us to invest in possibility and patience. We plant our gardens and patiently tend them. Let's do the same for ourselves. Let's plant some seeds for new growth. In order to do that, we need to prepare the ground. What do we need to do to make room for this new growth? What old ideas do we need to examine and remove?

In our community conversation, we realized that an important step in creating new possibilities was to examine the stories we tell ourselves and the meaning we assign to our experiences. Again, we have the opportunity to learn from the season and the land. Each summer, the land responds without regard to what happened the summer or the season before. Each summer is a new beginning. And often, we respond in the same way! If our tomatoes didn't do well, we try a new location, a new variety, more water. We plant our zinnias again, even though we know they will only last a season.

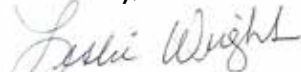
In our gardens, we savor variety and experimentation. We admire different approaches. The land rewards us with great beauty when we attend to different climates and growing conditions. The growth, fruit and flowering of plants, trees and shrubs become our measures of success.

This summer I will challenge myself to stop racing and to be present to each moment. I will nurture growth and healthy fruit in my life. I will put down strong roots for the seasons ahead.

During summer I am much more aware of savoring each moment and each day because I know they are precious and few in the Upper Midwest. I try to drink it all in—whether it is spending time with my hands in the dirt, watching my garden grow or sitting in the soft twilight on my screen porch watching the fireflies blink in the grass under a summer moon. I love to listen to the soft whisper in the trees when there is an evening breeze.

All of us here at Prairiewoods invite you to find some time to savor summer, here on the land or wherever you find yourself.

Sincerely,


Leslie A. Wright



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

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

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

Please address all correspondence to:

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

www.Prairiewoods.org
Ecospirit@Prairiewoods.org



(continued from page 1)

Summer teems with activity—endless hours: basking in lush gardens, taking in vibrant flowers galore, visiting beautiful orchards and farmers markets ... all gifting us with light and energy! Given our ties to the land, summer creates spaces that allow us to spontaneously recognize, engage and express gratitude. As we grow our own food, we cultivate virtues and qualities of mind, body and spirit in order to develop new ways of being. We may drop by a roadside produce stand to buy corn, apples, green beans “picked just this morning” ... We savor and taste summer in sweet buttery corn, sun-ripened tomatoes, scrumptious strawberries, raspberries—summer tastes, scents and vibrant colors bless us! Even corn husks and cucumber peels, overripe plums and watermelon rinds strewn on the compost pile create a work of art!

For some, *summer invites retreat and return*. In the Islamic tradition, July 30 marks the first day of the new year. Muslims celebrate by making an obligatory, sacred, month-long pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca to strengthen personal values and set spiritual goals and plans for the future. Eid al-Adha, the Festival of Sacrifice, is among the biggest Islamic holidays of the year, reminding all of Allah's mercy and blessings. The fest's main ritual emphasizes the importance of sharing the meat of a goat, sheep or camel. One-third of the meat goes to people who have no such food, one-third is distributed to friends and neighbors, and family enjoys the final third. This festival is also joyously celebrated by dressing up, visiting friends and relatives, preparing special dishes and desserts, gifting children with gifts and money, and hosting parties.

Summer invites de-light and spirited play! Both are essential elements of our sanity. With abundant life and long, lit days, summer is a pause in “the grinding schedule” where, as Lily Tomlin says, “Sometimes I feel like a figment of my own imagination.” Summer humbles us if we dare to step back for a moment from our self-importance and driven-ness, to reel in the fullness of life within and around us. We play for the pleasure of another's company, for the joy of community and to share the mutuality of the moment.

Sounds of summer invite us outdoors into the community of nature: buzzing lawn mowers; the birdsong of cardinals, robins, and lake loons; humming locusts and cicadas;

children's voices in splashing pools and parks; crooning crickets; gentle rain; squirrels chattering; adults laughing at barbecues and block parties; waves drawing a slow tug of the fishing line beyond shore ... With kindness, we mow for a neighbor, take time to drive someone to an appointment, host a picnic, celebrate together.

Indigenous people around the world have celebrated for thousands of years the Summer Solstice, the longest day of light in the year when Earth's northern hemisphere tilts closest to Sun. This seasonal shift prompts a revolution from within, a spark that lights one's soul on fire. In ancient cultures and still today, communities gather to share and celebrate languages, traditions and ceremonies to celebrate and thank Mother Earth for her abundant gifts. First Nation, Celtic, Slavic and Germanic people light bonfires in the hope of boosting the sun's strength for the remainder of the crop season and to ensure a healthy harvest.

A psychological link actually exists between happiness levels and the amount of sunlight humans receive. As daylight decreases, people actually tend to suffer greater levels of depression than they do during the summer. Exposure to sunlight releases serotonin, the chemical responsible for feelings of happiness and elation, in our brains. As a result, the more the sun shines, the happier people tend to be.

Summer welcomes an interior spirit of reflection, too. Summer stillness gives way to enlightenment and spiritual growth. The sacred texts of people practicing in the Jewish tradition refer to “kayitz,” the Hebrew word for *summer*. It shares a root with the word for *end*, “ketz,” and the word for *chopping wood*, “katzaz.” In Ancient Israel, this was the time when

the journey of the trees was complete. Trees were chopped and brought to their true purpose: to be used for firewood at the altar in the Temple of Jerusalem. This is what summer is all about: putting the finishing touches on all that we've experienced throughout the rest of the year and stepping closer to completion, peace and fulfillment—all of which share the Hebrew root “shalom” (www.jewishedproject.org/news/jewish-secrets-summer-success).

Summer is indeed a time to integrate and celebrate life. All of which is to say what Poet Hafiz says in his lovely poem *Laughter*.

Laughter

What is laughter? What is laughter?
It is God waking up! O it is God waking up!
It is the sun poking its sweet head out
From behind a cloud
You have been carrying too long,
Veiling your eyes and heart.

It is Light breaking ground for a great Structure
That is your Real body—called Truth ...

O what is laughter, Hafiz?
What is this precious love and laughter
Budding in our hearts?

It is the glorious sound
Of a soul waking up!

—Hafiz

Souls Waking Up!

Cultivating & Nurturing

Cultivating, growing, nurturing, tending fragile shoots of life, virtues and qualities of mind, body and spirit become new ways of being. "We plant so others can eat. This year we are planting things we've never grown before: ginger, leeks, etc. We love the challenge! It's fun to talk and learn with other gardeners as we share our produce."

—cook Brydon Hill & garden volunteer Gina Sison



Living Balance

"Spiritual direction with Sister Lucille has given me the opportunity to intentionally pause, reflect, ponder my life choices and take next steps. Our conversations and time together have supported me realizing the power of unplugging from work and technology to instead get outside with my family to soak up the beauty of creation. I am grateful for the many ways that she has positively impacted my life and reminded me to make space for rest—and fun!"

—Sarah Montgomery (with Zak, Lucia and Xavier)

Making Time for Play

"A goal of ours is for kids to learn how to play in a natural environment and also learn about the nature around them."

—Isaac, Kyle & Cole, students from Iowa

BIG who are creating a natural playscape in our Four Winds Food Forest



Nature & Grace

Many a yogi practice at Prairiewoods with yoga instructor Heather English. The Monday morning yogis say: "We co-create family here as the practice brings us inner peace physically, mentally, spiritually, emotionally. Sessions are filled with FUN, JOY and laughter. It's uplifting! We depend on Heather for our health and well-being. She's excellent! AND we are surrounded by beauty and connected to nature."



Family & Community

Amber walks with her family through the woods regularly. “We come out here to do a bit of foraging so that I can teach my girls how to figure out what’s safe and what’s not, and there’s just a lot of great opportunities. You can find golden oysters and pheasant backs (mushrooms) and then there’s the edible gardens that they love being able to come and snack on.”

—Amber (with Luna)



Community

“Prairiewoods is a place apart from the demands of daily life. For our group of pastoral and diaconal interns and their supervisors, the time and space provided by Prairiewoods gave us what we needed not only to rest in God’s abiding presence but to spark our personal and professional imaginations. We can’t wait to return.”

—Stacey Nalean-Carlson, Wartburg Seminary

Making New Friends

Sheila Streeby and Mary Jane Knight met for the first time at Prairiewoods’ Awakening Awareness of Energy through Meditation. “We now meet to play regularly for the pleasure of company, for the joy of community, and for the support and learning from each other’s journeys.”

—Sheila Streeby & Mary Jane Knight



Retreat & Return

Sister Anna Phiri, OSF, returns and retreats to Prairiewoods annually just to visit her friends in prayer. She says, “For the past 20 years, I have come here for different reasons, one of them being nature. In nature God meets me and I God, and this kind of retreat continues long after the actual retreat is over. Nature is all around us and we are reminded of God wherever we are and in whatever we are doing. Retreat becomes a daily experience.”



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.

The Power of Silence: July Silent Directed Retreat Monday, July 31, 4 p.m.–Sunday, Aug. 6, 1 p.m.

Facilitators: Lucille Winnike, FSPA; Rev. Rose Blank; Deb Hansen; & Ann Jackson, PBVM

Perhaps you've participated for years in Prairiewoods' Silent Directed Retreats. Or maybe you have seen these advertised and considered scheduling one for yourself, but aren't sure what a Silent Directed Retreat is. If you've made a silent, directed retreat, we welcome you back. If you've never made a retreat like this, we invite you to consider this question:



What's the deepest silence you've ever known? Silent Directed Retreats offer opportunities to enter into deep silence in order to sense what it feels like to awaken a quiet and palpable connection and deepen your relationship with the Source of All being.

Each day you will receive ongoing direction as you and a professionally-trained spiritual director listen intentionally to the movement of the Source of All Being in your heart. Listening in such profound silence assists you to get in touch with feelings, thoughts and actions as you reflect, meditate, pray and rest. The practice of this daily meeting assists in developing the capacity to discern, notice, sense the movement of the Source of All Being in light of your motivations, attachments, responses to that movement within the whole of your life. To share with a professional your divine experiences brings clarity, deepens your commitment and accountability to the direction of your life, surprises and offers insight into that direction.

Fee: \$495 includes lodging, meals and spiritual direction (*Partial scholarships are available.*) **Only a few spots remain, so register today!**

Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life (S.E.E.L.) 16 Retreat

Fridays, monthly beginning Oct. 6, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

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

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 an eight-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. We invite you to commit to one hour of prayer each day for eight months, at least one monthly meeting with a spiritual director and eight monthly Friday sessions (Oct. 6, Nov. 10, Dec. 1, Jan. 12, Feb. 9, March 8, April 5 and May 10). This retreat is best suited for those who have or are interested in establishing a discipline of regular personal prayer, have experience sharing their spiritual journey with others, and are called and committed to deepening personal faith.

Fee: \$400 (payable in October or in monthly installments of \$50) plus monthly spiritual direction sessions paid separately

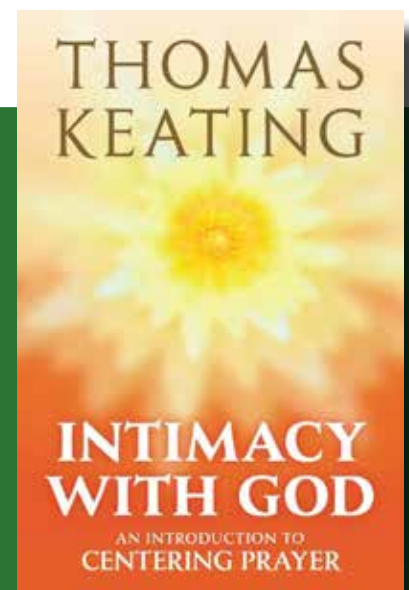


Book Review

***Intimacy with God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer* by Thomas Keating**

Centering prayer is a traditional practice that brings us into the presence of God and fosters contemplative attitudes of listening and receptivity. Over time centering prayer can take us to a spiritual level of our being. Centering prayer requires intentional times of silence and practices each day over a lifetime to achieve a level of contemplation. The results of practicing centering prayer is that we can experience the Divine presence that is always with us.

—review by Dennis VanAuken



You will find many great reads in our Gift Shop. Come in to find new inspiration!

Day of Self Renewal

Thursday, July 6, & Mondays, July 10 & Aug. 14, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

This popular program is being offered twice in July!

Facilitator: Rev. Jean Sullivan

Find rest and relaxation for mind, body and spirit! This tranquil day features your choice of two services, group guided meditation, Singing Bowl Prayer or Healing Sound Bath & Yogic Sleep, a private guest room, a fresh lunch, and access to the labyrinth and all that Prairiewoods has to offer. (Depending on the date, you may choose from massage, head and shoulder massage, reflexology, healing touch, spiritual direction, qigong, Nature & Forest Therapy, yoga or chair yoga. Visit www.Prairiewoods.org for details) Registration, a nonrefundable/nontransferable deposit of \$50 and your top three service choices are required eight days in advance. (Masks and vaccination may be required by the holistic provider.)

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

Into the Oneness: Qigong for Energy, Equanimity & Peace

Thursdays, July 6–Aug. 17 & Aug. 31, 12:45–1:35 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

Based on age-old Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), this gentle and accessible class involves

meditative, healing energy and compassion-based standing movement, breath work, visualization, acupressure and seated practice. We begin by opening, rebalancing and cultivating Qi (universal life force energy-Spirit) throughout the body's energy pathways, centers and organs to assist with mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being. Wisdom from the Tao Te Ching, TCM 5 Element Theory and beyond is sprinkled in to assist your practice of living life with greater ease, peace and harmony with the rest of nature in this One Reality



of which we all are part. Class ends with seated meditation, which includes sending healing compassionate intention to others and the planet. Also vibrational sound medicine played near your heart to re-tune and raise your vibration. *There will be no Qigong on Aug. 24.*

Fee: \$12 per session

Healing Sound Bath & Yogic Sleep

Thursday, July 6, 1:45–2:35 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine

Quehl-Engel
Rebalance mind, body and spirit through the soothing, penetrating power of healing sound and vibration via singing bowls. Then drop into deepest levels of relaxation and peace through authentic, age-old Yogic Sleep (Yoga Nidra)—a reclined, meditative experience used by stress reduction clinics, integrative health care and mystics who savor resting in blissful Oneness with The Sacred. We will close with prayerful sound healing, including a lower-octave bowl played on or near (your choice) the shrine of your heart.

Fee: \$8

Sweat Lodge (Inipi) Ceremony

Saturdays, July 15 & Aug. 12, 4–7 p.m. (setup begins at 3, ceremony starts at 4)

Facilitator: Kerry Batteau

The Sweat Lodge Ceremony pre-dates recorded history and was practiced in some form by every culture in the world. These sweats were held for reasons ranging from relaxation and socialization to healing and purification. Join us for a sweat focused on prayer, purification, recognition and healing. During the ceremony, we sit on the earth in the lodge, a small dome-shaped structure. Heated stones are placed in the center of the lodge and the water pourer, or leader, pours water over the stones to create steam. There are four rounds that include the singing of sacred songs, and after each round the lodge door is opened for more stones to be brought in.

Please note that the lodge is a small enclosure that is dark and extremely hot inside.



Sabbatical in Everyday Life

Opening Retreat: Friday, Sept. 29–Saturday, Sept. 30

Sabbatical Days: Fridays; Oct. 27, Dec. 1, Jan. 26, Feb. 23, March 22, April 19

Closing Retreat: Friday, May 17–Saturday, May 18

We all need dedicated breaks to rest and rekindle our energy and sense of direction. According to the testimony of those who have done it and the Harvard Business Review, sabbaticals can be transformative. Sabbaticals offer time to heal, reconnect with important relationships, explore and ultimately embrace a more authentic life. But not everyone can take extended leave from their everyday lives. When you participate in Sabbatical in Everyday Life, you will have the opportunity to integrate rest and renewal into your life and enhance your wellbeing and resilience. Participants will enjoy two overnight retreats at Prairiewoods, one at the beginning of the program and one at the end. In between, step away for six sabbatical days, designed to renew your energy, enhance your perspective and provide opportunities to learn practices that will help you build a life you don't need to escape from. Each sabbatical day will include the chance to learn new skills, spend time in quiet reflection (indoors and out) and receive two individual services such as massage or spiritual direction. Join the cohort that begins in September!

Fee: \$1,500 (deposit of \$250) Register by Sept. 1 for a 30% discount!

If you have claustrophobia or any medical conditions that prevent you from going into a sauna, you should not participate in this ceremony. Please visit our website for safety protocols and to register. You will be asked to sign a release form.

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

Threshold Conversations

Tuesday, July 18, 7–8:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Karen Hering

Whether you're living through significant personal transitions or navigating a world reshaping itself faster than ever, you are invited to join a yearlong online conversation about

how to make change more trustworthy. Each session focuses on one of the ten threshold skills featured in Karen Hering's book, *Trusting Change*. Karen will present selected content from her book and offer a focusing question and silent time for writing or reflection. Then we'll move into small groups to share how we each experience and engage the threshold skill in the context of change. The July topic is Claiming Companions. You are invited to join all the monthly offerings or attend selectively. Your voice will bring wisdom for others, while theirs may offer just the perspective you need on your threshold.

Fee: \$15

**Y.O.L.O. (Your Other Lunch Option!)—Summer Theme
Wednesday, July 19, 11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.**

Facilitator: Daniel Sutherland

Tired of the same old lunch places? Let's renew our bodies and refresh our spirits in a beautiful setting!



Join us for Y.O.L.O. (Your Other Lunch Option!)—a lunch choice celebrating wholesome, fresh food made from scratch by chefs Dan Sutherland and Brydon Hill in Prairiewoods' no-waste kitchen. We dine in a community setting with friends we bring with us or new friends we meet over a delicious themed lunch. On July 19, our theme will be a fun summer picnic. Arrive at 11:30, and the buffet line opens at noon. Registration is required at least two days in advance, and each lunch is limited to 35 people.

Fee: \$15

**Seasonal Tree Rock Painting
Saturday, July 29, 10 a.m.–12 p.m.**

Facilitator: Andi Lewis

At different times in life and even various times within the same year, we may find ourselves in different seasons of the heart. We may be in the rush of promise, hope and possibility present in spring, or withdrawing inward during the challenges of grief, loss or turbulence in winter. In this contemplative and

creative workshop, we will read passages from John



O'Donohue's book *Anam Cara* to help us discern which season of the heart we are in. Then we will delve into that season and express our emotions through painting on smooth rocks. We will use a paint brush and fine dotting tools to create a beautiful, one-of-a-kind seasonal tree. This is a fun, relaxing process that can be done by anyone, but it may be too contemplative for young children. This class is aimed at both those who have painted rock mandalas and those who are totally new to rock painting.

Fee: \$13 includes all art supplies

**Summer Mindfulness Meditation Retreat Day
Sunday, Aug. 13, 9 a.m.–3:30 p.m.**

Facilitator: Chris Klug

"Dwelling in stillness and looking inward for some part of each day, we touch what is most real and reliable in ourselves and most easily overlooked and undeveloped," writes Jon Kabat-Zinn in *Wherever You Go, There You are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life*. "When we can be centered in ourselves, even for brief periods of time in the face of the pull of the outer world, not having to look elsewhere for something to fill us up or make us happy, we can be at home wherever we find ourselves, at peace with things as they are, moment by moment." This day will be spent in silence practicing mindfulness through sitting meditation, walking meditation, mindful movement and mindful eating. There will be time for sharing and questions during the final 30 minutes. Please bring your own lunch.

Fee: \$50

Experience the healing powers of meditative yoga 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. Registration is required for each session. *There will be no yoga on July 3, Aug. 21 or Aug. 24.*

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

Going Inward with Sounds & Vibrations

Mondays, July 17 & Aug. 7, 6:30–7:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Kathy Broghammer

Experience sound, stillness, playfulness and relaxation through the enigmatic vibrations of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls. During this hour, we connect with our inner selves through the song of bowls. We are invited to sit or lie down to listen and just be. Registration is required. *There will be no singing bowls on July 3 and Aug. 21.*

Fee: \$10 per session

**Go Deeper Thursdays
Thursdays; July 6–Aug. 17; 4–5 p.m.**

Convener: Ellen Bruckner

Go Deeper Thursday is an ongoing personal exploration and deepening in community. This group began during the pandemic as an opportunity to be in community while physically isolated. Topics emerge from the conversations and maintain a general focus on our spiritual lives. Registration is required to get the Zoom link.

Fee: Free-will offering

Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton

Thursdays; July 6, July 20, Aug. 3 & Aug. 17; 7–8:30 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 Thursdays of each month. We use the *Bridges to Contemplative Living* series. The process involves readings,

Ongoing Programs

**Metta Yoga
Mondays & Thursdays; July 6–Aug. 17 & Aug. 28–31; 9:30–10:30 a.m., 10:45–11:45 a.m. (chair yoga) & 5:30–6:30 p.m.**

Facilitator: Heather English

reflections and contemplative dialogue. Please register for your first session to get the Zoom link. Book purchase is required after your first session.
Fee: Free-will offering

Singing Bowl Prayer **Mondays, July 10 & Aug. 14,** **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 let the resonant sounds of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls relax the entire body and create a pathway for clearer connection with the divine. Registration is required by noon.

Fee: \$8



Afternoon Nature & Forest Therapy Experiences

Mondays, July 10 & Aug. 14,
2:30–3:45 p.m.

Facilitator: Emelia Sautter

Join certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide Emelia Sautter and the land for a walk with the natural world. Experience Forest Therapy, a sensory-focused practice that invites us to slow down and be present with self and the natural world around us. According to the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy, “Forest Therapy is a practice that supports health and wellness through guided immersion in forests and other environments to promote the well-being of both people and the land.” Registration is required by the previous day.

Fee: \$15

Prairiewoods Knitters & Stitchers

Tuesdays, July 11 & Aug. 8,
9:30–11:30 a.m.; & Wednesday,
July 26, 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 morning and fourth Wednesday evening of each month. *There will be no Knitters & Stitchers on Aug. 23.*

Fee: Free

Pause, Connect & Reflect **Tuesdays, July 11–Aug. 29,** **11:30 a.m.–12 p.m.**

Facilitator: Rev. Jean Sullivan

Join with others as we pause in the midst of our week for a half hour of connection and reflection. Inspired by seasonal changes, concerns that surface in our daily lives and in our world-wide community of connection, each session is unique, drawing on poetry, music, prayer, imagery and meditation. All are welcome to stop in via Zoom. *There will be no Pause, Connect & Reflect on July 4.*

Fee: Free-will offering

Evening Centering Prayer **Tuesdays; July 11, July 25 & Aug. 8;** **5:30–7 p.m.**

Facilitator: Judith Smith

Join a supportive group of people for Evening Centering Prayer. This contemplative prayer form assists people in deepening relationships with God or Source of All Being. Each evening invites participants to an opening check-in and two twenty-minute silent, centering sessions. Together we relax and attune our body, mind and spirit to the Indwelling Presence. At the end of each gathering, we have an opportunity to share insights regarding our experience and practice. These Centering Prayer gatherings are open to all! Centering Prayer is offered on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month, and sessions stand alone. *There will be no Centering Prayer on Aug. 22.*

Fee: Free-will offering

Men Exploring Faith **Thursdays; July 13, July 27 & Aug. 10;** **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 is a hybrid group that meets both in person and via Zoom on the second and fourth Thursdays monthly. *There will be no Men Exploring Faith on Aug. 24.*

Fee: Free-will offering

Soul Care: Creative Arts Grief Support Group

Wednesdays, July 19 & Aug. 16,
5:30–7 p.m.

Facilitator: Jamie Siela, LISW

Offered in Partnership with UnityPoint Hospice

In grief, our very foundation can be rocked. Take time to connect with others in grief and engage the creative spark. 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. On July 19, we will use acyclic paint to make unique flowers through dot painting. This technique will use dots that we blend and shape into petals. On Aug. 16, we will do a dissolving paper activity. Are there things you wish you would have said to your loved one? It's never too late. In this session, we will have the opportunity to use dissolving messages to express those things that we wish we would have said or would like to say now. Then we will have the opportunity to dissolve our messages in water. Registration is required nine days in advance. This group is a hybrid, offered both online and in person.

Fee: Free includes all art supplies



Day of Caring 2023

On Thursday, May 11, we were thrilled to host corporate teams here at Prairiewoods for the United Way Day of Caring. This year's Day of Caring involved 56 different companies in the metro area doing projects at 49 nonprofit organizations. According to United Way, over 1,300 employees took part this year. Here at Prairiewoods, we had 48 corporate volunteers, and the teams came from Collins Aerospace, United Fire Group and Simmons Perrine Moyer Bergman Law Firm.

The weather was absolutely perfect for our teams, and they worked incredibly hard accomplishing many projects for us. We had teams working on our walking trails, pulling invasive species out in the woods, doing landscaping around our Hermitages and other buildings, cleaning all of our upholstered chairs and much more! Our teams put in 310 volunteer hours, which made a huge impact, and we're so grateful for all of their help.



If you'd like to volunteer here, visit www.Prairiewoods.org/Volunteer or contact Sandy at srosenberger@prairiewoods.org.

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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Marcia Baumert, FSPA
Karie Buss
Cedar Rapids Retired
Teachers
Cindy Chicoine & Morgan
Rivers
Matthew Clay
Ed & Peggy Dettmer
Angela Doty
Bob Engler & Carol Nilles
Laurie Erlacher
Shannon Foster
Jill Grandia
Terese Grant
Isabella Grumbach
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Suzanne Mahmoodi
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Hether Stauffacher
Brenda Steinke
Mary Gayle Stowe
Jan Swander
Diane Swanson
Kelly Tamborski
Sandy West
Leslie Wright

HONORARIA

*In honor of Nancy Hoffman,
FSPA, & Ann Jackson, PBVM*
Anonymous
*In honor of Nancy Hoffman,
FSPA; Ann Jackson, PBVM; &
Lucille Winnike, FSPA*
Sheila Rouse
*In honor of International
Women's Day* Anonymous
In honor of Laura Weber
Gina Sison

MEMORIALS

In memory of Martha Barry
Mary Ann Barry
*In memory of Betty Daugherty,
FSPA* Doug Beadle
In memory of Pat Day
Bette Niccolls
In memory of Mary Linn Fedler
Linda Bechen, RSM
In memory of Hank Godwin
Nancy Schrimper

In memory of Tara King
Andrea Nus
*In memory of Mitch
McWhinney*
Jon McWhinney

IN-KIND DONATIONS

Mary Jane Knight
Charles Luster
Trish Peebles

VOLUNTEER SERVICE

Jan Aiels
Nancy Allen
Susan Armitage
Mary Ann Barry
Doug Beadle
Duane Beaudry
Rosie Bowers
Ellen Bruckner
Carole Butz
Janice Clement
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Charles Crawley
Jordan Fetter
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Here are two ways you can help us be good stewards of our resources and produce a beautiful, informative and inspiring newsletter:

- 1. Contribute a free-will offering of \$10.** Your gift of \$10 pays for a full year of your newsletters delivered to you electronically or by mail. If you would like to make this gift, please visit www.Prairiewoods.org/Donate and mark "Newsletter" in the notes field.
 - 2. Read your bimonthly newsletter online.** If you are willing to switch from paper to electronic, please scan the QR code at left with your phone's camera and give us your name, address and email address. We'll do the rest! (You can also call us at 319-395-6700 or email ecospirit@prairiewoods.org and we can make the change for you.)
- Thank you in advance for all you do to support our mission!*



120 E Boyson Rd
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Are you on social media? Find "Prairiewoods FSC" on:



Friends & Family Day

We have a very special day planned for *Sunday, Aug. 6*, here at Prairiewoods! From *1-4 p.m.* we invite you to take in all of our beautiful outdoor spaces that we have to offer. You can choose from a variety of activities throughout the afternoon:

- Start off by walking our 2.5 miles of trails, where you can rest by our gently winding stream, meander through peaceful woodlands and explore the tallgrass prairie.
- As you walk our trails, you'll come to our beautiful outdoor labyrinth. Labyrinths have been part of every culture and religious tradition in history. The labyrinth isn't a maze but is a single path that leads to the center of the circle and back out. Many people find that walking a labyrinth helps them reduce stress, calm their mind or bring about changes in their lives. We'll have a staff member there to help you learn about our labyrinth and everything it has to offer.
- We'll also have our brand new natural playscape available that both kids and adults will love! Spend time climbing our play structures that are all made from things found in nature.
- Kids are also welcome to take part in a rock painting class at 2 p.m. in our Art Room. The class is limited to 20 (including adults that are accompanying kids 12 and under), and we have a suggested donation of \$10.
- Have you always wanted to try tai chi? We'll have three short sessions on our grounds led by our own Nancy Hoffman, FSPA, at 1:30, 2:30 and 3:30 p.m. Tai chi is slow, gentle movements that improve your muscle strength, flexibility and balance.
- Maybe you'd like to give yoga a try instead? We'll have short introductory yoga classes for everyone at 1, 2 and 3 p.m.

We look forward to a fun afternoon at Prairiewoods on Aug. 6 and hope that you can join us! For questions contact Sandy Rosenberger at srosenberger@prairiewoods.org or 319-395-6700, ext. 216.



image by Alda Silva on Flickr

September/October 2023

Prairiewoods

A FRANCISCAN ECOSPIRITUALITY RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER

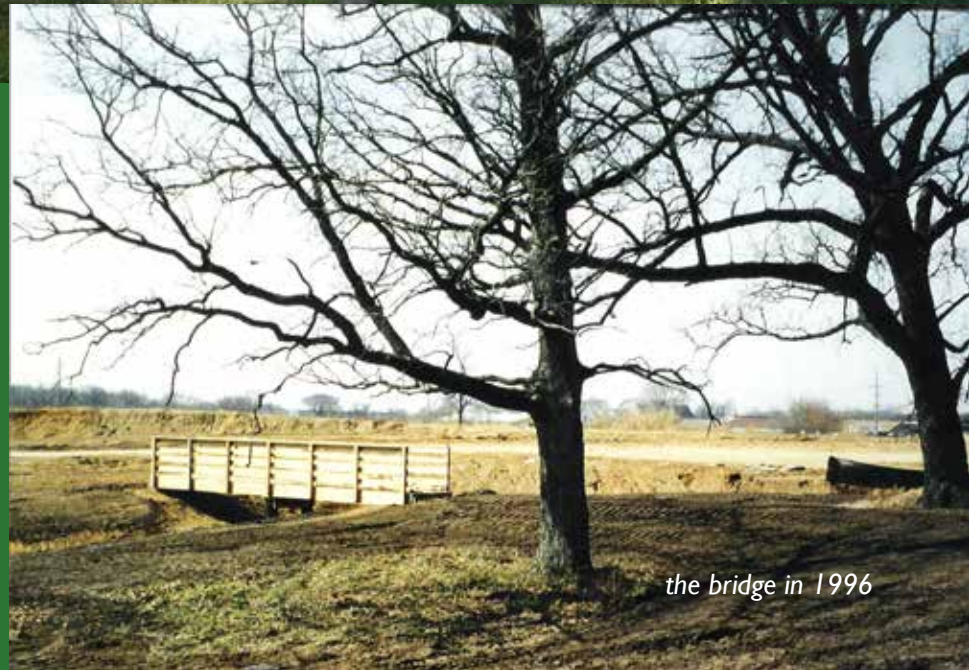
HARVESTING *years of* LAND CARE

the bridge south of the Center today

“ Autumn is a season of great beauty, but it is also a season of decline: the days grow shorter, the light is suffused, and summer’s abundance decays toward winter’s death. Faced with this inevitable winter, what does nature do in autumn? She scatters the seeds that will bring new growth in the spring—and she scatters them with amazing abandon. ”

—Parker Palmer, *There is a Season*, 1995

Read the article on page 3.



the bridge in 1996

PRAIRIEWOODS STAFF

Rose Blank
Spiritual Director

Aaron Brewer
Land Sustainability
Coordinator

Derek Doan
Cook

Joann Gehling, FSPA
Holistic Services, Spiritual
Director

Trace Harshman
Housekeeper

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

Ann Jackson, PBVM
Spiritual Services
Coordinator, Spiritual
Director

Andi Lewis
Marketing Coordinator

Alex Long
Cook

Erik Meggers
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Mary Rasmussen
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Sandy Rosenberger
Development Coordinator

Nancy Schrimper
Office Administrator

Jean Sullivan
Outreach, Engagement &
Hospitality Coordinator

Daniel Sutherland
Chef/Kitchen Manager

Lucille Winnike, FSPA
Retreats, Spiritual
Director

Leslie Wright
Director



*"The summer ends, and it is time
to face another way."*

—Wendell Berry

As I write this, it is late July, and it has been very hot and very dry. The gardens, the yard, the land look much as they often do late in August—dried-out and spent. I begin to long for the cooler days of autumn but also grieve the end of summer. I am in a middle place. It is easy to be dissatisfied and to look away from the reminders of what is coming to an end.

This year, for many reasons, I am challenging myself to stay in these moments just as they are. I am challenging myself not to live in an anticipated future. Instead I will find joy and blessing in this time that sometimes seems sere and lifeless. My garden, full of green and growing things earlier this summer, is mostly full of the empty spaces left by the produce that is finished for the season.

This is in-between time. It is especially poignant this year as I observe my parents' transitions. My father has been living with Primary Progressive Aphasia for many years. This past year the changes have accelerated, and now he is living in between what little language he has left and the next phase. He is very conscious of this loss. Almost all the words he had have been harvested and the few remaining are not sufficient. It is hard for him to find joy or peace in what to him seems like empty space. He was always a man full of words and ideas. He wonders how he can participate in life now.

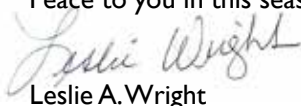
This experience with my dad has caused me to think deeply about how I might prepare myself for my own transitions. I have been reading *Mindfulness for Beginners* by Jon Kabat-Zinn. This little book has inspired me to practice presence in new and simpler ways. I hope to build my ability to find purpose and peace each day—even when the day might seem empty or the future deeply uncertain.

I take heart in the certainty that I am woven into the fabric of life, and my breath alone contributes to the well-being of the whole. I wish I could share this deep certainty with my dad. If only I could help him take heart in this season that seems dry and lifeless and let Joyce Rupp's words in *The Circle of Life* (p. 175) comfort him:

"Walk me among the dying leaves, let them tell me about their power to energize Earth's soil by their decomposition and the formation of enriching humus."

His words, his work, have contributed to rich possibilities for many. Now he need simply be and trust in the harvest of his life.

We cannot know what each day will bring. Seasons change, as do we. After the exuberance of spring and before the cool air and beautiful colors of fall there is time "to slow down as ... Earth slows down and allows her soil to rest in silent, fallow space" (Rupp, p. 176).
Peace to you in this season of change ...


Leslie A. Wright



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

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

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

Please address all correspondence to:

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

www.Prairiewoods.org
Ecospirit@Prairiewoods.org



This newsletter arrives in anticipation of fall. It is a time when gardens slow down, leaves and grasses begin to turn here at Prairiewoods. Young people return to school. Our Green Iowa AmeriCorps leave. It is a time of transition. It is a time to pause, take stock and refocus. Anticipating the season leads us to reflect on the evolution of the land here at Prairiewoods—over thirty autumns have passed since the Sisters began envisioning this special place. And each autumn, the land “scattered her seeds” in anticipation of a new spring.

It happens that we have been revising the Land Care plan, first written in partnership with Trees Forever between 2004 and 2006. Reading and revising that early plan has illuminated the many transformations that have taken place. It inspired us to look for early photos, because we found it hard to imagine those early beginnings while standing in the midst of waving prairie grass or in the shade of mature trees. These early photos reveal a place that at first glance appears barren, but we know that instead it held the seeds of tremendous possibility and the peaceful and lush environment that now exists.

During summer’s fade into fall, it is a good time to take a step back and capture all that has happened: the change, the growth, the challenges and the surprises over the years. Luckily, there are several histories of this land. Each offers us a slightly different lens. The Title to the land tells us a story of transactions and ownership, farmers and families. The Iowa Valley RC&D takes us back to an even earlier time and documents the early geological history as well as the presence of the first peoples, the Meskwaki and Ioway. Numerous Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration have added their documentation of the journey from land purchase to ecospirituality center. Each successive group understood their relationship to the land differently. The documents reflect an evolution of consciousness that moved us from ideas of dominion, to stewardship and finally a return to kinship first demonstrated by our indigenous brothers and sisters. In response, our language changed as our understanding of and relationship with the land evolved. Instead of a “land management” plan, now we call it the “land care” plan to reflect this deeper understanding of our role.

Fall is also a time to harvest. This harvest includes all the many things we have learned, including the unique personality of each section of land. Thirteen in all were named in the early plan. Each with a different expression of creation. Prairie, oak savannah, forest and wet prairie to name a few. Each with different needs. The years, the seasons and extreme weather have introduced us to the many incarnations and enduring resilience of the land. Prairie burns helped the tall grass grow. The derecho opened up the tree canopy, catalyzing different species to emerge and strengthened our resolve to continue the regeneration of the land.

The harvest also includes all the relationships that have grown along with the woods and the prairie. As networks grow in the forest to support resilient life, so too have the networks of support grown around Prairiewoods. Connections have been built beginning with early volunteer groups like the 450 children from St. Pius who helped to plant trees that first fall. The children have grown up, as have the trees they planted. Other relationships continue to deepen with Trees Forever, I-Renew and Metro Catholic Outreach, among many others. The addition of the Green Community Gardens have opened the door to new friendships on the land, with gardeners from different cultures and countries, children and elders.

And creation is still speaking to us. Grandmother Oak has shared her life-giving energy over the years. First with the foundresses and early visitors, and most recently with Winston, a member of a visiting Tai Chi group, who described the energy he experienced as he wrapped his arms around the old oak.

The lesson of fall is that what appears spent and dormant, or perhaps fallow, to those unacquainted with this land is truly teeming with diverse life and possibility. In order to see it we must get closer, be quieter, breathe more deeply and train our eye to see differently. Thirty years ago, the foundresses did just that. They walked, sat and listened, and in response trees were planted, trails were laid, buildings rose and a name was found.

And so we also enter a time of listening and imagining. We set an intention to pause and to tend. Even more importantly, we seek to challenge ourselves to explore new ways to nourish and restore the land that has nourished and cared for us.



Reaping the Bounty of Summer



Toan Barnes



Michael & Joan Wagemester



Bob Rasmussen

Summer's Bountiful Guests

This summer has been a busy one at Prairiewoods! Our grounds have been filled with so many wonderful kids and adults, including hikers, volunteers, our community gardeners and retreatants. We've enjoyed all of them! Here's a glimpse of our visitors and friends:

Community Gardeners:

We've really enjoyed those who have rented plots in our Green Community Gardens, and we were happy to add more plots this year for a total of 27! Each garden is unique and full of beautiful produce, including some culturally significant foods from throughout Asia and Africa. We have all ages who come out to the gardens, both young and old!



the Mills family



the Jain family



Rose Zhou



the Swami family



the Mathkar family

Reaping the Bounty of Summer



Peter Correll, board member



Trees Forever Growing Futures group



Hike It Baby group

Hikers & Groups: We've had lots of hikers and visitors out on our trails every day, and we always enjoy seeing both individuals and families. We also hosted the local Hike It Baby chapter for a group hike led by our Green Iowa AmeriCorps members. Don't forget that the trails are open every day of the year from sunrise to sunset!

Volunteers: Our grounds wouldn't be as beautiful as they are without the help of so many volunteers. We have a regular crew who weed, water and mow every week, and we also have company groups that come and help for the day. One of our board members also built two sturdy benches for our community gardeners to have a place to sit and rest. We've been so thankful for help from some of the local Green Iowa AmeriCorps members who are serving with other non-profits in our community.



Hike It Baby & Green Iowa AmeriCorps



Northwestern Mutual employee



North American Practical Method Chen Style Training Camp

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.

Active Hope for All of Creation Retreat Friday, Sept. 8, 6:30 p.m.–Sunday, Sept. 10, 3 p.m.

Facilitator: Kathleen Rude

Embody our interconnection with all beings through the wisdom of Saint Francis and the Work That Reconnects! In a time where separation and exploitation seem to dominate our relationships with other beings and our planet, the spiritual and ecological teachings that we are all connected, that we are all kin, is balm for our souls. Embodying this knowing is healing for ourselves and for the planet. This retreat will be led by Work That Reconnects Facilitator Kathleen Rude. Together we will combine the spiritual teaching of Saint Francis, the patron saint of ecology, and the transformative wisdom of the Work That Reconnects to explore our interdependence with all life. We will invite fellow species to speak through us in the beloved ceremony, The Council of All Beings. We will spend time in the woods and prairies to hear what Earth is inviting us to embrace and to receive inspiration and healing for our weary, overwhelmed hearts and souls. In supportive community, 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 beautiful planet. This retreat includes experiential practices, mask making, movement, inspirational readings and simple rituals. It's engaging, invigorating and gives us tools for dealing with the challenges of living in difficult times.

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

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



Spiritual Exercises in Everyday Life (S.E.E.L.) 16 Retreat

Fridays, monthly beginning Oct. 6, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

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

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 an eight-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. We invite you to commit to one hour of prayer each day for eight months, at least one monthly meeting with a spiritual director and eight monthly Friday sessions (Oct. 6, Nov. 10, Dec. 1, Jan. 12, Feb. 9, March 8, April 5 and May 10). This retreat is best suited for those who have or are interested in establishing a discipline of regular personal prayer, have experience sharing their spiritual journey with others, and are called and committed to deepening personal faith.

Fee: \$400 (payable in October or in monthly installments of \$50) plus monthly spiritual direction sessions paid separately

The Power of Silence: Silent Directed Retreat Sunday, Oct. 8, 4 p.m.–Thursday, Oct. 12, 1 p.m.

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

Perhaps you've participated for years in Prairiewoods' Silent Directed Retreats. Or maybe you have seen these advertised and considered scheduling one for yourself, but aren't sure what a Silent Directed Retreat is. Either way, we invite you to consider this question: *What's the deepest silence you've ever known?* Silent Directed Retreats offer opportunities to enter into deep silence in order to sense what it feels like to awaken a quiet and palpable connection and deepen your relationship with the Source of All being.

Each day you will receive ongoing direction as you and a professionally-trained spiritual director listen intentionally to the movement of the Source of All Being in your heart. Listening in such profound silence assists you to get in touch with feelings, thoughts and actions as you reflect, meditate, pray and rest. The practice of this daily meeting assists in developing the capacity to discern, notice, sense the movement of the Source of All Being in light of your motivations, attachments, responses to that movement within the whole of your life. To share with a professional your divine experiences brings clarity, deepens your commitment and accountability to the direction of your life, surprises and offers insight into that direction.

Fee: \$400 includes lodging, meals and spiritual direction (*Partial scholarships are available.*)



Save the Date!

Silent Mindfulness Meditation Retreat

Friday, Nov. 3, 6:30 p.m.—Sunday, Nov. 5, 1 p.m.

Join Chris Klug for a silent weekend retreat to cultivate mindfulness in silence amid instruction, questioning, sitting meditation, walking meditation, mindful movement and mindful eating.

Winter's Wisdom, Rest & Renewal: A Solstice & Advent Retreat

Friday, Dec. 15, 6:30 p.m.—Sunday, Dec. 17, 1 p.m.

Join Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel for a weekend of cultivating Night Vision and awareness of Light in everything—even in darkness, in wintery seasons of our lives and in our very being.

It's Still Possible: Inner Work of Age Retreat

Tuesdays; Sept. 5, Sept. 19, Oct. 3, Oct. 17, Nov. 7 & Nov. 14; 10 a.m.—1 p.m. (includes lunch)

Facilitators: Ann Jackson, PBVM, & Joann Gehling, FSPA

Based on the poem by David Whyte *It's Still Possible*, this six-session series will offer reflection and discernment for those in the wisdom years of life. Participants will explore personal core values and spiritual practices that may light the path and illumine a way of being in service to the world—a rhythm that enlightens one's living legacy.

Fee: \$30 per session, or \$175 for six-session series when paid in advance

The Artist's Way Book Study Series

Wednesdays, Sept. 6—Nov. 8, 10:30 a.m.—12 p.m.

Facilitator: Joni Reed Cooley

Explore your creative path and its connection to your spirituality! Using Julia Cameron's book *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* as a guide, the experiences will include group discussion, guided reflections and individual practices to go deeper and higher in your artistic expression. This series is for all types of artists (including visual arts, music, movement, writing and more) and for any point in your artistic journey, from beginning to established. **Fee:** \$200 for ten-week series, plus cost of book

Dream Workshop Series

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

Facilitator: Karen Sindelar

Dreams can open you into your inner landscape and help you to grow spiritually. Working and playing with dreams can bring transformation and inner healing. As a participant, you will be exposed to a Jungian approach to deciphering your dreams. You will be prepared to work with your dreams individually or in a group. After completing these four sessions, you will be eligible to join a monthly Dream Group (such as the one that begins Oct. 4). Facilitator Karen Sindelar, MA, LMT, holds a master's degree

in applied psychology with an emphasis in Jungian studies. Karen has been an active participant in dream groups since the 1980s. Registration is requested by Aug. 30. **Fee:** \$100 for four-week series, whether present or not (payable in advance or \$25 at each session)

Dream Group

Wednesdays; Oct. 4, Nov. 1, Dec. 6, Jan. 3, Feb. 7, March 6, April 3 & May 1; 1–3 p.m.

Facilitator: Karen Sindelar

"Dreams come in the service of wholeness and health," writes Jeremy Taylor. Dreams can open you into your inner landscape and help you to grow spiritually. Working and playing with your dreams can bring transformation and inner healing. As a participant, you will be exposed to a Jungian approach to deciphering your dreams. As a prerequisite, you must have some dream workshop experience (at Prairiewoods or elsewhere) that has introduced you to working with dreams individually or in a group.

Fee: \$160 for the eight-month series, whether present or not (payable in advance or \$20 at each session)

Day of Self Renewal

Thursdays, Sept. 7 & Oct. 5, & Mondays, Sept. 11 & Oct. 9, 8:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m.

This popular program is now offered twice a month!

Facilitator: Rev. Jean Sullivan

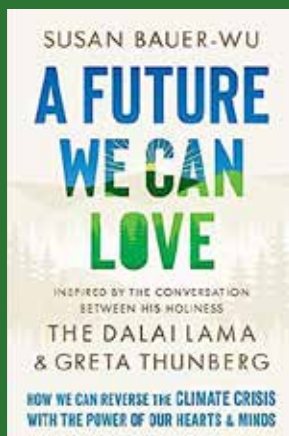
Find rest and relaxation for mind, body and spirit! This tranquil day features

Book Review

A Future We Can Love: How We Can Reverse the Climate Crisis with the Power of Our Hearts & Minds by Susan Bauer-Wu

Inspired by a conversation between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Greta Thunberg, Susan Bauer-Wu of the Mind & Life Institute takes us on an inspired journey beginning with the knowledge we need to understand the climate crisis. Greta Thunberg knows, "we need to tell people ... right now, because we are, to a large extent, unaware of what's happening." Woven together with a very approachable explanation of the science are ways to cope with the tendency to feel overwhelmed by it all and maintain our hope and courage. Alongside the scientific sources of our knowledge, she includes the spiritual sources—"the fact that everything and everyone are interconnected ... [through] an infinite web of cause and effect."

She helps us to consider the Earth's capacity to respond—so that while we are doing what we can to reduce our emissions, we also "increase the capabilities of natural systems



to remove more carbon dioxide than we are releasing." From an interview with Matthieu Ricard, a monk who is sometimes described as the happiest man alive, we hear, "The climate crisis really boils down to altruism versus selfishness." We are then offered multiple stories of the beautiful ways humans are successfully responding!

All of this moves us to both the need and the desire to take action. She offers us a variety of "To-do" lists—showing us how others are making their own decisions about how to respond. She quotes American environmentalist Bill McKibben responding to the question "what can one person do?" He responds: "Stop being one person! Find your people!" Perhaps those of you reading this are already doing that here at Prairiewoods!

—review by Rev. Jean Sullivan

You will find many great reads in our Gift Shop. Come in to find new inspiration!

your choice of two services, group guided meditation, Singing Bowl Prayer or Healing Sound Bath & Yogic Sleep, a private guest room, a fresh lunch, and access to the labyrinth and all that Prairiewoods has to offer. (Depending on the date, you may choose from massage, head and shoulder massage, reflexology, healing touch, spiritual direction, qigong, Nature & Forest Therapy, yoga or chair yoga. Visit www.Prairiewoods.org for details.) Registration, a nonrefundable/nontransferable deposit of \$50 and your top three service choices are required eight days in advance. (Masks and vaccination may be required.)

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

Mini-Hydroponics Class Tuesday, Oct. 24, 6–8 p.m.

Facilitator: Phil Pfister

You can grow fresh leafy greens and herbs all year long with a hydroponics system. In this workshop, Linn County Master Gardener Phil Pfister will help you build your own mini-ponics system. You'll be provided the materials and hands-on instructions to build your own system to take home.

Fee: \$90 includes all supplies

Concert Under the Stars Saturday, Sept. 23, 7–9 p.m.

Facilitators: Jonny Lipford, Suzanne Teng, Gilbert Levy & Tommy Graven

Experience an unforgettable

night under a blanket of twinkling stars, serenaded by the melodic sounds of four award-winning musicians specializing in Native-style flute and world flutes. Immerse yourself in a sonic journey like no other and enjoy one complimentary drink ticket with additional beer, wine and soda available for purchase. This enchanting evening will be filled with soothing music and blissful merriment, making it an experience you won't soon forget!

Fee: \$10 includes one drink ticket, free for kids 10 and under



Mandala Drawing Workshop Saturday, Oct. 28, 10–12 a.m.

Facilitator: Andi Lewis

Come create with the Creator!

Facilitator Andi Lewis will guide us to draw a beautiful mandala, or sacred circular work of art, simply using artist's pens, drawing paper and a pencil for shading. Together we will learn about mandalas, including their spiritual significance throughout history. Then we'll spend our time drawing in a contemplative setting. We'll each leave with a unique mandala that represents our spirit!

Fee: \$15 includes all supplies



What's Your Pledge? What's Your Practice?

Tuesdays; Oct. 3, Oct. 17, Nov. 7 & Nov. 14; 5–6:30 p.m.

Facilitators: Ann Jackson, PBVM, & Leslie Wright

Based on an interview between Jeremy Lent and Rick Hanson, this four-session series will prompt you to consider the relationship between personal core values, the power of reflection and intention, and spiritual practices.

Fee: \$100 for four-session series

Y.O.L.O. (Your Other Lunch Option!)

Wednesdays, Sept. 13 & Oct. 25, 11:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Daniel Sutherland

Tired of the same old lunch places? Let's renew our bodies and refresh our spirits in a beautiful setting! Join us for Y.O.L.O. (Your Other Lunch Option!)—a lunch choice celebrating wholesome, fresh food made from scratch by chef Dan Sutherland in Prairiewoods' kitchen. We dine in a community setting with friends we bring with us or new friends we meet over a delicious themed lunch. On Sept. 13, our theme will be Octoberfest. On Oct. 25, our theme will be fall's bountiful harvest. Arrive at 11:30, and the buffet line opens at noon. Registration is required at least two days in advance, and each lunch is limited to 35 people.

Fee: \$15

Sabbatical in Everyday Life

Opening Retreat: Friday, Sept. 29, 6:30 p.m.–Saturday, Sept. 30, 4 p.m.

Sabbatical Days: Fridays; Oct. 27, Dec. 1, Jan. 26, Feb. 23, March 22, April 26; 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

Closing Retreat: Friday, May 17, 6:30 p.m.–Saturday, May 18, 4 p.m.

We all need dedicated breaks to rest and rekindle our energy and sense of direction. According to the testimony of those who have done it and the Harvard Business Review, sabbaticals can be transformative. Sabbaticals offer time to heal, reconnect with important relationships, explore and ultimately embrace a more authentic life. But not everyone can take extended leave from their everyday lives. When you participate in Sabbatical in Everyday Life, you will have the opportunity to integrate rest and renewal into your life and enhance your wellbeing and resilience. Participants will enjoy two overnight retreats and six sabbatical days, designed to renew your energy, enhance your perspective and provide opportunities to learn practices that will help you build a life you don't need to escape. Each sabbatical day will include the chance to learn new skills, spend time in quiet reflection (indoors and out) and receive two individual services such as massage or spiritual direction. Join the cohort that begins in September!

Fee: \$1,500 (deposit of \$250) Register by Sept. 1 for a 30% discount!

Into the Oneness: Qigong for Energy, Equanimity & Peace Thursdays, Sept. 7–Oct. 26, 12:45–1:35 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

Based on age-old Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), this gentle and accessible class involves meditative, healing energy and compassion-based standing movement, breath work, visualization, acupressure and seated practice. We begin by opening, rebalancing and cultivating Qi (universal life force energy-Spirit) throughout the body's energy pathways, centers and organs to assist with mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being. Wisdom from the Tao Te Ching, TCM 5 Element Theory and beyond is sprinkled in to assist your practice of living life with greater ease, peace and harmony with the rest of nature. Class ends with seated meditation, which includes sending healing compassionate intention to others and the planet.

Fee: \$12 per session

Healing Sound Bath & Yogic Sleep Thursdays, Sept. 7 & Oct. 5, 1:45–2:35 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

Rebalance mind, body and spirit through the soothing, penetrating power of healing sound and vibration via singing bowls. Then drop into deepest levels of relaxation and peace through authentic, age-old Yogic Sleep (Yoga Nidra)—a reclined, meditative experience used by stress reduction clinics, integrative health care and mystics who savor resting in blissful Oneness with The Sacred. We will close with prayerful sound healing, including a lower-octave bowl played on or near (your choice) the shrine of your heart.

Fee: \$8

Singing Bowl Prayer Mondays, Sept. 11 & Oct. 9, 12:45–1:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Kathy Broghammer

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

Fee: \$8

Nature & Forest Therapy Experiences

Afternoon Nature & Forest Therapy Experiences: Mondays, Sept. 11 & Oct. 9, 2:30–3:45 p.m.

Full Moon Nature & Forest Therapy Walk: Friday, Sept. 29, 6–8 p.m.

Fall Forest Bathing: Thursday, Oct. 19, 6–8 p.m.

Facilitator: Emelia Sautter

Join certified Nature and Forest Therapy Guide Emelia Sautter and the land for a walk with the natural world. Experience Forest Therapy, a sensory-focused practice that invites us to slow down and be present with self and the natural world around us. According to the Association of Nature and Forest Therapy, “Forest Therapy is a practice that supports health and wellness through guided immersion in forests and other environments to promote the well-being of both people and the land.” Registration is required by the previous day.

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

Going Inward with Sounds & Vibrations

**Mondays, Sept. 18, Oct. 2 & Oct. 16;
6:30–7:30 p.m.**

Facilitator: Kathy Broghammer

Experience sound, stillness, playfulness and relaxation through the enigmatic vibrations of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls. During this hour, we connect with our inner selves through the song of bowls. We are invited to sit or lie down to listen and just be. Registration is required.

Fee: \$10 per session

Threshold Conversations Tuesday, Sept. 19 & Oct. 17, 7–8:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Karen Hering

Whether you’re living through significant personal transitions or navigating a world reshaping itself faster than ever, you are invited to join a yearlong online conversation about how to make change more trustworthy. Each session focuses on one of the ten threshold skills featured in Karen Hering’s book, *Trusting Change*. The time together will include selected content from Karen’s book, silent time for writing or reflection, and small group sharing. Your voice will bring wisdom for others, while theirs may offer just the perspective you need on your threshold.

Fee: \$15

Soul Care: Creative Arts Grief Support Group

**Wednesdays, Sept. 20 & Oct. 18,
5:30–7 p.m.**

Facilitator: Jamie Siela, LISW

*Offered in Partnership with
UnityPoint Hospice*

In grief, our very foundation can be rocked. Take time to connect with others in grief and engage the creative spark. 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. On Sept. 20, break clay pots and piece them back together, representing how we may feel shattered but can become whole again, though forever changed by our grief. On Oct. 18, we will create dimensional gift tags that can be used to add unique flair to gifts or admired as mementos. Registration is required nine days in advance. This group is a hybrid, offered both online and in person.

Fee: Free includes all art supplies

Metta Yoga

**Mondays & Thursdays; Sept. 7–Oct.
30; 9:30–10:30 a.m., 10:45–11:45
a.m. (chair yoga) & 5:30–6:30 p.m.**

Facilitator: Heather English

Experience the healing powers of meditative yoga.

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

Go Deeper Thursdays

Thursdays; Sept. 7–Oct. 26; 4–5 p.m.

Convener: Ellen Bruckner

Join this online community exploration and deepening of spiritual topics.

Fee: Free-will offering

Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton

**first & third Thursdays; Sept. 7,
Sept. 21, Oct. 5 & Oct. 19; 7–8:30
p.m.**

Facilitator: Carole Butz

Online, practice contemplative living to respond to everyday experiences with greater awareness of our connections.

Fee: Free-will offering

Prairiewoods Knitters & Stitchers second Tuesdays, Sept. 12 & Oct. 10, 9:30–11:30 a.m.; & fourth Wednesdays, Sept. 27 & Oct. 25, 6:30–8 p.m.

Facilitators: participants

Practice knitting and stitching as we create items for charity.

Fee: Free

Evening Centering Prayer

**second & fourth Tuesdays; Sept. 12,
Sept. 26, Oct. 10 & Oct. 24;
5:30–7 p.m.**

Facilitator: Judith Smith

Practice a contemplative prayer form to help deepen your relationship with God.

Fee: Free-will offering

Men Exploring Faith

**second & fourth Thursdays; Sept. 14,
Sept. 28, Oct. 12 & Oct. 26; 4–5:30 p.m.**

Facilitator: Linzy Martin

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

Fee: Free-will offering

Sweat Lodge (Inipi) Ceremony Saturdays, Sept. 16 & Oct. 28, 4–7 p.m.

Facilitator: Kerry Batteau

Participate in an ancient ceremony focused on prayer, purification, recognition and healing.

Fee: Suggested donation of \$10

Expressing Our Gratitude

We appreciate all of the generous people who donate their time, money and other gifts to Prairiewoods! For a complete, up-to-date list of donors and volunteers, please scan this QR code or visit www.Prairiewoods.org/Donate.



Green Iowa AmeriCorps

This summer we had three Green Iowa AmeriCorps members with us, and they were a huge help around the grounds. Additionally, they led guided hikes with our visitors, planned some learning activities on environmental sustainability for the public and helped in our food pantry gardens. We'll really miss them and wish them well with their future plans! Here's what they said about their summer at Prairiewoods:

What have you liked best about your time at Prairiewoods?

Jasmyn Edwards: I have enjoyed getting to know the staff and learn what Prairiewoods is all about and I have also enjoyed being able to get my hands dirty, learn more about plant species and all the fun projects we do. I enjoy seeing all the progress and work that it takes to keep prairie and wooded areas as natural as possible.

Gabe Jones: I have learned so much, and I am very grateful to have the opportunity to steward the land and assist with food justice efforts! Knowing that the hard work I do contributes to conserving the native ecosystems and helps feed people is beyond rewarding.

Rita Tofanelli: What I've liked best about working at Prairiewoods was becoming more connected to nature. I've really enjoyed harvesting in the garden, catching snakes, and getting to know all the staff.

Is there anything that surprised you about Prairiewoods or the Green Iowa AmeriCorps program?

Jazz: One thing that surprised me at Prairiewoods is that it is a great community and it has a history that has been fun to learn about.

Gabe: I was surprised by how connected

so many of the Green Iowa AmeriCorps organizations are. The volunteers that come out to Prairiewoods remind me of how supported we are by people with similar goals in environmental sustainability.

Rita: I was surprised by how much Prairiewoods has changed since I've been hiking here as a little girl, and how diverse the Green Iowa AmeriCorps program is with all their different locations and program goals.



What were a couple of things that you learned while at Prairiewoods?

Jazz: I learned how to plant a tree the correct way, learned about different invasive species and plant/tree species that we have on the grounds. I also learned more about using power equipment and how much fun it is!

Gabe: Basic plant and tree identification is something I have learned, as well as some basic permaculture gardening practices. I also learned how to operate a tractor!

Rita: I have learned a lot here, how to identify trees and plants, how to drive a tractor and how to operate heavy machinery, as well as becoming very skilled in weeding and mulching.



What are your future goals around the environment or sustainability?

Jazz: I want to hopefully become a conservation officer so I can help to protect the land that we have been provided for future generations.

Gabe: Pursuing a law degree specializing in Environmental Law would be the long-term goal, but right now I'm content in finding any way I can steward.

Rita: My future goals are to further my education in environmental science as well as learning more about plant and animal species.



Welcome Aaron Brewer

A proponent of land stewardship and environmentalism, Aaron Brewer studied Parks and Natural Resources and Conservation Management at Upper Iowa University, leading to his involvement with Brucemore, Trees Forever, AmeriCorps and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. Originally from Iowa City, Aaron lives in Cedar Rapids with his wife, Hannah, and daughter, Maribel.

As Prairiewoods' Land Sustainability Coordinator, you'll find him practicing his passion for gardening and managing the 70 acres of timber and prairie restoration projects. He welcomes volunteers and nature enthusiasts to join in caring for this wonderful land together and hopes you find great peace during your visit.



2023 Garden Party



We were thrilled to see so many old and new friends at our Garden Party in June! We had so much fun bringing it back to the grounds of Prairiewoods, and luckily the weather cooperated. Our chefs served delicious food, and Jonny Lipford serenaded us with beautiful music on native and world flutes. We added a new activity called the Camino de Prairiewoods, and lots of people took the tour and saw all of the wonderful things happening on the land.

All of our individual donors were so generous! People also bought loaves of bread in the Dough for Dough raffle, purchased items at the silent auction and bought Garden Shares to support our Green Prairie Garden. We also want to thank our generous sponsors, including Cedar Rapids Bank & Trust, Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Pure Mean Clean and Farmer's State Bank. Our in-kind sponsors were Wendling Quarries and KMRY AM/FM Radio. Because of everyone's generosity, we raised more than \$27,000, which will support produce served at Prairiewoods and provided to Metro Catholic Outreach's food pantry. Thank you for making this another successful Garden Party!

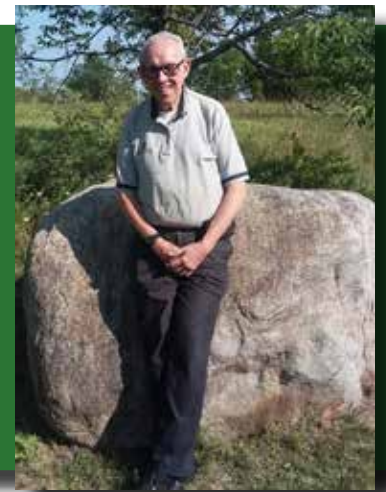
To see photos from the event and a complete list of donors, visit www.Prairiewoods.org/Garden-Party.



Did You Know?

Have you ever noticed the two large rocks on the west side of the Prairiewoods parking lot and in the island by the Guest House? According to our longtime Media Center volunteer, Doug Beadle, they're called Glacial Erratics. A Glacial Erratic is a glacially deposited rock and differs from the rocks that are native to the area in which it rests. Erratics are carried by glacial ice, often over distances of hundreds of miles and can be as big as a house. The rocks are most likely from central Minnesota and came here between 500,000 to 2.5 million years ago! According to science's understanding of the Universe Story, that is about the time in our 14-billion-year evolutionary journey that the first humans were created.

To see the area's largest exposed Glacier Erratic in Iowa head out to Waldo's Rock Park in Marion (6303 Partner's Ave, www.TourismCedarRapids.com/directory/waldos-rock-park).



Help Support Our Newsletter

Here are two ways you can help us be good stewards of our resources and produce a beautiful, informative and inspiring newsletter:

- 1. Contribute a free-will offering of \$10.** Your gift of \$10 pays for a full year of newsletters delivered to you electronically or by mail. If you would like to make this gift, please visit www.Prairiewoods.org/Donate and mark "Newsletter" in the notes field, mail a check to Prairiewoods or call 319-395-6700 with your credit card information.
- 2. Read your bimonthly newsletter online.** If you are willing to switch from paper to electronic, please scan the QR code at left with your phone's camera and give us your name, address and email address. We'll do the rest! (You can also call us at 319-395-6700 or email ecospirit@prairiewoods.org and we can make the change for you.) *Thank you for all you do to support Prairiewoods' mission!*





120 E Boyson Rd
Hiawatha IA 52233

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- Please send your mailings electronically to _____.
- Please take us off your mailing list.
- Please note the address change.
- We receive duplicate mailings; please send only one to this address.

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



Blessing of the Animals

Sunday, Oct. 1, 1–4 p.m.

Join us for outdoor fun for people and pets! Gather your family, your friends and your favorite animal companions and head to the annual Blessing of the Animals at Prairiewoods! Please bring your pets on leashes or in carriers, their clean-up bags, and lawn chairs or blankets. We'll have this free event rain or shine, and it will be moved indoors if there's inclement weather.

- We'll have a parade with people and pets at 1:15 p.m., and the blessings will begin around 1:30. Our very own Nancy Hoffman, FSPA, and Rev. Jean Sullivan will perform the blessings.
- We'll also have the Cedar Valley Humane Society passing out information and collecting donations for their organization. If you would like to help them, they'll gratefully accept cash donations, dry cat or dog food, HE liquid laundry detergent, antiseptic wipes, or 1-gallon or 2-gallon Ziplock bags. For a complete list of their needs, visit www.CVHumane.org/wish-list.
- Eastern Iowa Arts Academy will also be on hand to host a sun print workshop. Sun prints, also called cyanotypes, have been used to make records of plants for hundreds of years. Sun print paper is coated with chemicals that react when exposed to sunlight. When you place objects like leaves on the paper, they block the light so that the paper remains white while the areas around the leaves turn a beautiful Prussian blue. Explore the land for some flat leaves and flower petals to turn into a lovely sun print to take home!

We hope you and your beloved animals will join us for this fun, free event!



November/December 2023

Prairiewoods

A FRANCISCAN ECOSPIRITUALITY RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER

be Still
let Fall

Many spiritual traditions recognize the rhythm of nature, human experience and divine spirit. In attuning to the rhythms of Earth, Esther de Waal writes in *The Celtic Way of Prayer* (p. 61–62):

“A people who farmed and knew the patterns of the seasons, who lived close to the sea and watched the ebb and flow of tides, above all who watched the daily cycle of the sun and the changing path of the moon, brought all of this into their prayer.”

As we move into Fall, we are invited to hold together seemingly contrasting energies: vibrant color and stark dormancy, abundant harvest and barren landscape, dark and light, cold and warmth, death and rebirth. Spiritual author John Philip Newell cites in *The Rebirthing of God* (p. 60):

“We know that if we do not give ourselves over to the darkness and dreaming of nighttime, entering its intimate invitation to sleep and rest, we will be only half awake to the demands and creativity of the day. Yet ... we forget the natural patterns that we are part of. Or we pretend that we can be deeply engaged and productive while pushing ourselves and others in ways that are antithetical to the essential rhythms of Earth’s cycles and seasons.”

Fall embodies nature’s spiritual discipline: letting go and waiting. We begin to balance—being and doing, inner awareness and outward engagement—which leads us to living life as fully and as relationally as possible. Or as Newell says, “to experience the Sacred at the heart of life in ways that will shape how we live and undergird how we work to heal the world” (p. 64).

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PRAIRIEWOODS STAFF

Rose Blank
Spiritual Director

Aaron Brewer
Land Sustainability
Coordinator

Derek Doan
Cook

Joann Gehling, FSPA
Holistic Services, Spiritual
Director

Trace Harshman
Housekeeper

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

Ann Jackson, PBVM
Spiritual Services
Coordinator, Spiritual
Director

Andi Lewis
Marketing Coordinator

Alex Long
Cook

Erik Meggers
Maintenance Coordinator

Mary Rasmussen
Hospitality Assistant

Sandy Rosenberger
Development Coordinator

Nancy Schrimper
Office Administrator

Jean Sullivan
Outreach, Engagement &
Hospitality Coordinator

Lucille Winnike, FSPA
Retreats, Spiritual
Director

Leslie Wright
Director



As I prepared to write to you, I began thinking about November and December and all that they bring. In the early winter, we are entering a season most often characterized by busyness. In fact, I have often measured my satisfaction with the holiday season by the hurry, the invitations, the number of gifts both given and received. Success is measured by consumption of time, money and activity. Almost like a drug, I have sought the breathless exhilaration of nonstop action and the long list of tasks checked off. And yet, as a result I often find myself, in the still dark of January, feeling as though I have “missed it.” What I am seeking in all this busyness is joy, deep connection and a fullness of experience. Instead, all of the rushing often leaves an aftertaste of disappointment.

This season I have set my intention to go slow, be present and carve out the space for stillness.

*Hollowed out,
Clay makes a pot.
Where the pot's not
Is where it's useful.*

—Lao Tzu, from *The Uses of Not*

I wonder what I may catch and hold in this open space? I wonder what I may have the opportunity to hear in the stillness? And I wonder what more I will see during a slow amble through the season. I can imagine myself, eyes adjusting in the stillness, hearing growing sharper without all the noise around me. I can imagine the vessel that is my spirit overflowing—catching and holding the stories of loved ones and the warmth of shared experience. The tastes and smells of the food I love will linger because I take the time to savor it. I will carve out quiet space in the darkening days to hear the quiet breath of all creation as it rests. I will let go of my doing and simply be.

I hope that each of you has the opportunity to move through this season filling the vessel of your life with love during the coming season.

Peace and all good to you,

Leslie A. Wright



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

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

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

Please address all correspondence to:

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

www.Prairiewoods.org
Ecospirit@Prairiewoods.org



(continued from page 1)

How and what can we “let fall” so that we can move into the landscape of inner reflection? This involves letting fall the over-stimulation of the ego—our individual and collective ego—the ego of our religious tradition as the one true religion, or our sports team as the best, or our family as any more or less dysfunctional than another, or our nation mightier than another, or our human species as dominant over the myriad of other species ... All of these manifestations of over-stimulated “ego” (and more!) define us in terms of separation, one over another, creating within and around us more dualism and defensiveness rather than unity and compassion.

How might we use this time of fall to dig deep into the foundations of our being, to examine our inner life—how we identify ourselves not in terms of political party, religion, race, social status, sexual orientation ... rather, by the very ground of our being?

Returning to the innermost ground invites us to those certain parts of ourselves that separate us from our true self. As we release the shallow, superficial aspects that seemingly identify us, a deeper, more qualitative sense of SELF emerges.

Time: How can we make productive use of solitude during the season of fall? How might we create a stable foundation of presence—presence to oneself while also recognizing the presence of other people, the land, plants, elements, animals ... that assure us that we are not alone?

Spiritual author David Benner in his book *Presence and Encounter* notes:

“This is one of the main potential gifts that can come from a silent retreat. Stripped of the distractions, those who survive the first couple of days of silence invariably begin to awaken to powerful, previously unnoticed forms of presence.”

Letting fall, people begin to notice the LIFE that had been present to them all along. They awaken! And begin to live in the NOW, rather than in the past or future. It frees!

One doesn't have to attend a silent retreat to practice this. Often as the land lies fallow, we are invited inward and, sometimes, we experience absence. We try to fill time with meaningless forms of presence: shopping, screen time, busyness, procrastination, expectations, resistance ... These can perpetuate the cycle of hopelessness, fear, anxiety ... and diminish the chance for meaningful relationship, possibility and transformation within ourselves and within our relationships. If we are to live as truly and fully as we possibly can, we must develop the capacity to embrace absence.

Resist Resistance: How might we develop a spiritual practice of noticing our resistance?

Can we relax into the moment and notice, grow curious about the energy that we are resisting? Push through. Grin and bear it. Attend a gathering and then complain or gossip our way through it ... We sometimes try to work harder in defiance, hoping to overcome our resistance.

(continued on page 4)

Poet Mary Oliver (1935–2019) wrote about “letting fall” in her poem “Song for Autumn.”

Song for Autumn

Don't you imagine the leaves dream now how comfortable it will be to touch the earth instead of the nothingness of the air and the endless freshets of wind? And don't you think the trees, especially those with mossy hollows, are beginning to look for the birds that will come—six, a dozen—to sleep inside their bodies? And don't you hear the goldenrod whispering goodbye, the everlasting being crowned with the first tufts of snow? The pond stiffens and the white field over which the fox runs so quickly brings out its long blue shadows. The wind wags its many tails. And in the evening the piled firewood shifts a little, longing to be on its way.

—Mary Oliver, *Upstream*



image by Thomas Dean

(continued from page 3)

Instead, could we pause? Note the emotions attached to our resistance. What is the source of the resistance? Unmet needs? Forgiveness for a hurt? Deep fatigue? In identifying the source, and honoring and validating the feelings attached, we might ease our way through “either/or mentality” to both/and curiosity.

Can we let fall anything that prevents us from openness and trust? Recently, a scripture scholar who specializes in the psalms unpacked a familiar line, Psalm 46:10: “Be still, and know that I am God.” She mentioned that many people may find this Greek translation an invitation of simplicity and ease. The scholar suggested the value of the Hebrew translation. The Hebrew word for “still” is *raphah*, meaning to “sink down, relax, cease striving or withdraw.” *Be still* comes from a Hebrew term that means “that which is slack, to drop, to be vulnerable.”

The scholar cited the deeper challenge in the Hebrew translation: “You’ve been holding onto something for far too long. Let it fall.” So which is it, the Greek translation or the Hebrew? our dualistic mindset asks. Practicing unitive curiosity, we explore: Why not combine both translations of Psalm 46:10!

You’ve been holding onto something for far too long.

Be still.

Let it fall.

Know that I am God.

This powerful invitation urges us to stop clinging to what we perceive gives us a sense of identity, safety and security, and invites us to reflect on what opens or closes our body, mind and spirit ... to discern what is healthy and unhealthy, growth-producing and growth-inhibiting.

“Be still.” This phrase supports us to stop our striving, to cease our efforts and to rest in the presence of the Source of All Being. It is a call to quiet in mind and heart, making space for Spirit to speak and work in our lives. The more we can enter into reflection and deeper awareness, the more profound peace, freedom and contentment we experience, allowing ourselves to feel through the pleasure and the pain, and to move beyond them.

Perhaps as we enter into the autumn season, we can simply still ourselves and ponder, “What have I been holding onto for far too long?” And then, like the magnificent and vibrant trees, let it fall!

image by Joni Reed Cooley



The land is quieting down at Prairiewoods. Animals are going into hibernation or migrating. Plants and some animals are no longer growing and will be using the least amount of resources to survive the long winter months. Our gardens have all been cleaned up and harvested from, fruit has been picked from the orchards and summer vacations are in the past. So if we take a pause and observe nature, we'll see how she's showing us to follow her lead to slow down now and let things lie. We hope that many of our programs and holistic services at Prairiewoods will help you to slow down and take a pause from the busy lives that we all lead.

Diane Morris, a longtime Prairiewoods volunteer, talks about how our singing bowl programs help her to just let go and be. She says:

"As a volunteer at Prairiewoods, I have had the pleasure of welcoming participants to the experience of the singing bowls. I'm always excited to introduce new people to this beautiful practice. The ethereal sounds and vibrations of the Himalayan and crystal bowls surround and penetrate your soul and body. For me, it is a spiritual practice of letting go, to just be. For some, it is a time for meditation and others the ultimate relaxation."

"I love to listen to newcomers express how they have experienced the joy of the bowls. I have brought friends, neighbors and family to share the enchantment of the bowls. Some are hesitant because they don't know what to expect, but I explain that they should dress for comfort and can bring whatever would make them more comfortable. You can sit in a chair or lie on the floor. I encourage those who are comfortable in the chair to at least take their shoes off so they can better feel the vibrations. I prefer to lie on the floor and bring my yoga mat and pillow. I would encourage everyone to enjoy the peace and beauty of the bowls that sing!"



Nancy Hoffman, FSPA, one of Prairiewoods' foundresses, speaks about how much the land has taught her about resting and letting go. "After 85 years of winter resting with my old friend Mother Nature, I thought I knew it all. Grandmother Oak chuckled at me during a recent visit. 'In my hundreds of years,' Grandmother Oak said, 'I now only know what I still don't know about resting in God's divine care and plan. I'm always invited deeper. This year I really am not ready to give up my leaves, my food making factory. The drought has limited the amount of food they produced. So if I could just keep them a few more months I'll have enough, but God tells me, 'No, that's not the way it works. Let go now—trust and rest in my presence.' 'Yes, I know each spring my energy once again rises in more vibrant ways than ever.' 'Wait, stop!' I said. 'Maybe if I ...' Grandmother Oak winked at me with a colorful leaf falling on my head."



The following are retreats and programs that Prairiewoods is hosting in person or online via Zoom 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. 3, 6:30 p.m.–Sunday, Nov. 5, 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 that knows 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 wellbeing and happiness. Join facilitator Chris Klug for a weekend 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’s Wisdom, Rest & Renewal: A Solstice & Advent Retreat

Friday, Dec. 15, 6:30 p.m.–Sunday, Dec. 17, 1 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

Like quiet Earth in winter, we—amid the stress and conflicts of these times—need revitalizing ways to pause for rest and “letting be” amid the darkness so we can open to mysterious healing forces working with and in us to birth life anew. Come for a weekend of cultivating Night Vision and awareness of Light in everything—even in darkness, in wintery seasons of our lives and in our very being. This retreat includes ways of transforming our relationship with uncertainty or fear, and for experiencing mystical union with The Sacred amid silence, The Dark Night, all of Creation, and in our bodies, minds and souls. Join Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel as we experience this increased awareness of Oneness and peace via inter-spiritual mystical wisdom, rest and mind-body-spirit practices. It includes winter’s wisdom from our brothers and sisters found in the rest of nature and integrates

soothing night prayers, insights from Advent and Celtic Christian ways of being, Buddhism, Taoism and Traditional Chinese Medicine. Spiritual practices include slow, meditative energy and compassion-based qigong movement and acupressure, yogic sleep, and vibrational singing bowls for rebalancing mind, body and spirit.

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

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



Save the Date!

Prairiewoods Spirituality in the 21st Century 2024

Friday, April 26, 6–8 p.m., & Saturday, April 27, 9 a.m.–3 p.m.

in person in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, & online via Zoom

Join us in April 2024 to be inspired by and learn from leaders who are committed to creating a hopeful and regenerative future. We encourage you to come with your friends, your congregation or any group of committed humans to which you belong. Get inspired, get informed and get into action!

Susan Bauer-Wu, PhD, RN, FAAN, is the president of the Mind & Life Institute, which serves as the primary convener, catalyst and community builder for the contemplative sciences. Her new book, *A Future We Can Love: How We Can Reverse the Climate Crisis with the Power of Our Hearts and Minds*, shares the words of the Dalai Lama and Greta Thunberg in dialogue with climate



scientists, activists and spiritual leaders as they start a world-changing conversation. Learn more at www.mindandlife.org/person/susan-bauer-wu.

Rev. Veronica M. Johnson serves as Outreach Director for Faith in Place, whose mission is to “empower people of diverse faiths and spiritualities to be leaders in advancing environmental and racial justice, providing resources to educate, connect, and advocate for healthier communities.” She has a bachelor’s degree in mechanical engineering and a master of divinity degree from McCormick Theological Seminary. She currently serves as co-pastor of Hyde Park Union Church. She has served previously in the Baptist, AME and UCC churches, and is the former president of the council for the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago.

Register by April 1 for a \$10 discount. Learn more and register at www.Prairiewoods.org/Spirituality-in-the-21st-century.



Labyrinth Walk

Thursday, Nov. 2, 6–7:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Leslie Wright



Come walk the Labyrinth with us! In this season of darkness and light, it is important to take time to slow down, reflect and renew our spirits. Join us as we walk our indoor labyrinth. All are welcome and no experience is required. We will provide some brief guidance at the beginning for those who may be new to this practice or have been away from it for a while. Labyrinths have been around for thousands of years. The circle and the path are symbols found across cultures and religious traditions. The

labyrinth and other spiritual practices help to ground us during unsettled times when our foundations seem to shift; sometimes we can't think our way out of or to something, and sometimes we need another way of being. When engaging with or praying a labyrinth, a person travels on a single path where the way in is the same as the way out. The labyrinth can be a metaphor for how we walk through life and the situations that may currently be confronting us. In her book *Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool*, Lauren Artress presents a four-fold path for praying the labyrinth:

- Remembering: Be open as you begin, notice what comes and remember you are loved.
- Releasing: On the way to the center, release those things that are causing you pain and confusion.
- Receiving: Enjoy the center, be still and linger. Take a deep breath. Receive what God has for you.
- Returning: Move back out into the world, more replenished, grounded, empowered, receiving a kindness and mercy. Look for an invitation with God to do the work in the world that is yours to do.

Fee: Free-will offering

Day of Self Renewal

Thursdays, Nov. 2 & Dec. 7, & Mondays, Nov. 13 & Dec. 11, 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

This popular program is now offered twice a month!

Facilitator: Rev. Jean Sullivan

Find rest and relaxation for mind, body and spirit! This tranquil day features your choice of two services, group guided meditation, Singing Bowl Prayer or Healing Sound Bath & Yogic Sleep, a private guest room, a fresh lunch, and access to the labyrinth and all that Prairiewoods has to offer. (Depending on the date, you may choose from massage, head and shoulder massage, reflexology, healing touch, spiritual direction, qigong, yoga or chair yoga. Visit www.Prairiewoods.org for details.) Registration, a nonrefundable/nontransferable deposit of \$50 and your top three service choices are required eight days in advance. (Masks and vaccination may be required.)

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

Into the Oneness: Qigong for Energy, Equanimity & Peace

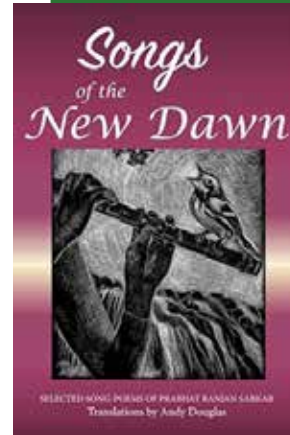
Thursdays, Nov. 2–16 & Nov. 30–Dec. 21, 12:45–1:35 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

Based on age-old Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), this gentle and accessible class involves meditative, healing energy and compassion-based standing movement, breath work, visualization, acupressure and seated practice. We begin by opening, rebalancing and cultivating Qi (universal life force energy-

Book Introduction

Songs of the New Dawn by Andy Douglas (an introduction by the author)



In the mid-1980s, I visited India and developed a love for mystical and devotional songs and poetry. In West Bengal I met a remarkable man, Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar, Indian philosopher, activist and spiritual teacher, who was sharply critical of the caste system and economic inequality in India.

Between the years 1982 and 1990, Sarkar composed over 5,000 songs, mostly in the Bengali language. I wanted to help capture in English the literary depth and beauty that the Bengali songs conveyed and decided to try to render some translations into a poetic form. The result is a new book, *Songs of the New Dawn*, a project I have been working on for many years.

Sarkar's songs are marvels of rhythm, melody and lyrical inspiration. The metaphors he uses for the spiritual life are rich and wide-ranging, his depictions of the natural world beautiful and his vision of social justice stirring. Most of all, his songs movingly depict the intimate relationship between human and Divine beloved.

These songs have been injected with a powerful insight, sense of purpose and love-energy. I strove to find a balance between the original spirit, rhythm and meaning of the lyrics, and a poetic, inspiring sensibility of the word's meanings in English. I have studied and can read the Bengali language, but I am not fluent.

These songs and this book are part of a larger movement, aimed at creating a more just and loving world. Sarkar developed a profoundly ecological philosophy called Neohumanism which calls for extending our love and respect not only to other humans, but to plants, animals and the inanimate world. Hundreds of schools around the planet are using this outlook as a basis for their educational pedagogy. He also created a new socioeconomic theory, the Progressive Utilization Theory, a rational and inclusive cooperative-based alternative to capitalism and communism. He was persecuted for his ideas but remained eternally optimistic.

These songs, and I hope these poems, contain elements of all these influences. Like the poetry of Rumi, I believe they can be powerful tools for opening one's heart and expressing the infinite desires within.

Spirit) throughout the body's energy pathways, centers and organs to assist with mental, emotional, physical and spiritual wellbeing. Wisdom from the Tao Te Ching, TCM Five Element Theory and beyond is sprinkled in to assist your practice of living life with greater ease, peace and harmony with the rest of nature. Class ends with seated meditation, which includes sending healing compassionate intention to others and the planet.
Fee: \$12 per session



Healing Sound Bath & Yogic Sleep Thursdays, Nov. 2 & Dec. 7, 1:45–2:35 p.m.

Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Catherine Quehl-Engel

Rebalance mind, body and spirit through the soothing, penetrating power of healing sound and vibration via singing bowls. Then drop into deepest levels of relaxation and peace through authentic, age-old Yogic Sleep (*Yoga Nidra*)—a reclined, meditative experience used by stress reduction clinics, integrative health care and mystics who savor resting in blissful Oneness with The Sacred. We will close with prayerful sound healing, including a lower-octave bowl played on or near (your choice) the shrine of your heart.

Fee: \$8

Civilized Wildlings: A Collaborative Community Art Project *Offered in Partnership with Iowa Ceramics Center & Glass Studio*

Saturday; Nov. 4; 9–10:30 a.m., 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m., 1–2:30 p.m. or 3–4:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Jill Foote-Hutton at the Iowa Ceramics Center & Glass Studio

The Iowa Ceramics Center & Glass Studio (ICCGS) and Prairiewoods, with grant funding from the Iowa Arts Council, are excited to announce Civilized Wildlings with multi-media artist Jill Foote-Hutton. This project uses

inspiration from native prairie grasslands in Eastern Iowa to create a mosaic art project during a series of free workshops at ICCGS. From the workshops, 20–35 mosaic projects will be selected to be a part of a larger community art installation at Prairiewoods next April. On Nov. 4, participants will learn to assemble small pieces of ceramics and glass to create a mosaic landscape design on a 10-by-10-inch board. We will cut, design and assemble pieces of pre-made and upcycled glazed ceramics and glass into our very own design. Projects should evoke inspiration from the native prairie grass landscape of Eastern Iowa. The mosaic design will then be affixed to the board with adhesive and dried overnight. All mosaic boards will be grouted, and the one-of-a-kind projects will be available for pick-up one week later. If your project is selected to be part of the large community art installation project, you will receive an email with detailed instructions. Registration through ICCGS is required.

Fee: Free, but registration is required

Journey Toward: A Future We Can Love

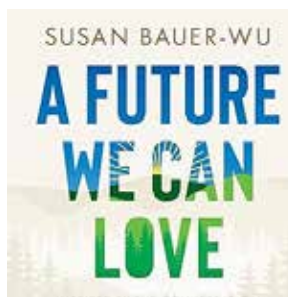
Mondays; Nov. 6, Nov. 13, Nov. 20 & Dec. 4; 4–5 p.m.

Facilitators: Ann Jackson, PBVM, & Rev. Jean Sullivan

Join us for a winter read and conversation of Susan Bauer-Wu's *A Future We Can Love: How We Can Reverse the Climate Crisis with the Power of our Hearts and Minds*.

The book was inspired by a conversation between the Dalai Lama and Greta Thunberg. We will journey toward active hope through four themes: Knowledge of Science and Spirit; Capacity of Earth and Humans; Will of Heartbreak and Wonderment; and ACTION! Join us in person or via Zoom for any one or more sessions.

Fee: \$20 per session, or \$75 for four-part series



Going Inward with Sounds & Vibrations

Mondays; Nov. 6, Nov. 20, Dec. 4 & Dec. 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 hour, we connect with our inner selves through the song of bowls. We are invited to sit or lie down to listen and just be. Registration is required.

Fee: \$10 per session

Drum Circle

Sundays, Nov. 12 & Dec. 10, 2–4 p.m.

Facilitator: Drum Iowa

Join Drum Iowa and Prairiewoods for a wonderful indoor drum circle. Don't forget your drums! (We also will have instruments available for you to borrow.) You don't need to be a magnificent drummer or musician to enjoy this



fun drum circle, and you are by no means obligated to participate. Spectators are welcome, and we'll have you drumming in no time! Registration is not necessary.
Fee: Suggested donation of \$10 (but this is a free event for all to enjoy)

Singing Bowl Prayer

Mondays, Nov. 13 & Dec. 11, 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 let the resonant sounds of Himalayan and crystal singing bowls relax the entire body and create a pathway for clearer connection with the divine. Registration is required by noon.

Fee: \$8

Threshold Conversations

**Tuesday, Nov. 14 & Dec. 12,
7–8:30 p.m.**

Facilitator: Karen Hering

Whether you're living through significant personal transitions or navigating a world reshaping itself faster than ever, you are invited to join an online conversation about how to make change more trustworthy. Each session focuses on one of the ten threshold skills featured in Karen Hering's book, *Trusting Change*. The time together will include selected content from Karen's book, silent time for writing or reflection, and small group sharing. The November topic is Widening What We Trust, and the December topic is Blessing the Journey—New Moon. Your voice will bring wisdom for others, while theirs may offer just the perspective you need on your threshold.

Fee: \$15

Soul Care: Creative Arts Grief Support Group

**Wednesdays, Nov. 15 & Dec. 20,
5:30–7 p.m.**

Facilitator: Jamie Siela, LISW
*Offered in Partnership with
UnityPoint Hospice*

In grief, our very foundation can be rocked. Take time to connect with others in grief and engage the creative spark. 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. On Nov. 15, create a memory box decoupage, a special place for mementos with your loved one. Feel free to bring copies of special recipes or photos to decoupage to the outside of your box, or use the materials provided. On Dec. 20, we will create string art to process how our grief is woven into different areas of our lives. We will reflect on how grief is experienced in physical wellbeing, relationships with others, self-identity, daily responsibilities and more. Registration is required nine days in advance. This group is a hybrid, offered both online and in person.

Fee: Free includes all art supplies

Every Step Is Home Book Discussion

Wednesday, Nov. 15, 6:30–8 p.m.

Facilitator: Lori Erickson

Join Lori Erickson as she speaks about her new book *Every Step Is Home: A Spiritual Geography from Appalachia to Alaska*, a memoir about spiritual sites and experiences in the United States. From the California redwoods and

South Dakota's Buffalo Roundup to New Mexico's Chaco Canyon, she explores the

themes of sacred water, air, fire, stone and other elements. Lori, who lives in Iowa City, is one of America's top travel writers specializing in spiritual journeys. She's the author of books that include *Holy Rover*, *Near the Exit* and *The Soul of the Family Tree*.

Fee: Free-will offering

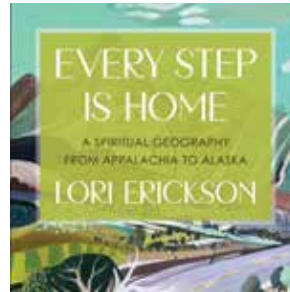
Rock Mandala Painting for the Whole Family

Saturday, Dec. 9, 2–4 p.m.

Facilitator: Andi Lewis

Spend a few hours creating art with your favorite people! Learn the art of rock painting with mandalas, which are sacred works of art in the form of a circle. Using smooth stones, paints and fine dotting tools, we will make beautiful, detailed mandalas. This is a fun, relaxing process that can be done by anyone, regardless of age. We will have time to paint several rocks and will be encouraged to take one rock home and leave one as a secret gift for a stranger to find. No experience or artistic skill is necessary, but kids 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult. (It is ideal for ages 10 and older.) Experiences together make a great holiday gift, so register today!

Fee: \$13 per person includes all supplies



Ongoing Programs

Metta Yoga

**Mondays & Thursdays; Nov. 2–20,
Nov. 27–Dec. 21; 9:30–10:30 a.m.,
10:45–11:45 a.m. (chair yoga) &
5:30–6:30 p.m.**

Facilitator: Heather English

Experience the healing powers of meditative yoga.

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

Go Deeper Thursdays

**Thursdays, Nov. 2–16 & Nov. 30–
Dec. 21, 4–5 p.m.**

Convener: Ellen Bruckner

Join this online community exploration and deepening of spiritual topics.

Fee: Free-will offering

Bridges to Contemplative Living with Thomas Merton first & third Thursdays; Nov. 2, Nov. 16, Dec. 7 & Dec. 21; 7–8:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Carole Butz

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

Fee: Free-will offering

**Men Exploring Faith second Thursdays, Nov. 9 & Dec. 14,
4–5:30 p.m.**

Facilitator: Linzy Martin

Join with a group of reflective men in honest conversation about life changes, either in person or via Zoom.

Fee: Free-will offering

Prairiewoods Knitters & Stitchers

**second Tuesdays, Nov. 14 & Dec. 12,
9:30–11:30 a.m.**

Facilitators: participants

Practice knitting and stitching as we create items for charity.

Fee: Free

**Evening Centering Prayer second & fourth Tuesdays; Nov. 14,
Nov. 28 & Dec. 12; 5:30–7 p.m.**

Facilitator: Judith Smith

Practice a contemplative prayer form to help deepen your relationship with God.

Fee: Free-will offering

We Want to Hear from You!

Please share your feedback about our newsletter with us in this brief survey that takes about four minutes to complete. We are continually striving to create a newsletter that inspires and informs you. We cannot do that without your input. There are several ways you can share your thoughts with us:

Take the survey in paper form and mail it back to us at 120 E Boyson Rd, Hiawatha IA 52233.

Take the survey in paper form and scan and email it back to us at ecospirit@prairiewoods.org.

Scan the QR code at right (or click here) to take the survey online.



1. How long have you received the Prairiewoods newsletter?
 1 year or less
 2–5 years
 More than 5 years
 2. How do you receive the newsletter?
 By mail
 Electronically
 Both
If both, why do you choose to receive it in both formats?

 3. Overall, how satisfied are you with the newsletter?
 Very satisfied
 Satisfied
 Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 Dissatisfied
 Very dissatisfied
 4. What do you enjoy most about the newsletter?

 5. What do you enjoy least?

 6. How important is the newsletter to you?
 I read every issue
 I read most issues (3 or more per year)
 I read the newsletter sporadically
 I rarely read the newsletter
 7. What sections interest you or do you read the most?
 Front page article
 Retreat information
 Program information
 Donation and/or volunteer list
 Special event information such as Holiday Bazaar, Garden Party, etc.
 Other: _____
 8. How often have you registered for a program or retreat after receiving the newsletter?
 Several times per year
 Once a year
 Less than once a year
 Never
 9. What information, topics or features would you like to see in future newsletters?

 10. How likely are you to recommend our newsletter to friends or family members?
 Very likely
 Somewhat likely
 Not likely
 11. Are you willing to help cover the cost of producing the newsletter with a gift of \$10 per year?
 Yes (see below)
 Not at this time
- Tell us a little about yourself:
12. How do you identify?
 Male
 Female
 Non-binary
 Prefer not to answer
 13. How do you describe your spiritual or religious affiliation?
 Christian
 Muslim
 Jewish
 Buddhist
 Hindu
 Spiritual not religious
 Agnostic
 Other: _____

Help Support Our Newsletter

Here are two ways you can help us be good stewards of our resources and produce a beautiful, informative and inspiring newsletter:

1. **Contribute a free-will offering of \$10.** Your gift of \$10 pays for a full year of newsletters delivered to you electronically or by mail. If you would like to make this gift, please visit www.Prairiewoods.org/Donate and mark “Newsletter” in the notes field, mail a check to Prairiewoods or call 319-395-6700 with your credit card information.
2. **Read your bimonthly newsletter online.** If you are willing to switch from paper to electronic, please scan the QR code at left with your phone’s camera and give us your name, address and email address. We’ll do the rest! (You can also call us at 319-395-6700 or email ecospirit@prairiewoods.org and we can make the change for you.) *Thank you for all you do to support Prairiewoods’ mission!*



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

Volunteering at Prairiewoods: Gina Sison Talks about Volunteering

In 2013 Metro Catholic Outreach (MCO) started a vegetable garden where my family volunteered to help in growing vegetables for their food pantry. In April of 2014, we got an email that the new garden site (Green Prairie Garden) would be at Prairiewoods, and that MCO had a new garden coordinator for those gardens. I mainly volunteer at the Green Prairie Garden (GPG) and the tower garden inside Prairiewoods that grows lettuce greens and herbs aeroponically.



What I like about volunteering is that whatever is being done here benefits not only the people in the community but the environment as well. The GPG, for example, not only produces food for the MCO food pantry and the Prairiewoods kitchen, but the vegetables are grown using organic practices. When I work at the tower garden inside the Center, I am reminded that the electricity being used by the aeroponic system is from a renewable energy source.

One of my favorite places to volunteer is in the GPG hoop house. Being someone who grew up in a place without winters, I noticed that the growing season in Iowa is too short. I wanted to learn how to use the hoop house in extending the growing season. Fortunately, Prairiewoods also offers classes about different topics, and I was able to attend a master gardener's class about extending the growing season. After a few years of helping plant the GPG hoop house, it was also exciting to collaborate with the former Prairiewoods ecospirituality coordinator and one of my fellow GPG volunteers to automate the cooling of the hoop house.

Another favorite of mine is working with the tower garden. When it arrived in 2017, I was able to work with the ecospirituality coordinator to understand how an aeroponic system works. Today, the tower garden is another tool for extending the growing season and an alternative for growing plants that do not do well in the heat of summer.

I think the chance to deliver food downtown at the MCO food pantry is always special for me. I get to see the MCO staff, who are always excited to see fresh produce being donated. And if you stay for some time during distribution, you would be able to see fresh produce being given away. I think it is why I keep coming back every year and try to help grow the best produce we can grow.

Volunteering on Wednesdays is what makes me understand more of what Prairiewoods is doing for the community and the environment. I've helped control invasive plants, collected seeds to propagate in the prairie, helped plant fruit trees and edible shrubs, harvested fruits from the orchard, and built garden plots for the Green Community Gardens.

I am able to do these things because there is always a very supportive Prairiewoods staff who guide and support me or my family as we do the work. Also, as with all the other areas I have volunteered, I am always amazed and inspired to see how my fellow volunteers give their time and talent when they come to Prairiewoods.

Donating at Prairiewoods: Carol Nilles & Bob Engler on Why They Donate

How long have you been coming to Prairiewoods, and what initially brought you here?

Carol: In the fall of 2008, I returned to Iowa after 30 years in Milwaukee. I needed a retreat and was told of a retreat center called Prairiewoods. The retreat was a "taste and see" experience. I felt at home.

Bob: I've been coming to Prairiewoods since 2016—seven years now. My wife brought me here with stories of her experiences with the people and volunteering in the laundry. I had to experience this Center. I couldn't believe such a place could exist in Cedar Rapids.

Is there a program or service that we provide that you particularly connect with?

Carol: I connect with the buildings, the gardens, the woods, the staff, the speakers, the musicians and the variety of participants' beliefs.

Bob: The "service" I connected with was the opportunity Prairiewoods provided to pursue spirituality not related to any particular religion but to the healing, exciting life that is modeled for us in nature—open to all beings, all inclusive, sharing responsibility with all for each other in a new way of living on this planet.

Where did you learn the importance of giving?

Carol: I learned the art of giving by having much given to me. I enjoyed working for nonprofits and was blessed with a family who supported me.

Bob: I learned the importance of giving from growing up in a small house with seven people, a couple animals, a piano, and a garden that sustained us through wars and economic depression. And now I see the Sisters and staff giving and giving—their time, their attention, their strength for all of us.



What inspired you to give to Prairiewoods?

Carol: Its example and message of caring for this planet in all of its facets is an absolute necessity.

Bob: The dynamism of the Prairiewoods mission is what inspires me to give of my time, my money, my enthusiasm, my encouragement. When there is a place doing something critical for all of us to live and survive the challenges of our times, it's crucial that we step up and give it our support.



120 E Boyson Rd
Hiawatha IA 52233

Help Us Update Our Records

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

- Please send your mailings electronically to _____.
- Please take us off your mailing list.
- Please note the address change.
- We receive duplicate mailings; please send only one to this address.

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



Prairiewoods Holiday Bazaar

Saturday, Nov. 18, 8 a.m.–1 p.m.

Join us for Prairiewoods' annual Holiday Bazaar to jump start your Christmas shopping and get in the spirit of the season! There is no entrance fee, and coffee, warm apple cider and breakfast pastries will be available for purchase.

The Holiday Bazaar features more than a dozen local artists with handcrafted items including:

- one-of-a-kind jewelry
- pottery
- handknit hats, mittens, blankets and other goods
- wood crafts
- purses and bags
- and much, much more!

In addition, check out the following items from the Prairiewoods Gift Shop:

- fresh cut greenery from the grounds at Prairiewoods
- Prairiewoods Tree-shirts (long-sleeve and short-sleeve)
- Trappistine caramels and assorted candies
- books on spirituality and ecology
- wind chimes
- and so much more!

Don't miss this chance to shop handcrafted goods from local artists and get into the spirit of the season!

