



Actions of Love

by Julie Keefer

In May I, along with about forty others, attended a workshop entitled "Thresholds of Collective Wisdom" facilitated by Angeles Arrien and Patrick O'Neill. Angeles is a cross-cultural anthropologist, author, educator and corporate consultant who has researched the universal truths which run through all of the world's religions. Patrick founded Extraordinary Conversations, a coaching and consulting organization in Toronto.

We were there to focus on universal aspects of personal and corporate leadership that would liberate the highest good for ourselves and for others.

These seven principles of journeying together toward reconciliation are:

- 1) Purpose: Having an intentionality of purpose that has heart and meaning because it ignites action. "Purpose is a journey and not a destination," says Rilke. Our purpose is our vehicle of transformation and requires allegiance of wisdom over ego, mutuality over individuality, service over ambition, integrity over fear. Leadership is meant to be given in freedom, and not for carrying a cross. We are to show up with our sufficiency expressed in our authenticity and strength of character.
- 2) Responsibility: We are to take responsibility for that purpose with truth, imagination, passion, and integrity. Being consummate adventurers, exercising curiosity, and not letting the self critic be stronger than self-worth empowers authentic action. Embracing silence, we live life as an inside out journey. Investing in what is working achieves more than investing in what is not working.
- 3) Trust: Operating in personal sufficiency and believing in other's sufficiency builds trust. With trust we can be flexible and welcome whatever comes.

Exercising discernment, not judgement, comes with sufficiency. Trusting ourselves we can more easily be clear and consistent. Saying what we mean and meaning what we say builds trust as well as being accountable and generous of heart.

4) Intimacy: Intimacy is established through honest, vulnerable heart connections with communications of gratitude, joy validation, compassionate truth, apology and forgiveness. Being humble and feeling what you feel is important to creative conflict. Accepting difference is required. Connecting with nature nurtures intimacy. View giving and receiving love as an honor, not a burden.

5) Mutuality: Invest in creating contexts of mutuality and support for creative problem solving. Honor the need for diversity in finding sustainable solutions to serve the highest good. Work collaboratively with open, clear and adequate ground rules for effective dialogue. Recognize every dynamic in relationships as being co-created. Be human and vulnerable and take care of your own needs.

6) Creativity: Align with the fire of creative action, trusting sufficiency and not fearing conflict, but seeing it as a creative impetus toward meeting the needs of all. Check out assumptions for their truth. Stay open to creative possibilities. Use win-win thinking. Build shared meanings. Report authentically what you observe, feel, want, need or are requesting.

7) Collective wisdom: The fruit of the embodiment of the above six principles necessitates the surrender of ego's desire to serve self. Yet, ego must be strong enough to be willing to choose actions that serve the greater good, not for mere personal glory. Wisdom requires impeccable living with hope and optimism in the face of whatever comes. It requires time for personal reflection and individuation. It requires

humility and acceptance of a Higher Power or Universal Agent of Love.

Both facilitators carefully created a safe and hospitable context by introducing agreements that would guide us to honest and self-revelatory inner work without internal or external blame or judgment. We were encouraged to show up fully as responsible participants with our thoughts and feelings applying the aspects of leadership listed above, within the group process. Compassion and patience toward oneself and one another was emphasized and practiced.

The challenge was also given to examine our assumptions and seek to see things from different perspectives, not letting fear, pride and feelings of threat keep us stuck in old ways of thinking. Questions for clarification were important for understanding ourselves and one another. Confidentiality was essential both to honoring one another, and to the others in our lives who influence our journeys.

We worked with the image of what Angeles calls the Four Chambered Heart. If we live well into the above seven principles of wisdom, we develop a healthy four chambered heart; one that is full, strong, open and clear. One that enables us to stand behind the gift we bring of who we are to the world.

If we honestly, openly and compassionately reflect on our journey, we heal the injured instincts of the heart. The heart then becomes the clearer organ of vision it is meant to be. Healing the heart is the work of the Inner Warrior and is at the heart of empowering leadership.

Yes, the journey to enlightened and empowered leadership for myself has been and is about healing my own wounded, hardened heart so that my full giftedness and joy might be made complete; my life lived to the fullest with clear intention and integrity of purpose. Wholeheartedness.

Risking loss of pseudo harmony by taking responsibility for my truth is the process for healing my heart. If I don't speak my truth, who will? But speaking it becomes a matter of how, when and with whom. And at the same time it becomes an ever more subtle work of self-awareness, clarity of motivation and skill in communication so that truth telling does not rupture relationship unnecessarily. It requires me to accept, ever more fully, the "sufficiency" of my mind, body, soul and spirit.

Angeles reminded us that we are all "strong, sensitive and subtle creatures". So the more intimacy (in-to-me-see) I seek, the more subtle aspects of unconsciousness I become aware of; seeing the subtle ways I can do violence to myself and to others by violating the patterns of leadership, thus eroding my capacity as a leader in the highest sense. As I become aware and bring to light my unconscious assumptions and projections and make changes in my behavior, I am performing the actions of love that heal my heart and also empower the healing of others. In this way I am contributing to the larger collective shift toward wise leadership. The fully developed heart is the hope of glory.

"Work like you don't need money, love like you've never been hurt, and dance like no one's looking".



MorningStar Calendar 2003

(Refer to the last newsletter for details or look up our web site at: www.morningstarretreatcenter.net or call 231-768-4368 for more information. All retreats are \$40, including lunch.)

Women and Sage-Aging

August 16, 10-5 with the wisdom of all who come, including the MorningStar Sisterly

Re-Connecting with Nature

August 23, 10-5 with Julie Keefer and Elise Schlaikjer

Writing Your Story

September 27, 10-5 with Marcia Perry

Archetypal Journey to Wholeness and Love with Julie Keefer (repeated)

October Sunday, Oct. 12th 10-5
(Come on retreat on Saturday and join Becky Kirk in a creative activity and autumn campfire.)

Integrative Breathwork

October 25, 10-6 with Inie Bijkerte, Sylvia Kallemeyn, and Julie Keefer

Embracing Anger as Creative Ally

November 22, 10-5 with Julie Keefer

Circles of Process Art, Conversation, Music and Firelight:

Sign up for these dates:

July 26, August 30, September 27

Bonfire, music, poetry and storytelling with Becky Kirk and John Harper.... an invitation for all to come and share their gifts... or just enjoy the campfire. 7:30-9:30

August 2, 3-5

Creative process with the medium of collage mandala with Sylvia Kallemeyn. Sylvia is also available for massage (\$45 per session) during this weekend.

August 9, 3-5

Creative Expressions, or nature exploration with Becky Kirk, artist and naturalist.

NOTE: Please call to let us know if you will be coming to a circle. Free-will donations for the needs of MorningStar are welcomed for all gatherings, circles and bonfires.

To Register for a day long retreat:

Send registration to:

MorningStar Adventures
20564 MorningStar Trail
LeRoy, MI. 49655

NOTE: Consider incorporating a personal retreat overnight with your retreat day for \$35 per person.

Personal Retreat and Spiritual Midwifery

If you are uncomfortable coming on retreat alone, yet want to experience the nurture and healing found in solitude and silence in a cozy cabin amidst nature, you can schedule a single or daily session of holistic spiritual midwifery with Julie Keefer for exploring what is surfacing in your awareness to bring greater understanding and integration for your journey. Suggested donation:

One night and one session; \$75 Two nights and two sessions: \$140.

Following The Morning *

We are comprehending the fact that this vision of MorningStar has been broad. It encompasses many aspects which we recognize as aspects of the larger collective movement toward greater spiritual sustainability in our individual and collective lives. It has involved:

- 1) The establishment of a lifestyle where Elise and I have lived and modeled living in harmony with nature in greater self-sufficiency and in community.
- 2) Creating an extended local community that gathers for worship, learning, and mutual holistic support.
- 3) Inviting, supporting and being agents of healing on the inner journey. Being involved in social justice work, both locally and nationally.
- 4) Pioneering circle work in this region; giving ourselves and others a safe place to express our soul's pain and joy.
- 5) Empowering others to have the courage to follow their soul's call.
- 6) Making an impact on the direction of holistic healing and eclectic, yet disciplined spirituality.
- 7) Navigating the dark waters of personal transformation, as the catalyst and teacher for our work in the world.
- 8) Developing an integrated model of leadership where the inner journey is fundamental to the outer journey.
- 9) Consistently communicating these values and this work to a broad network of people for 21 years.

What many people are dreaming to live, we have been living into for 21 years. Yet, we have struggled to see clearly the value it holds as we've been in the midst of the organic unfoldment with all its fits and starts of creative experimentation and not always seeing the larger context of its full meaning. Instead of seeing clearly that this work has helped open the collective path that is needed at this time in our culture, we rather bemoaned that in our smallness we were invisible. NOT SO!!

And now, what are the new buds beginning to emerge after a period of reflection, integration and renewal?

The dream to protect parcels of land that surround MorningStar has become yet more fulfilled with the recent purchase of a total of thirty more acres by

friends of MorningStar whose intentions are to be supportive to the community and work of MorningStar, but also to possibly become involved in some way with this community and with the vision as it intersects their values and interests.

Elise and I have a dream that a community of people, such as this, will come together around the intent and purpose to have the land of M* continue, after we are gone, to serve the needs of those seeking greater healing and integration in their lives, and as a center of empowerment for learning and living more sustainable lives in harmonious relationship with all Life.

This dream is slowly becoming a reality. It has taken deep faith, perseverance, personal transformation, and hope to weather the storms of the call to the vision of MorningStar which, for us, represents the larger vision of the journey to wholeness, love and justice intended for all. This vision has changed us. And it will continue to change us because we want MorningStar to be an agent of change for this war-torn, ravaged world.

Earth is too sacred and life too precious to invest our energies otherwise.

We invite you, in your own way, to become part of the community of MorningStar that is journeying together toward living this vision in our everyday lives.

Supporting MorningStar by Mary Weber

I believe our earth needs large tracks of land that are cared for with love and held as sacred space.

I believe our society needs wilderness places of hospitality and retreat for all to have the opportunity to connect with the Divine in nature.

I believe people need guidance to navigate their journeys.

I believe our world needs intimate circles and supportive communities to help individuals grow to their full potentials.

I believe people supported in these ways can then gift the world with their energies for peace, justice,

and healing for all- The Divine's work through human hands and hearts.

I know MorningStar is such a space providing these kinds of support.

It is the vehicle for this community's healing work in this world.

It is the vessel for circles and community built on love.

I believe the world needs MorningStar as an agent for change and healing.

I have a vested interest in the continuation of the work of MorningStar because I need what MorningStar has to offer, as so many others do. I also need such a place to offer my gifts to the world.

I can't not commit myself to supporting a work that so closely matches my beliefs and values; a place that supports me as well.

For all these reasons, I commit to ongoing, intentional physical, financial, and spiritual support of MorningStar.

I encourage all who feel similarly to dream, imagine and ponder ways to ensure MorningStar's continued presence. Then act.

MorningStar News

With Gratitude

We are grateful to Marcia Perry, Pam Poley, Sylvia Kallemeyn, Becky Kirk and Inie Bijkerte for giving time to MorningStar this year through facilitation of events. And to Ginny Hyataka for helping facilitate more effective "ground rules" with which to facilitate more effective group process with the MorningStar board of directors.

Morning Glory

Thanks to Barbara Carvill and her new hardwood floors, we now have wall to wall carpeting in Morning Glory! It feels cozy and looks so inviting! Thanks to Mary Weber for working with Julie to install it.

New Classical Labyrinth

Elise has built a seven circuit stone labyrinth near the garage. She has also added some wonderful surprises for your labyrinth experience. Elise is available to have a conversation with you about creating and using labyrinths.

Composting "Inhouse"

Brian and Karen Cool built a composting "inhouse" room in the garage. It is a special enclosed place, built of scrap lumber, ingenuity and a sense of playfulness. This gives us a more private and comfortable bathroom facility while participating in saving water and providing fertilizer for our fruit trees!! Sawdust is added for composting. It's great!

Organic Gardens

And although we have had an unusually cold summer, and all kinds of "varmint", the MorningStar organic gardens continue to delight the eye, bring beauty to the cabins, and food to our tables. Elise welcomes conversations on healthy eating, the practice of organic and sustainable gardening. She is hard at work now planting and planning how to winterize part of the garden so we can have some of our own food during the winter. With farm water and fuel for transportation becoming more and more of an issue, we need to be thinking more about how we can live within our own bioregions. (A bioregion is a land and water territory whose limits are defined not by political boundaries, but by the geographical limits of human communities and ecological systems.) Elise promises that in the next newsletter there will be more on this. She will also share more of her concern about genetically engineered foods which she sees as a spiritual issue, as well as a practical one.

The Cottage Book Shop

Remember to order any books with free shipping through The Cottage Book Shop. Stating your connection with M* will give MorningStar 10% for every book sold. What a deal!! 1-800-254-5536, pin- 7186 e-mail: siepker@aol.com Thank you!!

Some of our book recommendations:

PEACE IS THE WAY, edited by Walter Wink

NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION, by Marshall B. Rosenberg

SMALL WONDERS, by Barbara Kingsolver

THE SECRET LIFE OF BEES, by Sue Monk Kidd

THE HIDDEN WOUND by Wendell Berry

LEAP by Terry Tempest Williams

COSMIC DANCE by Joyce Rupp

AGING TO SAGE-ING by Zalman Schachter-Shalomi

WILD LIFE by Molly Gloss

ENEMY WOMEN by Paulette Jiles

LAST GIFT OF TIME: Life Beyond Sixty by Carol G. Heilbrun

books. cats.



life is good.

Retreatant Letter

As I reflect on my week at MorningStar, I realize it has been almost two years. The images and memories are so vivid it seems like yesterday.

Always in the past I had thought I needed a person or medicines to help me through my problems. This time I listened to my inner wisdom and chose a natural way. Your gentle, nurturing presence along with the safe natural environment, allowed me to work through many painful issues at my own pace. It was the beginning of my trusting my inner voice and utilizing nature as a natural healer in my life.

I feel blessed that the MorningStar sanctuary exists and was there when I so desperately needed an escape from an insane world. I am hoping to make another retreat, this one from the perspective of relaxing, refreshing, refueling.

Love, Peace and Harmony, Brenda

The Why and What of A Personal Retreat

by Julie Keefer

A friend recently wrote and expressed not having enough time for herself because so many important and necessary concerns occupy her days. This was my response to her:

It is easy to get caught up in busyness, but it is not impossible to bring awareness of Spirit's presence with us in daily life. We can more easily be present if we use deep breathing with letting go of tension and become more aware of how we are feeling. The practice of gratitude is also helpful.

This is ultimately the challenge of spirituality; living it in every moment! Yet, the times of solitude and silence are still needed for deep listening and guidance. We need time to uncover the emotions and needs that make it so hard to hang on to our centeredness in the midst of the day's challenges.

Staying in tune with ourselves is healthier and more conducive to good relationship than getting so far away from our feelings, needs and spiritual guidance. Distance from ourselves leads us to making increasingly poorer decisions for ourselves and for others. At least this is how it works for me. Perspective is easy to lose if I don't stay mindful. And, of course, I do lose it, but it teaches me how much I need Spirit's guidance for a life of greater balance.

Balance requires periods of disengagement from the usual demands of my days. I try to begin my day with some kind of centering; breath meditation, body prayer, journaling, reflective reading, a walk in nature. I live with a lot of external silence which enables me to be listening throughout the day for inspirations, feelings, intuitions, and calls to action. These are all ways to more deeply listen to what is going on in my life.

But over time I need to remove myself from my surroundings in order to refresh my perspectives about the particulars of my life. Without that, it is easy to forget the larger frame of purpose in which I am living my life.

Retreat time is essentially "being time". I usually invite people to spend a good portion of their retreat time opening their senses and paying attention to nature and their immediate surroundings. Nature tends to have a calming, insightful and restorative effect with those who can open to it. Retreat time is also time to rest, to journal experiences, dreams and longings and the feelings associated with them. It is time to seek a deeper clarity about the needs

under your feelings and the direction those needs are calling you toward. A particular book, poem, psalm, scriptural passage or song can also be a catalyst bringing comfort, inspiration and insight for your journey.

In solitude we are invited to deepen our relationship with the Spirit at the Heart of All Life. This enables us to return to community and to work with a greater clarity of purpose, renewed energy and more trust in the mystery and love that sustains us.

My work as a spiritual midwife entails being an active listener, helping you activate your own inner capacity to discern the truth and meaning of what you are sensing, feeling, intuiting, knowing and longing for in your inner and outer life. I might use a variety of ways to approach this such as journal exercises, guided imagery, body awareness, visualization, or creative expression. Once you know how to be in silence with greater awareness and skill, your inner resources can more effectively lead the way.

There is nothing more exciting for me than to see how the Holy Midwife works with a soul that is open and desiring to be guided into greater wholeness and love. This, truly, is the Great Work, the Grand Adventure meant for this life. Imagine our world where this Adventure takes priority!!



© Angela Wernicke 1989

Celtic Mysteries

