



## Following the Morning \*

As we reflect back over the past twenty years of MorningStar's presence in the world, we are in awe of the faithfulness of God's Spirit, of Wisdom's Presence, in bringing healing and guidance to our lives and to our work. We are privileged to be caretakers of a humble piece of land and simple abodes that have meant so much to so many. And feel privileged to have given witness and assistance to the Spirit's transformative work in us and in those who have made the journey to MorningStar with open hearts and minds.

The reasons people have come to MorningStar include; crisis, grief, emptiness, the need to connect with self and nature, a sense of fragmentation, spiritual hunger, seeking spiritual vision, to find wisdom and guidance, to reconnect with the feminine, to get support for life transitions, to rest and renew, to create ritual and celebrate a rite of passage, to explore new edges of creativity, and to learn.

MorningStar's context of hospitality is manifest in the acceptance of diversity, in the support of community, in the healing beauty and wildness of nature, and in the healing space of one to one and small group encounters. This hospitality has been upheld in devotion to Jesus' call to love the Earth, the Spirit and the Community, beginning with ourselves. These are the abundant gifts of God that, in right relationship, makes life the extraordinary journey that it is. Learning to let the Spirit guide, heal and teach us of her ways, we have come to accept that it can take a lifetime to grow a vision and a community. These grow in proportion to the faith and transformation of those involved.

As we evolve into a community of those called to live the MorningStar vision of a naturally embodied spirituality, we are growing as well into a larger community of those called to assume more responsibility for the vision and needs of MorningStar herself. As this unfolding occurs, MorningStar can move more fully into areas of outreach and education in the local community and greater world. Yet our greatest gift and call is to invite the deeper transformational work that occurs when people seek the Heart of Love in this healing context of hospitality. We invite you to partake of MorningStar's hospitality as you continue your journey to the Heart of Love.

## MorningStar News

### Web Site Coming!!

Yes, we are becoming global!!! We've decided, for better or worse, richer or poorer, that more people need to know about the resource that MorningStar is for healing and re-education. Sally Bloem connected us with Rachel Bajema to give us a professional hand in creating our site. We are excited and ready to share who we are with a wider audience. The site name is [morningstarretreatcenter.net](http://morningstarretreatcenter.net) and we hope to have it up by the end of August, if not before. We are grateful to Agnes Masselink for making this possible.

### The Cottage Book Shop

Our apologies for having the wrong telephone number for The Cottage Book Shop! It is: 1-800-254-5536, pin-7186. Remember to state your connection with MorningStar and they will give MorningStar 10% for every book sold. And shipping is free!! What a deal!!

### Working Assets...and M\*

Another way to help support MorningStar is to sign up for long distance service with Working Assets. If you tell them we sent you they will give us \$10 off our bill. It is a socially responsible company and donates 1% of their income to social and environmental justice organizations that you vote for. They also give you important issues to speak out about and two free phone calls to make them. We also round off our bill which goes to these organizations. Call them at 800 548-2567.

### Hobbit Hut Camping

If camping interests you, an ideal place is by the Hobbit Hut with its screened in porch. This is a good option for pet owners who don't want to leave their pets behind.

### M\* needs:

We are needing to replace several windows that are cracked, or seals broken, and repair window frames. The estimated cost is approx. \$500. Your tax-free donation would be a welcomed help in this project.

## MorningStar Retreats

With Julie Keefer and Elise Schlaikjer

### Silent Retreat: Re-Connecting with Nature

**October 5th 10-4** In the simplicity and beauty of the autumn forest we will explore various ways to heighten our senses and open the windows of our perception. The aim is to bring awareness of our embeddedness in nature and experience nature as a source for restoration and inspiration.

Suggested donation, including lunch \$40

With a follow up personal retreat day retreat: \$70

### Mask Making, Saturday November 2, 10-4

Capturing one of our "many selves", mask making is a powerful way to make conscious and celebrate aspects of ourselves. Masks are made with plaster cast material. Bring items that might be used for decoration.

Suggested Donation: \$50 including lunch, mask and creative materials. With an additional personal retreat day: \$80

### Labyrinth Retreat/ Workshops

Elise and Julie are available to travel to your area with three portable labyrinths; 28' Chartres (indoor use), 14' rainbow classic (outdoor or indoor), 12' Heart of Chartres (inside) and several finger labyrinths. If your church or group would like a retreat designed around the labyrinth, here or there, let us know. Our themes can vary. If you are interested in building a labyrinth Elise is available for consultation.

### Other Retreat/Workshop Themes

Available at M\*, or beyond, for your group

Women's Spirituality

Archetypes for Self-Knowledge and Empowerment

Listening With the Heart/Contemplative Prayer

Embodied Spirituality

The Spirituality of Food and Vegetarian Cooking

Activating the Inner Compass/ Wheel of Life Teachings

Ecospirituality

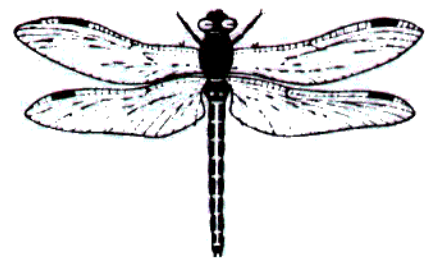
Unmasking the Powers Within/Mask Making

Tools of Inner Awareness and Healing

### Life and Vision Consultations

Apart from the Spiritual Midwifery that Julie offers, Julie and Elise together are available upon appointment to prayerfully listen to your, or you and your partner's, life situation, issue, project, or vision asking questions and giving feedback to help in your discernment process. Suggested donation: \$55-65 for an hour and a half.

To register for a retreat send a non-refundable \$25 deposit to MorningStar, 20564 Morningstar Trail, LeRoy, MI 49655



Lie quietly along the earth  
That sky may send its strength through you  
Into the spinning planet.  
Absorb from eons of tumultuous change  
The rhythms pulsing up through fire and water,  
rock and roots of growing  
things.  
Your body filtering with flesh and spirit  
Earth's vibrant offer to the sky.  
You are the instruments of peace,  
The promise of renewal to a time and place not of  
your own body  
But dependent on your willingness to give  
yourself to earth and sky:  
To make belief in goodness shape a thousand years  
to come.  
May blessings be your gift, both given and  
received. - Judith Billings  
from Blue Mountain by F. Lynne Bachleoa

# MorningStar: A Place of Restoration

by Dr. Dawn Yankou, Canada

Morningstar has been a place of deep restoration for me personally, as it has been for many, many others. Increasingly, the connection between natural environments such as Morningstar and well-being is supported by science. Morningstar allows for time to reflect in a natural environment. Reflection, particularly in the presence of the aesthetic, is most helpful in our being able to make sense of our lives.

As a professor at a major university in Ontario, Canada, I have conducted funded research looking at the natural environment, depression and attention. Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989) states that nature is a most powerful restorative environment. A restorative environment is one that improves the ability to concentrate or pay attention.

Attention is the capacity to block out distractions in the external world (i.e. noise) and the internal world (i.e. worries) in order to concentrate on needed information in the environment. Being able to concentrate allows us to make sense of our lives and function effectively day-to-day.

Research evidence also suggests that natural settings are important for reflection and restoring attention. Additionally, there is evidence that the natural environment also is associated with improved mood states, and well-being. I would hypothesize further, that the natural environment is restorative or healing not only intellectually and emotionally, but also spiritually. This notion is not new.

Our culture is one in which we are constantly being bombarded with information requiring attention. When our ability to concentrate diminishes we experience attention fatigue. This fatigue, a state we all experience, manifests as distractibility, irritability, increased errors; and impaired social behavior, decision-making and planning skills. We may withdraw and hesitate to help others. Without the capacity to concentrate, especially in the presence of distractions, our lives would become chaotic.

We are in great need of reconnection with natural environments through reflection to rest and restore our attention, our daily lives, and our

very selves. I know Morningstar to be an environment that invites reflection and restoration at the deepest level for those called to be there.

The problem is how to remain whole in the midst of the distractions of life; how to remain balanced, no matter what shocks come in at the periphery and tend to crack the hub of the wheel.

--Chris Casson Madden

## Gardener's Gleanings

"Let the beauty that we love be what we do. There are hundreds of ways to kneel and kiss the ground" ....Rumi

While kneeling in the vegetable garden and pulling weeds, I came across a cluster of tiny iridescent pearls. Exploring gently with my fingers I found that they belonged to the slug lying unobtrusively next to them. So unobtrusive that it took my eyes awhile to spot her earth colored body. Such a contrast to her snowy eggs! Gazing in wonder for some time, I finally slid my trowel gently under her and her progeny and carried them outside the garden to a spot where they would be safe and could be about the work that they were created to do in this world. No longer are they my "enemy" to be destroyed, but rather revered for their unique role in nature. My job is to find a way for us to live in harmony. Now when I find one in my garden, I gently gather it up and place it safely in a similar situation but in the woods. One small way I am learning to kneel and kiss the ground.....for all is sacred and worthy of respect.

Elise has been hard at work in the vegetable garden and has created a meditation corner which is open to all.



# The Faith Fire

by Ann W. Wakenhut (Lakeview MI)

And how do I build a faith fire? For years I have carefully structured the fire, done it according to instructions, the way I was taught in survival training, placing the small dry tinder first, adding small pieces of twigs and then larger. However, each time I built it, the tiny flame would flicker hopefully and then die. I remained cold, uninspired, discouraged.

I wanted my faith fire immediately! I wanted to have instructions on its creation that I could follow with predictable results. Not so! Blizzards occurred, winds howled, still no fire. Luckily I sat in my house with my central heat. "No need for a primitive fire", I said to myself. "Why bother with all that unreliable stuff", I scoffed. "I have modern conveniences and I'm warm".

I settled into my daily routine, forgetting my desire for the simple faith fire. Deep inside sat a chunk of ice, seeping its frigid drops into my soul. I knew I was freezing to death, drip by drip, although I appeared alive to the crowd. The symptoms were clear evidence: numbness, confusion, bitterness, a silent wish for release from the world, eyes that saw no beauty, a loss of hope.

So I gathered some dry leaves from my brittle spirit. I took some tiny twigs from deep inside and began my feeble "faith fire". In my desperation, I worked too quickly, built it haphazardly until I finally realized I needed to gently, tenderly kneel on the damp ground, light a few leaves and softly, sweetly place one tiny twig at a time on the fragile flame, remembering to let it breathe as it started its life.

And when it appeared to be failing, I needed to barely breathe into it. Too impatient a breath blows it out. It must be a sensitive one, like a gentle kiss we would place on a baby, just fresh from the womb. This breath must be released so close to the flame that often the smoke burns my eyes and I want to pull back from its discomfort.

"Trust the closeness, tend the new life, add another twig to its simple structure", I say to myself. "Wait, watch, sit in awe as its life grows into rising flames. Hear its crackling life, feel the warmth of its red coals, its core of spiritual breath".

I allow the flame to warm my skin and travel into my soul as I add larger sticks and then a log. Too heavy for the structure, it collapses and the

flames are gone. Panicking, I return to my knees and gently remove the log, blowing on the remaining coals. I start over with little twigs, remembering to calm my hasty actions.

This time the flames return quickly, coming from the coals deep within. I sit staring into the fire, imprinting its image on my soul, feeling the warmed fluid in my veins pulse life to my numb limbs.

I am merely a primitive fire builder who comes to the light as all animals of nature have for hundreds of years, fascinated with its miracle, desperately needing its beauty, warmth, flickering reassurance.



Silence and Solitude enable  
Connection with Mind  
Compassion of Heart  
Strength of Soul

"In silence we discover ourselves, our actual presence to the life in us and around us. When we are present, deeply attentive, we cannot be busy controlling. Instead we become beholders -- giving ourselves up to the mystery of things. We become more willing to let things be. And, as a consequence, we can also let ourselves be.

Through silence our days are illuminated -- like rooms filled with light -- so we may inhabit our lives."

From *Sharing Silence* by Gunilla Norris:

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20564 Morningstar Trail  
LeRoy, MI. 49655  
231-768-4368  
morningstar@netone.com.net  
Recycled paper with soy ink  
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LeRoy, MI

Joy

To save paper and postage, please  
let us know if you do not wish  
to receive our mailings. Thanks!

Return Service Requested

### Song of Gratitude Julie Keefer

I am reminded in the beauty of each day the importance of beginning with three attitudes: gratitude, humility, and trust. It is so easy to get bogged down in the fear of injustice and environmental destruction....or attitude of not enoughness of whatever. I must stay connected to gratitude for the beauty and goodness each day holds and for what has been provided in the miracle of life.

Humility is remembering that I do not carry the world on my shoulders; I only carry what is given me and am given who and what I need to do my part. This requires trust that a larger wisdom is working things out in Her own way and time toward the greatest possible goodness for all. No matter how tough it gets, I will have what I need to make it through.

Yes, today, and every day love is present in each cell of my body, in each molecule I breathe! Just to exist is to experience Love's presence whether I realize it or not. Only my mind can separate me from it by fear or unawareness.

Friend Mary Weber sent me an inspired message received as she awoke one morning, "You are lovable and loved by your existence alone. Nothing else is required."

May we, this day and every day, give our minds, hearts and bodies this message so that we will naturally respond to the Spirit's healing work in us and through us, knowing we will be given everything we need in every circumstance we face.

Yes, it is a matter of attitude and discipline to stay open to the gifts. May it be so!