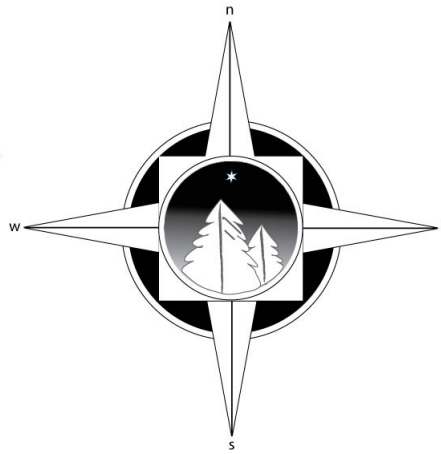


**MorningStar**  
Empowerment for the journey  
to wholeness and love



**Adventures**  
In the Dawn  
of a new day

Spring 2009 Issue 1

Volume 24

## ***Following the Morning ☆***

*by Julie D. Keefer*

For the past few years, MorningStar has been in a time of transition. We have moved from the foundational years of creating MorningStar to deepening that foundation with our expanded contemplative, learning community seeking to live a simple, sustainable life; one of devotion to the journey toward wholeness, embodied love, and the hospitality that MorningStar offers others in their own quest for embodying spiritual, ecological values.

Elise's move back East last November to be closer to her family brought Mary, Amanda, and me into greater unity and deepening partnership toward our call. We believe that it is of great importance in creating a different world to first attend to the needs of the vulnerable within ourselves, in society, and in nature, with attention to the movement of Spirit guiding each of us toward greater awareness and acceptance of who we are, in both our divinity and our humanity. With grace we learn together how to integrate both into our daily lives, through acts of compassion, forgiveness, justice, and love for all life. This is a work of a lifetime.



We are grateful for our expanded community. Our webmaster Chris Gaidica, in addition to generously donating his time to host and guide our website rebuilding process, meets weekly with the three of us for meditation and sharing. Our board, consisting of Inie Bijkerk, Barbara Carvill, Becky Kirk, Sylvia Kallemeyn, and associates Karen Bota and Katie Reitemier, meets with us monthly to join in discernment around the vision and business of MorningStar, as well as to con-

tinue the deepening of our relationships while sharing our journeys with each other. Brian and Karen Cool are heading into their 16<sup>th</sup> year of working with us on a contract basis. Though we are unable to financially remunerate them, Mary and Amanda continue to give their time and energy to MorningStar while maintaining outside employment at least two days a week. Together, the support of our community acts as a strong root system, strengthening and sustaining the vision and mission of MorningStar, for which I'm deeply grateful.

We are grateful, as well, for your ongoing presence and support for our continued journey, especially in light of the difficult economic and environmental times, and hope you will continue to support us.

Our overall aim is collective liberation from systems of domination, violence, and oppression and the cultivation of an alternative community rooted in tenderness, compassion, love, kindness, generosity, recognition of the sacredness of all life, and the awe and wonder at the grandeur of the universe. Yet, neither liberation nor the creation of alternative community is possible without concurrent transformation within ourselves as we allow the values of the dominant culture to be rooted out of us. True liberation comes as we enter into full aliveness ourselves and align ourselves and our work in the service of Life. This is the true catalyst for aliveness in others. Offering retreat space and resources to those seeking this ongoing work of wholeness and clarity of one's own sacred process continues to be our purpose. ☆

We may never come to full knowing of God  
till we know first clearly our own soul.  
~Julian of Norwich



# *My MorningStar Adventure*

*by Amanda Sutherland*

A little over seven years ago, I plopped down on the sofa across from a psychologist I'd only recently begun to seek guidance from, and through tears of exasperation and despair told him, "I don't know what to believe anymore! I believe in Jesus, but that's it!" I'd lost my trust in the church and in scripture as I understood it then. I was feeling unmoored from what had held me through 27 years of my life. A light went on for him, and he rolled over to his desk, pulled out a rolodex card, wrote a name and a number on it, then told me about a little place not far from here called MorningStar. The name and the number on the card was Julie Keefer's.

I made my way out to MorningStar to meet with Julie not long after that. I turned off of 13 Mile Road, onto a path that was breathtaking and mysterious all at once. The rows and rows of pines lining the driveway, the strong, gentle and protective presence that they are, ushered me down a winding road deeper into the woods. The road curved to the left, and my heart was squeezed by the beauty of the sun-dappled forest of fresh, young maples. At the end of the path sat a small, no-big-deal cabin- that is anything but no-big-deal in its archetypal energy and welcoming nature. Once inside, I sat down across from Julie, stealing glances at her log cabin home and outside the large picture window overlooking a woodland landscape and creek, something right out of a fairy tale. Thus began the next chapter of my healing journey, my spiritual journey, and my journey with Julie and MorningStar.

There is a Buddhist proverb that says, when the student is ready, the teacher will appear. My naïve acceptance of fundamental Christian dogma had crumbled. I awoke in the midst of a storm of a failed belief system, exhausted and afraid. It was enough to propel me out of its confines, but I had no clear direction for the next steps of my spiritual journey. Julie was there to meet me. She was a powerful mirror for me, speaking a language that resonated deeply within me and set me on fire. Our conversations repeatedly led me back to my Self, refocused my vision on the bigger story of what God was guiding me through, and energized me.

Over time, I discovered my passion for understanding the psycho-spiritual journey. I took an interest in mystics, such as Teresa of Avila and Thomas Merton. I was introduced to the works of Carol Pearson, Angeles Arrien, Marion Woodman, Etty Hillesum, Nan Merrill, and Sue Monk Kidd, to name a few.

As my healing journey continued on, my path led me back to my family in Texas for a while. My heart felt deeply bonded with them, and I couldn't resist the draw. I was there for less than a year when I realized, though my heart was with my family, I wasn't nurtured in that environment. I wasn't able to be who I wanted to be with my family- namely a loving presence. I read a quote that struck me: you can't love others until you love yourself. I realized in that moment I needed separation from my family for my healing to continue. I was also struggling financially, as I hadn't been able to sell my home in Michigan. I moved back and resumed my interactions at MorningStar.

After another year, the pull to be with my family again felt too strong to resist. I sold my home with uncanny quickness, packed up my things and my new awarenesses, and tried again to live near them. One evening, as I sat in my home in Texas, I had a moment of clarity, a revelation. It was as though I'd stepped out of my body and was suddenly able to look at my life objectively. Everything seemed so empty to me. I was working full time in a job that was not fulfilling, working from home. I'd go in my office, work, come out, watch TV, go to the gym. It was going nowhere, yet part of me was waiting to get somewhere, waiting for meaning and purpose in my life to just happen. I deeply understood in that moment what it meant to lose my life in order to gain it. I knew I didn't want to do captioning for the rest of my life. I wanted my work to be in psychology. I knew I was most drawn to the type of psycho-spiritual work Julie was doing. It was time to put one foot in front of the other. My fantasy was to shed my life, move to MorningStar to work for my room and board, plus some small amount of pay, and to learn all I could about transpersonal psychology, living simply, sustainably, and about gardening. I built up the courage to share this vision with Julie, who in time responded with some practical questions for me to consider. We both agreed I should first pursue a formal education. I decided to return to UT at Austin to finish my degree, a bachelor of arts in Psychology, as a foundation.

I found a rental home in Austin, enrolled in school, and continued my full-time employment as a broadcast captioner. I took a fascinating philosophy class that introduced me to other religions. It enlightened and informed my understandings of Christianity. Aside from that class, I was overwhelmed. I was struggling finan-





cially. I was struggling with the work/school/relationships load. I felt the lack of spirit in the psychology program, and my heart wasn't in it. I realized a degree didn't matter to me. Stuff didn't matter to me. Money didn't matter to me. I just wanted to live. Now. It just so happened, my closest friend's parents had a trailer on their land that they wanted to sell very cheaply because the previous owners were buying it on land contract and had disappeared. This trailer was in Hersey, Michigan, 11 miles from MorningStar. I moved there when the semester ended. I sold or gave away nearly everything I owned. I loaded up my car, including my cats, and drove back to Michigan. I cut my job hours in half, in order to devote that time to my personal study, to volunteer at MorningStar, and to have time to study transpersonal psychology with Julie.

It was during this time that Julie and I became close. We spent many hours in conversation, playing, and working on projects. Our energy flowed together well, and we brought a spark to each other's life. We talked about the journey, about scripture, about humanity, about relationships. She mirrored to me my true self, calling me forth, naming the gifts she saw in me. And I began to grow quickly. I trusted and respected her, and her love was like sunshine and water on a sapling. During this time, I also began to interact with Mary and Elise more. Eventually discernment began about my moving to MorningStar. And I did, on October 13 of 2007.

I knew going in that community life would prove to be a cauldron of transformation. I knew that on a mind level. I've now come to know that experientially, and have experienced deep healing through my relationships here. Living with three other women choosing to live consciously, as well as meeting with other women who join us in community once a month, has been an incredible healing and learning opportunity. I've ridden the wheel of life and death for many revolutions during my short time here. Diving deep into the darkness of my psyche, facing wounds, fears, and demons...grace alone bringing me back to the surface, each revolution bringing healing to my soul.

As I sat in that little trailer in the woods, before I moved to MorningStar, I prayed that the deep wound in my chest would receive healing, so that I might have room in my heart to love. That prayer is still being answered. I've been shown my propensity for denial, which can not only limit my ability to feel pain, but can also limit my ability to feel joy. I've been shown the deep abyss in my heart, at the bottom of which sat my orphan, waiting for nurture. I've seen my pettiness, jealousy, and

pride. I've been shown the shame I've carried since my adolescence. I've uncovered my deep fear of abandonment.

I'm learning what it means to let go, though I only "let go" in fits and starts. I'm learning how to set boundaries for myself and how to respect others'. I'm learning how to pay attention to and honor my energy, listening to my body. I've come to trust that after darkness comes the dawn, and that the issues I struggle with are not novel, but are universal. I've seen my potential for leadership and love. I am now able to dance and sing in the presence of others, where before the thought paralyzed me. I know that I'm not alone, that when I have just about had enough and believe I can't take another step, Grace steps in and moves me forward, showing me the path I've just walked and the fruit of the journey. I fall in love again with the human journey, fascinated by the Mystery of it all. I know I'm where I belong and am filled with gratitude.

Through all this my ego has become stronger, yet what I've given my life to requires the ego to let go of its desire for visibility and tangible results, to serve the soul and to be informed by the soul. I don't know exactly what all of this is for, where this is all going, this healing journey, these trysts into the underworld, but I do know there's nothing I'd rather be doing and no where I'd rather be. ☆

*Last night  
as I was sleeping,  
I dreamt—  
marvelous error!—  
that I had a beehive  
here inside my heart.  
And the golden bees  
were making white combs  
and sweet honey  
from my old failures.*

*~by Antonio Machado*

*"Our strength will continue if we allow ourselves  
the courage to feel scared, weak and vulnerable."*

*~Melody Beattie*





## Retreat: Listening to Your Life

Saturday October 17, 10 am to 5 pm

This silent retreat is a time to catch up with yourself by reflecting and listening to what Spirit is inviting you to pay attention to. Centering practices, such as breathing, simple movement, art and ritual, journaling questions, awareness in nature, and labyrinth experience will be offered. An opening circle will provide time to enter the silence together with intention, and a closing circle to give witness to your process, if desired. Retreat may be guided or done on your own. Saturday lunch will be provided.

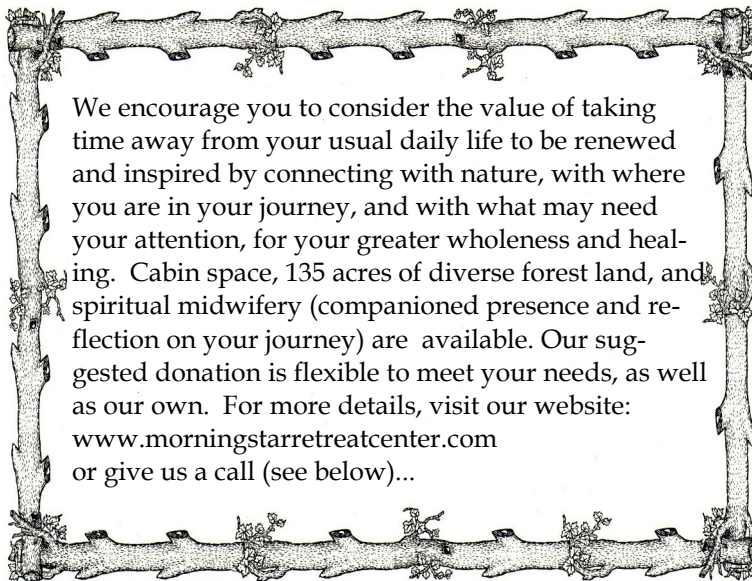
Overnight retreat space is available both Friday and Saturday nights for a deeper experience of solitude and silence on the land.

Facilitated by Julie Keefer and Amanda Sutherland

Suggested donation for retreat: \$35-45

With one night: \$75-80, two nights \$115-120

Please reserve cabins at least one week in advance.



We encourage you to consider the value of taking time away from your usual daily life to be renewed and inspired by connecting with nature, with where you are in your journey, and with what may need your attention, for your greater wholeness and healing. Cabin space, 135 acres of diverse forest land, and spiritual midwifery (companioned presence and reflection on your journey) are available. Our suggested donation is flexible to meet your needs, as well as our own. For more details, visit our website: [www.morningstarretreatcenter.com](http://www.morningstarretreatcenter.com) or give us a call (see below)...

### Announcement!!

MorningStar now has an **additional phone line**, one that will never have a busy signal! Because we only have dial-up Internet access and no voice mail service in our area, M\*'s main number may be busy. To remedy that, we now have an additional number: 231-884-2789.

When you come to M\*, don't forget to visit our gift shop! Mary's M\* jams are delicious, made from local fruit, and have developed quite a following!

### Bee News

M\* has two beehives! They produced 7 gallons of surplus honey last summer. To our delight, both colonies survived the long winter! As we cleaned the gardens this early spring, we worked alongside our beez, as they gathered as much pollen as they could from the first spring flowers.



M\* honeybee collecting pollen from a crocus

### Women Leading from Within

Our monthly WLFW Circle, now in our third year, continues as we explore our life journeys together through the lens of archetypes. This year we are finishing our work with Carol Pearson's Awakening the Heroes Within and the archetypes of the Seeker, Destroyer, Lover, Creator, Ruler, Magician, Sage, and Fool.

Please consider ordering your books through the Cottage Book Shop, an independently owned bookstore in Glen Arbor, Michigan. When you mention M\*, owner Barbara Siepker will generously donate 10% of the sale to M\* and provide free shipping!

[www.cottagebooks.com](http://www.cottagebooks.com)  
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1-800-303-6956

Thank you, Barbara!



## *Balancing Act on Dayspring Path*

*by Mary E Weber*

The month of March on Dayspring Path is a daily, physical balancing act as the ice holds on for weeks on end on the shaded gravel driveway into MorningStar. So too is my inner life a balancing act as I try to integrate and accept the rightful place of my intuition in relation to my logic. A recent dream gives me hope:

I am driving my car on a very mountainous, winding, and snow-covered, slippery road. In the passenger seat is a male figure who represents for me the ultra-logical, linear thinking part of me. I am driving at a safe speed, but as I round a tight, right-hand curve, there is something in the road that must be avoided, so I move left into the other lane only to slide right off the road into nothingness, a sheer drop-off. The car rolls in space, and I think, "I can no longer steer or use the brakes. I have no control." I put my head back against the seat, take a deep breath, close my eyes, and put my hand out to cover my passenger's hand, which is clenched onto the center console. I turn and look at him and say, "I'm sorry. I have no control now to fix this. Just relax. It will end the way it ends." I put my head back and close my eyes again. After much tumbling, the car lands, wheels down, in a great thickness of powdery snow with a giant "poof!" I am surprised to see the outcome: the car is upright, unscathed, and we are not hurt.

Most of my life has been dominated by the logical, linear, goal-oriented, dynamic, "masculine" action function. It has served me well to navigate in the world for the first half of my life. But in my 40's and more so in my 50's, I have found myself drawn to people and places that challenge this one-sided approach to life and which open that other side of myself: the intuitive, winding and circuitous, receptive, relational, "feminine" process function; becoming aware of it, learning to value it, and allowing it to inform the masculine so the two could share rightful place. My intuitive side existed, but I didn't recognize it, and when I did, I didn't honor it. To be my best whole self, I believe I need the two working in harmony, yin and yang, in right relationship to each other.

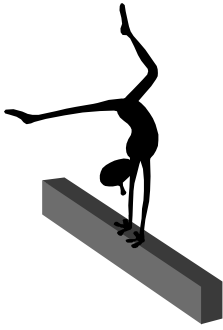


At 39, I was introduced to MorningStar, and that part of me which I didn't recognize experienced an immediate attraction to the space and the people; the lifestyle embodied here. Yet MorningStar is a place and a way of living that has thrown my logical, linear self into a tail spin from day one. I was highly attracted to this foreign (to me) way of thinking, being, and acting, yet totally knocked off kilter by it.

I vividly remember the first few board meetings I attended – they called it the Sistery – how quaint! I just kept shaking my head. "These people have no clue how to run a board meeting or a business!" Yet my inner voices were in conflict. At the same time I was hearing in my head, "I'm going to get in there and fix this mess," I was also hearing, "Watch and wait, pay attention, learn a new way." Though I was confounded by my experience of board meetings and my discussions with Julie, I just couldn't turn heel and walk/run away. Some long-quiet, deep, dark (shadowed) place in me knew that I needed what was here to help open this other side of me and give balance to my existence.

I often name some of the aspects of my personality. One I have come to know well this winter is the Skeemer. (Yes, I know it is spelled schemer, but mine is Skeemer, liking to bend the rules just a touch.) The Skeemer has been strong in me for a long time and utilizes my logical functions – street smart, deal conscious, skeptical and untrusting – believing that everyone else is also scheming, so it is likely that I will get ripped off if I am not savvy. This Skeemer is an important part for dealing with the world of business, money, purchasing, and has benefited myself, MorningStar, and others with lower taxes and insurance rates, higher interest on savings, and great deals on needed items. But the Skeemer is limited; he only measures in dollar signs. He is unable to see and evaluate the non-monetary costs and benefits in a decision or choice. He also likes to walk around with his fingers in his ears, humming, to avoid hearing anything that might interfere with his conclusions. ☺

After events this fall and winter where the Skeemer was out of control to my own detriment, he was put on probation and court-ordered to listen and communicate meaningfully with a new psychic character



that I hired: the Inner Consultant. The Consultant speaks with a holistic wisdom to inform the Skeemer of broader ways of evaluating that help to ensure balance in a decision. The Consultant is modeled after the way of processing I've experienced in discernment with my community at MorningStar.

A tiny example: The Skeemer sees a candy bar for 10 cents. He says, "WOW! How cheap, and I want it, so it's a deal. Buy it!" The Consultant says, "Wait, it is cheap in dollars, but the GMO high-fructose corn syrup and refined sugar in it is expensive to your body. The chocolate in it was not shade grown or fairly traded, so it is costly for the land and those who grew and picked it. The manufacturer is the same one who takes water from the taps in our county, puts it in plastic bottles, and sells it saying your own tap water is not good enough." The Consultant asks, "How much fuel was needed to get this to you? What is the carbon debt on this candy bar? How does the purchase and consumption affect my relationship with myself, others, and the environment?" The Consultant's sobriety replaces the high of immediate gratification of getting "something for nothing" or "the great deal" with the deep satisfaction of serving myself well and serving something greater than myself – this interconnected world community and this environment of which we are a part. Lest you think I suffer too much over a cheap candy bar, know that for me, practicing and exercising timely and effective communication between my Skeemer and my Consultant on little things makes the process for much larger decisions – vehicles, land, work choices – more fluid, more natural. It wears a path in the neural net of my brain so that working more holistically, more whole-brained, becomes the norm.

Over these past years on the Sistery and at MorningStar, my balance has been challenged. It is the only way I know to strengthen it. Building relationships and community is our primary work because we know that the strength of the organism/

organization is first and foremost in those relationships with self, others, and the environment. And still we tend to the practical details in their rightful place. This alternative model, embodying wholeness, has served MorningStar well. It is what drew me to MorningStar and keeps me here, walking the slippery path, attempting balance. ☆



Inhale and exhale  
The rhythm of paradox  
Breathe deep and know truth  
-JDK

It is only when we are willing to face our own pain that we are willing and able to experience joy. It is only when we are willing to face our ignorance that we stand a chance of gaining wisdom. It is only when we feel our loneliness that we are likely to experience love. Finally, it is only when we are willing to experience our inauthenticity that we are able to open to our Souls.

-Carol Pearson

To fly we must dance with our longest shadows in the brightest sunlight.



-Louise Rader

## Healing the Defended Heart

by Julie D. Keefer

Something in need of healing in so many of the women and men who come to MorningStar, as well as in ourselves, is facing our deep fear of not being enough, not being lovable, or not even knowing we are innerly resourced by the Divine. Yet if we are willing to face and deal with our inner orphan's fear, shame, guilt, anger, negativity, and unmet needs, we can work our way back Home to our sense of oneness with ourselves and with the Divine. This requires enough trust to be open and vulnerable to the permeation of Love's healing Presence.

Spiritual disciplines are so important because they ground us in practices that help us learn to distinguish between what our fearful ego is saying to us in our choice-making and what our deeper, Spirit-guided self seeks in order to live in love and harmony with ourselves, one another, and with nature. Without this disciplined time for prayerful reflection, centering, and listening, we may hold ourselves tightly in fear of loss, rejection, abandonment, shameful feelings, and emptiness. We unconsciously activate our ego's negation of any attempt to face these and move out of them because of the risk of re-injury or loss as we face, name, and heal from deep self-alienation. The "wounded" ego seeks to keep us safe, not evolved. We may internalize an outer oppressor's voice, attitudes, and actions toward us and re-enact them with not only ourselves, but with those who threaten to dismantle, either through love or criticism, the mask/wall behind which we falsely feel safe.

The process of healing and change can take place most readily within a loving community seeking to live through grace and wisdom in the power of Spirit and willing to engage one another as human mirrors to our inner fears, projections, strengths, weaknesses, and

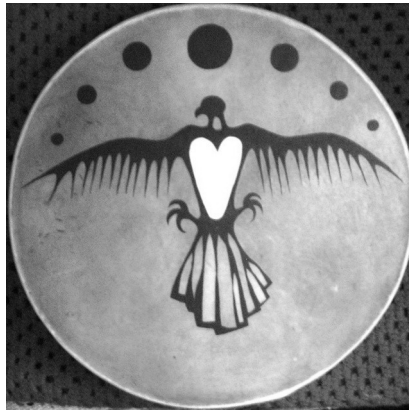
gifts, albeit imperfectly, and with willingness to forgive. Even in community, we may deeply fear having our defenses uncovered exposing the fear of being unlovable, inept, ignorant, or not enough in some way. Not until we risk facing these fears through intentional openness to psycho-spiritual transformation will we come to know the deep healing love that can rise up from within us and between us. We learn to live in greater freedom, especially with those who receive and accept our whole self without blame or judgment

(because they, too, are in a process of learning to receive and accept their whole self). Being human, we know the necessity of acknowledgement of our wrongs and the power of forgiveness. Through this transformational process we grow in strength and boldness about being who we are, even when we know others may not accept or understand us, or even feel threatened or afraid of us. It is easier to avoid, demonize, or blame/accuse someone when we can't bear to claim

the truth of our own authentic faults and gifts.

Our rootedness lies in our willingness to allow Spirit to work in us and between us as we encounter the shadow, the unconscious aspects in ourselves and in one another. Through this process, our lives become more peace-filled, generous, whole, and loving.

Even though silence and solitude can at times feel too threatening for the defended fearful ego, silence and connection with the Divine Spirit invites us to crawl out of our cage of self-limitation and fear and become free to embrace our wholeness (wholeness). It is an ongoing process of learning and growth for us all since perfection is not the call, but rather consciousness, right-relatedness; Love. This is our reason for being and the greatest adventure of our lives. ☆



When the path is blocked, we can accept or fight. When we fight, doors slam.  
When we surrender to the mystery and say, *Well, what do you need?* doors open.

~Marion Woodman, *Coming Home to Ourselves*

SEEK LOVE'S PRESENCE



SUFFER YOUR TRUTH

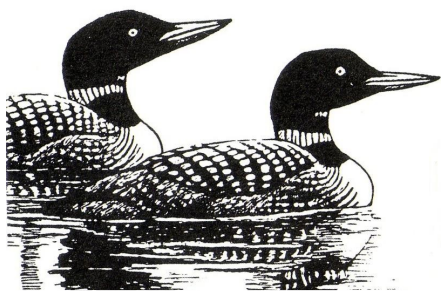


TRUST YOUR PROCESS

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Loon calling me now  
Calling me to be present  
All I need is here -JDK

**Our website has been updated!**

Please visit [www.morningstarretreatcenter.com](http://www.morningstarretreatcenter.com)  
and subscribe to our **group email list** to stay up to  
date with M\* upcoming events, announcements,  
and reflections!

We now have a **bulletin board** set up through our  
website, a place for our extended community to  
share their thoughts and reflections. Click on the  
menu button "Share with Our Circle" to register  
and participate!

LIVE SIMPLY



LOVE GENEROUSLY



CARE DEEPLY



SPEAK KINDLY