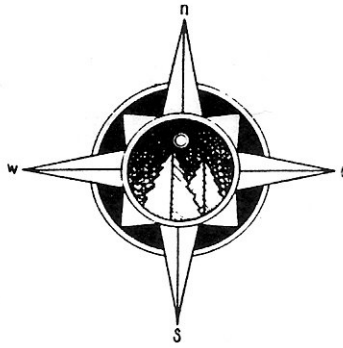


MorningStar

Empowerment for the journey
to wholeness and love



Adventures

In the Dawn
of a new day

Autumn 2006 Issue 2

Volume 23

FOLLOWING THE MORNING *

"Not only is another world possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing." -- Arundhati Roy

It has been several months since our last newsletter. We have been in the process of looking back, giving thanks for what has been, and intentionally listening for what calls to us from the future. On one hand, it seems we have fulfilled our mission; creating and holding safe space, and offering holistic resources to inform and encourage women's unique journeys. We feel good about what we have done, even though there is always more that could have been done. We are very grateful that there now are many more such places where this kind of work is being done.

On the other hand, we still long for deeper connection with ourselves, one another, and the natural world. We are called to reverence what we are given in life and reverence where we live, and to pay attention to ways which connect us in more intimate and ecologically sustaining ways with our local community and our bioregion. This seems critical in the face of the uncertainties of the future, not only for MorningStar, but for the world. As we discern what we are being guided toward, where our energy wants to flow naturally, one direction seems clear. We are to continue, with the help of other's presence and skills, to hold the space of MorningStar for those who also seek deeper knowledge and grounding through solitude, nature, and a learning community, to enable more sustainability in mind, body, soul, and spirit.

Many things are sobering. Much of what our American and global way of life has spawned is being called into question due to the realities of global warming, damaged ecosystems, increased corruption in politics, wars and nuclear proliferation, broken health care systems, and

painful economic realities for the middle class, and many more critical issues.

Integrity is needed to restore a sustainable way of living. Deepening our connection with the vital forces of life and love holds the power to transform and sustain us. We have only to humble ourselves enough to pay attention, learning to cultivate right relationship with these divine forces by inviting them to flow freely through our mind, body, soul, and spirit, enabling wisdom to flourish.

The drama of the rugged individualist is over. Learning to live more intimately and sustainably is the root religious call of our time. Religion is meant to join opposites and polarities, not further divide us from ourselves, one another, and nature. But this takes willingness to change, to be where we are, to persevere, if at all possible, in the circumstances or chaos we are in. It is a quest to overcome all that divides us through fear of the "other." As we face and accept our deepest fears and our deepest contradictions, the light of love and grace leads us into the dawning of human authenticity grounded in intimacy and truth, integrity and wholeness, community and service. Life becomes reorganized around what matters most: right relationship with all life. This is the context which will sustain our lives with abundance and goodness.

Yes, going deep means facing ourselves and all that we fear within. Only through this will we find the compassion and revelation needed to re-create our lives, our country, and our world anew.

May MorningStar continue to bless us and those who seek to listen and learn, and find the courage to stay the course toward an unknown future, but one toward which we will find our "salvation," our wholeness and love, regardless of outcome.

Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched, we cannot know ourselves. --Adrianne Rich

MORNINGSTAR NEWS

Twenty Five Years!!

We began our 25th year October 1st!! From our humble beginnings in 1982, calling women to journey with us, we have been blessed with the privilege of being transformed into more of our own wholeness and love through the many ways our lives have intersected with yours.

We believe the story of MorningStar needs to be told, not only by us, but by those of you who have experienced and been affected by our presence and our offering. This is an important way to honor and value your own journey, not just the journey of MorningStar. So we are inviting you to add to our archives your experience in the form of a personal story, a reading, poem, or song.

Then on September 29th there will be a celebration at MorningStar where your offerings will become part of the fabric of our story. We would like these submitted to Barbara Carvill.

Here are some questions that might help you reflect on your journey with us:

How has your involvement with M affected your life with your body? With others? With the Earth? With your understanding of mystery? With your understanding and expression of your spirituality?

How do you think M has influenced women's spirituality? Mainstream spirituality?

What influence do you feel M has had in increasing your awareness of the value of spiritual practice and simplicity?

*What is your favorite story of MorningStar?

*What significance does the land hold for you?

*What significance has Julie's presence held for you? Elise's? Mary's? The Sister's presence?

What of M's journey has been most inspiring to you? Challenging? Disappointing? Affirming of your own journey?

What would you hope in the future for the land that has held M?

What would you hope for M's role in shaping the values and practices of the future?

You are welcome to add questions to spark various writings which woven together could paint a more complete picture of what this adventure has been, is, and may continue to be. Please submit your writing at least a week before September 29, 2007 to Barbara Carvill, 3091 Old Kent Rd. Grand Rapids, MI 49512 call: 616-942-6983 e-mail: carv@calvin.edu Let Barbara know if you would like to participate in planning the celebration or providing food or other services in preparation for the event. This part will be a surprise to Julie and Elise.

MorningStar Values into Local Community

With Elise's initiative and hard work, our Ecology and Spirituality Circle started the LeRoy Farmers' Market; open every Saturday July-October in LeRoy. We are delighted by how well it was received and how beautifully it gives us the opportunity to support small local farms, local economy, and local community as ways to rebuild our world toward more sustainable values.

Julie was appointed to fill a trustee position in the township for two years, along with her membership on the planning commission.

Financial Report/Budget of 2005-06

Thanks to your generous contributions and investment in personal retreats, our total income for the year was \$35,773. Our expenses were \$35,073. We are building capital toward providing income for at least one other person to work with Julie and Elise as their calls expand into more local involvement. Our budget for 2006-07 is \$40,000, same as last year.

Fundraiser: Cottage Books of Glen Arbor

A reminder that **M* receives 10%** from every book sold when the purchaser indicates connection with M*. Free shipping. Call: 1-800-303-6956 or: info@cottagebooks.com Thank you, Barbara Siepker!

MorningStar Gift Shop

In the workshop you will find Mary's wonderful jams and nature cards, as well as Elise's special herb vinegars, and a few books and past issues of our newsletter.

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MORNINGSTAR CALENDAR 2007

Our theme this year is "Coming Home"

Our heart is a home for the divine. As we learn to open our hearts in trust of the Goodness and Abundance that is a present resource for us, the marriage of Earth and Heaven is consummated within. Our hearts and minds become welcoming centers of hospitality for all life.

We invite you to take times, and even moments, of solitude and silence in nature this coming year to open to the Goodness and Abundance ever present seeking to heal and to guide you.

Monthly Circles

Women Leading From Within; Accessing and Expressing Your Archetypal Energies and Learning Compassionate Communication with Self, Other, and Nature. 10 am - 4:30 pm. We'll gather in Circle around Angeles Arrien's *The Four Fold Way* as springboard for personal reflection and spiritual practice incorporating the archetypes of the Warrior, Healer, Visionary and Teacher.

Dates: April 1, May 6, June 3, July 1, August 5, Sept. 2, Oct. 7, Nov. 4. Limited to 8 participants so reserve your space early. Suggested donation for all 8 days: \$240 - \$400. Deposit of \$30 required no later than March 18. Scholarships available.

Second Saturday Generativity Circle. This Circle is building a relationship of trust with those who are called to explore MorningStar's mission and future with the Sistery.

If you are interested in either of the above circles, or want more information contact Julie at 231-768-4368.

Last Sunday Ritual Circle, 11:00 - 12:30 followed with your brown bag lunch and further discussion or activity. Bring something to share from your journey: a short reading, a symbol, a song, a meditation, a movement, a story, a personal reflection. These are woven together with silence and reflection. This is a good time to introduce new people to MorningStar. All are welcome.

GUEST REFLECTION

It is always so hard for me to leave here because it resonates with me so deeply...
I can see my path clearly and I have clarity.
I can hear my inner voice loudly and I have wisdom.
I can feel the compassion and strength of the energy here and I have peace.
--Christine Stack

Christine's 9-year-old son Sullivan reminds us that:
If we can shape it in our minds, we can live it in our lives!

Those who dwell among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life.

-- Rachel Carson

I Am

By Julie D. Keefer

One day this summer I went to the Boardman River canoeing and had a delicious afternoon floating and communing with Wild Love. Here is what I experienced:

I am a big white cloud passing through the blue sky.
I am a green hedge of grass blowing in the wind.
I am a large white pine giving purchase to the great bald eagle.
I am a crumpled brown leaf floating lazily down the river.
I am a mother eagle calling out in protection of her young.
I am a tree stump above the water giving rise to new shoots of growth.
I am a turtle lifting its neck out of the rippling clear water.
I am a paddler paddling home amidst a holy family of loons.
I am a woman embedded in Wild Love.

As I come to know this Wild Love and that deep reflective meaning in all experience, I know who I am.

*Wholeness is being in tune with the wind, sand
and stars --Henry Beston*

A GARDENER'S GLEANINGS

By Elise P. Schlaikjer

One of life's simple pleasures for me is visiting friends' gardens, be they vegetable or flower. To me, they are all beautiful in one way or another. A row of purple kale, its large frilly leaves incandescent in the late afternoon light, is as esthetically pleasing to me as a mass of fall asters blazing in my garden.

And so it was with eager anticipation that I drove to my friends Betsy and Runo's farm a few days ago. They raise grass fed beef, lamb, chickens, and a few milk cows along with a sizable vegetable garden. It was the latter that interested me this day as I was looking for carrots and beets to put in my root cellar. I found Betsy in the kitchen finishing up the last of 43 pints of applesauce. She was at a place where she could stop, so we headed towards the vegetable garden, joined by Runo as we passed the barn. The first order of business is always just looking at the various crops and discussing the things that went right with them this year and what did not. Was it the type of seed, the weather, soil type, or bugs? Questions that are always floating in a gardener's or a farmer's mind.

The garden tour was relatively brief as the weather was brewing up in the west. Large dark clouds covered that horizon, rumbling ominously while the wind whistled in the nearby trees, and like a great broom, was driving the leaves in wild patterns over the landscape. Runo set up some chairs beside the bucket of sand he had brought over. My 5-gallon buckets were placed in a row. The possibility of rain catching us at our task did not hasten our work or change the banter and reflections on the season. Somehow, it was all of a piece... the pungent smell of earth-covered carrots, the feel of their crisp bodies, the wind tossing the trees, the lightening crackling in the distance... being with generous friends, who have the same respect and love of the earth. This time was a gift and a great part of why I am working to preserve local farms. I believe we have a need, as a nation, to connect back to the earth, to choose a simpler

lifestyle, while using technology in more thoughtful ways.

Fortunately, our Ecology and Spirituality group feels the same way, so we were inspired this year to bring forth a farmers' market in LeRoy. It was not an easy process for a variety of reasons, but knowing that the townspeople wanted it as much as we, we persevered... and succeeded! From the end of July to the end of October, the market has been open every Saturday morning. At first we were afraid that we would not have enough vendors or customers to make it worthwhile. But our fears were soon put to rest as farmers and craft persons signed on. We now have 25 vendors with more in the offing, and around 300 customers.

Our desire has been to support our local farmers, to bring fresh food to the townspeople, to educate all about the need to live within our bioregion by eating local food and keeping our food and gas dollars in the local economy, not shipping them to the west coast or beyond!

Our desire has also been to build community. We could see that happening this summer as people visited with one another and the farmers. There was definitely a festive air about the market, and having some music certainly enhanced it for all. Next summer we hope to have music on a regular basis as well as a variety of demonstrations. Perhaps, even a little weekly newsletter with information, recipes, and poetry.

It has been a very rewarding and fun time for us all, and we shall miss the weekly gatherings. But never fear; we will not be in a winter limbo. Rather, we will be meeting with the farmers to talk about the coming season, how we could do things differently, share ideas and catalogs, and perhaps have educational videos on farm topics that townspeople might be interested in as well. Brian Cool and I have taken on the responsibility of being Market Masters. It is a definite commitment and responsibility, but when it is where your passion is, the energy is there to do it... and we definitely have the energy!!

No matter what our attempts to inform, it is our ability to inspire that will turn the tides.

-- Jan Phillips

ON DAYSPRING PATH

By Mary E. Weber

The prayerfully held space here at MorningStar provides me with solace and strength as I continue with my inner and outer work. I invite you also to come, "Taste and See"!

Liturgy of the Hours on a Day of "Silence"

In every moment, Source of All, You are with me.

In the stillness before first light,
Cricket wakes me to Your Presence.
At the breaking of dawn,
Crow calls me to Awareness.
At sunrise, through Mourning Dove,
You coo my name.

In every moment, Source of All, You are with me.

In early morning,
Hummingbird arrives in Your brilliant colors.
Midmorning, Earthworm yawns and
Pine shakes off Your nightly dew.
By noon,
Jay and Squirrel discuss Your Wonders heatedly.

In every moment, Source of All, You are with me.

Midday,
Daisies, heads held high, sing "Alleluia!"
Early afternoon,
Creek gurgles a melody rich with Your Goodness.
Later, Popples' leaves chatter as
Wind breathes Your Name.

In every moment, Source of All, You are with me.

At sunset,
Deer moves quietly through Your Beauty.
As darkness approaches,
Owl announces the call to evening stillness.
As night falls,
Moth's wings tap Your rhythm in my heart.
In the depth of the night,
Moon sings Light into my soul.

In every moment, Source of All, You are with me.

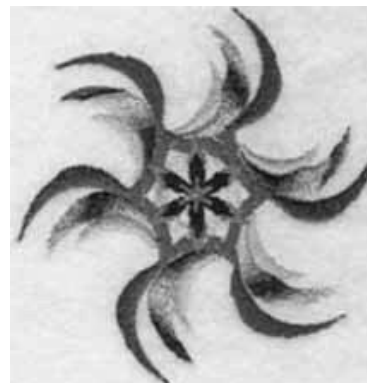
Be still...

And listen to the heartbeat of creation...

It throbs with love for you. --J. Keefer

*The heart that seeks to awaken, to live genuinely,
is more real than anything.
That nameless drive calls,
to be who you most truly are.
--Ezra Bayda, from Saying Yes to Life*

"There is in all visible things
an invisible fecundity,
a dimmed light,
a meek namelessness,
a hidden wholeness.
This mysterious Unity and Integrity
is Wisdom, Mother of all,
'Natura naturans'." --Thomas Merton



WILDERNESS JOURNAL

By Julie D. Keefer

If my inner work of forgiveness, healing, and self-responsibility does not flow out into the world in creative actions of compassion, forgiveness, healing, justice, reconciliation, and service, then my spirituality lacks trust in the Goodness and Abundance of all life, and of my life specifically. Likewise, my actions in the world are weak and ineffectual to the extent they spring from fear, doubt, and illusion harbored within the shadows of my unclaimed humanity.

Therefore, without moments or regular times of seeking Wisdom on my reactions and responses to life, which reveal my strengths and positive potential, as well as my weaknesses and potential for evil, I am vulnerable to projecting anger, fear, greed, selfishness, or power onto others, becoming separate from myself and others in ways which withhold love and do harm. We are all subject to evil if we fail to question our own conclusions.

Through the grace of seeing my deeper needs and taking responsibility for that which needs to be set free within me, grace heals those self-diminishing projections based in fear. I then come home to more of my authentic Self through creative, restorative, and reconciling action. I also find more compassion for those who are letting fear close and defend their own hearts. Joy becomes possible.

I know that fear will always be a companion that can influence for good or for ill. It constricts my breath, closes me off from receiving the life force of goodness and abundance, especially in the midst of suffering and stress. It is taking a life-time to make this fear more conscious in all of its subtle disguises, from the self-negation of my creative abilities, to shyness in asserting my voice in unfamiliar places.

This is the adventure of faith to which I am called. The cost of spending time in the "wilderness" of my soul is exemplified best for me by Jesus, and all those courageous people who have been inspired in faith to dare to examine and live life from within. By facing their fears and the temptations that would draw them away from what truly compels them to act from deep within their Spirit, they were willing to risk "being not conformed to this world" in manifesting their authentic gift of Love.

My journey with MorningStar has taught, and is still teaching me, these truths. Inviting others to journey with me in humility and truth toward the restoration of our wholeness and of the Earth's imperiled ecosystems, and finding healing and love in the service of community seem the only real options for me at this most vulnerable time on Earth. We are all learners and teachers; all fallible human beings who need to be taken seriously, to be valued, and to uncover our authentic gift. I can't see my gift or what obstructs my process without being grounded in a covenant of relationship with others, including nature, which builds trust in the Goodness and Abundance that is here for me.

The more I trust in that Goodness and Abundance, the more fully I will show up to make a difference in this hurting world.

**"Don't look down on the Heart
Even if it is not behaving well,
Even in that shape, the heart
is more precious than the teachings
of exulted sultans.
The broken heart is where God looks.
How lucky is the soul that mends the heart!"**

**For God, consoling the heart
that is broken into hundreds of pieces
is better than going on a pilgrimage.
God's treasures are buried in ruined hearts."**

--Hafiz



Cultivating our wisdom is one of our most important tasks. If we don't spend enough time alone listening to the counsel of our hearts, then we will never become wise. If we do not cultivate, through prayer and meditation or spiritual practice, a stronger heart that can fly and endure, then we'll never become wise.

--Marianne Williamson

FOR LOVE OF THE WORLD

By Charlotte Tall Mountain

For the love of a tree, she went out on a limb.
For the love of the sea, she rocked the boat.
For the love of the earth, she dug deeper.
For the love of community, she mended fences.
For the love of the stars, she let her light shine.
For the love of spirit, she nurtured her soul.
For the love of a good time, she sowed seeds of happiness.
For the love of the Goddess, she drew down the moon.
For the love of nature, she made compost.
For the love of a good meal, she gave thanks.
For the love of family, she reconciled differences.
For the love of creativity, she entertained new possibilities.
For the love of her enemies, she suspended judgment.
For the love of herself, she acknowledged her worth.
And the world was richer for her.

Charlotte Tall Mountain/SCW©1999
www.syracuseculturalworkers.com



Here is a song first shared with us by Marty Rienstra. Make up your own music!!

*When the people live their lives
as if it were a song for singing out the light
it creates the music for the stars to be dancing
circles in the night, hey!!*



*God picks up the reed flute world and blows.
Each note is a need coming through one of
us, a passion, a longing-pain.
Remember the lips
where the wind-breath originated,
and let your note be clear.
Don't try to end it. Be your note.
-- Jalalludin Rumi*

What ought one to say then as each hardship comes? I was practicing for this, I was training for this.
-- Epictetus (55-135 AD) Greek Philosopher



As a citizen, you have a choice between two different paths.

One path is easy. When you turn on the TV or open the newspaper and hear about all the trouble in the world you could walk away from the stories about Iraq or poverty or violence or joblessness or hopelessness. Just turn it off and tune out. That would be the easiest thing in the world to do. There will be pundits and politicians who will tell you that it's someone else's fault and someone else's problem to fix.

There is a second path. This one is more difficult. It takes more of you. It asks you to not just pursue your own individual dreams, but to help perfect our collective dream as a nation. It asks you to realize there is more to life than being rich, thin, young, famous, safe, and entertained. It asks you to recognize that there are people out there who need you. -- Barak Obama, Illinois Senator

"Whenever I despair, I remember that all through history this way of truth and love has always won. There have been tyrants and murderers and for a time they seem invincible, but in the end they always fall--think of it, ALWAYS." --M. Gandhi

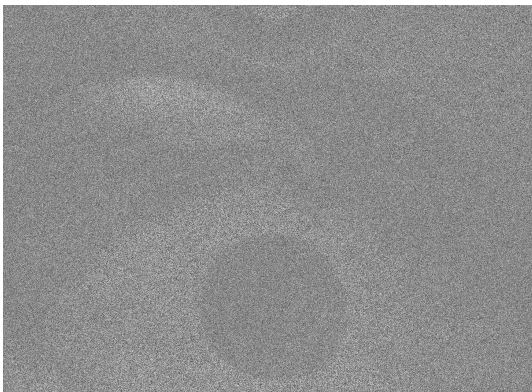
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Picture by Mary Southard, CSJ
www.ministryofthearts.org

But we have only begun to love the earth.
We have only begun to imagine the fullness of life.
How could we tire of hope?--so much is in bud...
We have only begun to know
the power that is in us if we would join
our solitudes in the communion of struggle.
So much is unfolding that must complete its
gesture.
So much is in bud.

--Denise Levertov, from *Beginners*