

# MorningStar

Empowerment for the journey  
to wholeness and love



# Adventures

In the Dawn  
of a new day

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## Following the MorningStar

by Julie D. Keefer

A new friend recently wrote: "My spirituality is best expressed through Tao. Christians are so locked into the Bible as the only source. Bearing in mind that it was written by men, edited, stripped of many books, translated several times and interpreted to support whatever one wants to believe, I find other sources more enriching. I might add, I am not a 'believer', which makes me a heretic to Christians. I am, however, open. There is so much we don't know that I have learned to be okay with not knowing anything for certain while learning as much as I can." The following response is for all who feel the same way, yet are open to the Spirit in all Life:

We can understand our friend's concern about Christianity, especially in our country today. We at MorningStar have had a conflictual relationship with Christianity and the Bible ourselves, but only because of our own direct experience of the teachings which don't agree with the more conservative, literal interpretations. We've questioned, struggled with, and often wanted to disown Christianity over the years, but have always found that the Spirit reveals a deeper truth to us over time in relationship to how open we are to deeper revelations and to self honesty.

The Christianity we embrace is open to all

faith traditions, inclusive of difference, and evolving from a deeper mystical understanding of the universality of Love.

Radical, or "root" Christianity, in the tradition of Jesus, calls us out of conformity to the status quo to think for ourselves and, through grace, to take responsibility for the ills of the world, starting with ourselves. We read the Bible as a metaphorical map of our journey, yet subject to a "hermeneutics of suspicion"; looking through a lens of feminist critique and interpretation. The Bible is one way Spirit has revealed to us the mysteries of our being and our becoming. But it requires us to have an open mind and heart to let the Spirit of Life teach and guide. If the Bible is instead read literally, taken at face value, we have seen how easily it can be taken as a mandate for judgment, war and the inevitability of Armageddon. Reading it with openness we are subject to the truth of our lives and the call to die to our old, self protective, fearful ways, and instead learn to trust Wisdom's Way. As we daily follow this call, the Spirit continues to guide and to heal. We know it as a life-long movement toward greater wholeness and love. Jesus models this growth toward maturity and invites us to also journey, through grace, toward truth, justice and love with humility and compassion for ourselves and for all life.

Our spiritual practice does not deny or ignore the human shadow comprised of

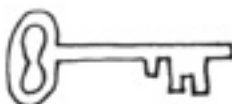


unconscious aspects of ourselves, both negative and positive, but we deal with them compassionately, accepting our humanness, yet seeking healing through spiritual practice.

Our lives have been influenced by spiritual pioneers and midwives of Spirit who have had the courage to wrestle with the deepest questions of Life, such as: Who is God? Who am I? Who are you? What am I here for? How am I to live and love? What is just? What is true?... instead of just accepting what they are told. Some of these guides include Thomas Merton, St. Theresa of Avila, Henri Nouwen, Julian of Norwich, Richard Rohr, Hildegard of Bingen, Sue Monk Kidd, Carol Flinders, Dwight Judy, Joyce Rupp, Elizabeth A. Johnson, Matthew Fox, Dorothy Solle, Albert Nolan, Rosemary Reuther, Jim Wallis, Virginia Mollenkott, Walter Bruggeman, Pema Chödrön, Thich Nhat Hahn, Walter Wink, Joan Chittister, Parker Palmer, Elizabeth O'Connor, and many more who have inspired and guided us along the way.

We have also been open to Buddhist, Native American, Wiccan and Taoist teachings, along with Carl Jung's archetypal psychology and other proponents of transpersonal psychology. We are oriented around the more contemporary spiritual psychologies which lead to a whole and compassionate way of life if we are willing to change from inside out. This includes the Twelve Step process. They all encourage us to be the change we want to see in the world as we learn to live in right relationship with all life.

So we agree with our friend that being open and willing to learn is key.



## A GARDENER'S GLEANINGS

by Elise Schlaikjer

Thresholds have been on my mind a lot recently. Not the kind that are a hard physical reality such as the ones that separate one room from another, or from outside to inside of a building although as a builder, they interest me too. Nor the kind that I feel that our country is facing now: will we choose to remain adolescents, self centered with few boundaries, or will we choose to cross the threshold of adulthood and become responsible, interdependent and caring of all. As much as these issues pull at my heart, the ones I have recently been reflecting on have been more personal.

For a number of years I have been yearning to get my house in order. I would make stabs at it, but I never seemed to get very far with it. I felt like I was treading water rather than swimming strongly towards my goal, and it was very frustrating. Friends would roll their eyes when I talked about my desire, obviously wondering when I would get off of my duff. I wondered too, but somehow the chemistry within never got fired up with any kind of sustained energy. However, I did learn to sit with myself in respectful attention and to ask others to honor my process. At the time I would not have labeled this as a threshold, but now I see that it was. I was taking small steps toward greater self care while the universe was bringing others into my life who could be of help, such as Mary James who later did an exquisite job of interior painting for me.

The next threshold was my 30th birthday and the ritual with my friends. Yes, it was a marvelous decade celebration, but on hindsight, I feel it was also a Croning, a true crossing over to being an "elder". How do I know? I know because my energy has





been quite different. All of a sudden I moved on having furniture reupholstered, the interior of the house painted, while bags of things wended their way to the second hand shop or to friends, and other things like good books got stored in the hope that someday MorningStar would have a real library. I realized that what was going on in my outer home was truly a reflection of what was going on inside of me. I was acting on my behalf, clearing the decks, simplifying, honing in on what feels truly important and letting go of peripheral "possibilities" that would so often suck my energies or distract me. I have a sense of what is my next step, yet I want to remain open to the Spirit.

However, facing breast cancer again this spring took a lot of the wind out of my sails. The first time I had cancer my body told me something was wrong and so I went to the doctor. But this time the news came through a routine mammogram. I felt betrayed by my body and bewildered by our lack of communication. I thought I was a good listener, but obviously I wasn't. Fortunately, my type of cancer is slow growing and so after another lumpectomy and a new medication called Arimidex, my chances of having many more years here are quite good.

The cancer was another threshold, a liminal space reminding me that I truly cannot see the shore, that all that I can do is take one day at a time. However, I can do more to take care of myself physically as well as emotionally and spiritually. For me that involves a number of things, such as: cleaning up unfinished business, making sure my relationships are clean and clear, and keeping open space for listening and then acting on what feels right.

Besides gardening and being an earth keeper, I hope to spend more time writing and doing a variety of art. Perhaps a book will emerge, but if it is nothing more than a journal of sorts, that will be alright too. It will then be part of my legacy to my children and grandchildren. Attending to this "book" and keeping the above disciplines is an act of loving obedience to my inner truth, and each time each one of us makes that choice, the world is a better place for all. What really feels good is the eagerness welling up inside of me to take on this next step. It feels like a holy discipline, not onerous at all, but rather one full of joy and laughter; my YES to God and myself!

### MorningStar News

We are grateful for the fulfillment of our requests last fall for meeting current needs. We've had a new roof put on Gabriel's cabin, received a DVD and TV for the loft, and increased Julie's salary for this year. We also have funds for extra help.

What we continue to need are people utilizing our resources in order to fulfill our mission, and to sustain our regular income to cover our basic expenses.

### Our Spring Challenge

This has been a slower year of retreats and programs so far for us. We have trusted the wisdom of this in light of Elise's recurrence of breast cancer in the spring and the needed re-evaluation of our energies to attend to her needs. We have both moved through this challenge to more clarity and readiness for whatever the future holds for each of us and for MorningStar.

### Another Challenge

Martha, my (Julie) companion cat for over 15 years, is in her dying process with a sarcoma on her leg. As cat lovers know, cats have unique personalities and companion us in ways that comfort and teach. Martha has been a black and gold comforting, wise presence at MorningStar for



me and for many. Yes, there is gold found in the mysteries of darkness. Thank you Martha, for reflecting that promise for us all these years. We bless you on your way.

### Encouraging Retreats

We continue to believe our work meets an essential need for deepening relationship with Spirit, within and without. We encourage you to use the resource that MorningStar is for the restful and restorative quiet of silence, personal reflection, journaling, walking the labyrinths, connecting with nature and creative process.

Spiritual Midwifery is available to help you gain clarity about your current growth edge, or just for affirming your journey's wisdom. Also, check the calendar for our fall retreats.

### The Question of Showers

For years we have discussed whether having a shower house would make a difference in getting more people to partake of our resources. We have desired to keep our facilities simple in order to give people a more intimate experience with nature and encouraging a comfortableness and ease with the natural body. But we are also concerned that many people will not partake of MorningStar's fine resources because of being fearful of this simple, natural mode of living or because of physical limitation.

We are wondering if having a shower house central to the cabins would make a difference in your choice to retreat here or not, and if for more extended times? Please let us know via the following little questionnaire:

- 
- ☐ No, it would make no difference.
  - ☐ Yes, it would make a difference to have a shower/bath house.
  - ☐ Yes, I would consider a longer retreat.
- Please E-mail, phone or send your responses (see last page)



### Holding Center in Times of Change

We find we are being called to deeper prayer in the midst of what seems a disintegrating world. By "holding center" on this land, in our prayer, study, work and community, we feel we are offering what is needed to counterbalance the destruction and increased violence. We pray for a shift in hearts, including our own, to allow wisdom to guide our way through. Our journeys have taught us that aspects of ourselves which don't trust in wisdom's presence are invested in fear and in self-preservation due to a wounded view of who we are, and an ignorance of who She is in us; the feminine face of God.

She is our key to self-knowledge. But to possess her is to choose the path of the cross. Fear and self-preservation must be transformed into choices that are wise, loving and self giving, where we don't count the cost, but embrace the abundance of how we are supplied with all we need to live fully in the moment of what is. This is holy detachment.

We know that nothing is permanent, all is passing away, and that change is constant. But how we deal with it is our challenge. We are to show up in trust, faith and willing action toward a new dawn.



Behind every door I open,  
You are there  
waiting...  
For me to say "yes",  
to say "Yes,"  
to say "YES!  
Again, I close the door.  
- M. Weber



## MorningStar Calendar : Fall 2005

**Paying Attention to Your Life.** October 8-9, beginning at 10 am on Saturday, ending at 4:00 pm on Sunday, with Julie and Elise

This retreat invites you to practice both silence and community as you listen, individually and in circle, for what your soul and spirit want to reveal to you at this time. Various ways to listen will be offered including centering, journaling, being with nature, short readings and questions for reflection, and creative expression. Suggested donation for facilitation, lodging, 3 meals: \$135-\$160 Bring your own breakfasts.

**Dreams: A Gateway to Wisdom.** October 28-29, from 7:30 pm on Friday to 5 pm on Saturday, with Inie Bijkerk and Julie Keefer. All over the world, all through history, people have regarded dreams, however differently they might approach them, in similar ways. Dreams were seen as giving wise counsel for living right, healing and transformation. They were revered as a manifest link between secular and sacred, human and divine. We will utilize a variety of approaches to explore and honor the wisdom of our dreams, and their symbolic language, by tapping into the rich associations of the group, as well as by taking some time for journaling, drawing, working with clay, movement and/or ritual. Bring a dream you want to work on or you may want to incubate one overnight.

Suggested donation: \$125-150 includes lodging, breakfast & lunch on Saturday

**Integrative Breath work** November 19, 9:30 am - 6 pm with Inie Bijkerk, Julie Keefer and Sylvia Kallenmeyn.

In a safe and spiritually supported environment, this is an opportunity to enter into a process of listening to music geared to the various energy centers of the body while doing faster than normal breathing. It is a means of opening, at your own pace, to deeper levels of self-knowledge, freedom and integration. Inie has worked as a dream therapist for over 30 years. Sylvia is a certified massage therapist.

Suggested donation: \$85-100 includes Lunch

**To register:** call or e-mail: 231-768-4368 morningstar@netonecom.net Send a \$50 deposit, non-refundable at least 1 week prior to event.

**The Hand of Non-Violence: 5 steps to honesty and clarity in communication.**



Marshall B. Rosenberg's book, Non-Violent Communication, is a valuable resource toward living with greater harmony and peace. He names a pattern of non-violent communication which helps us stop our habitual reactivity to life and helps us learn to respond with awareness, self-discovery, interpersonal integrity and wisdom. His four step questions include:

1. What am I observing, using all my senses and intuition?
2. How I am feeling about it?
3. What is my need related to it?
4. How I will respond to assert myself in addressing the moment, and yet respect other's feelings and needs with humility, right timing, and compassion without blame or judgment?

I have added a 5th step which I feel is important to re-inforce the learning of the first 4 steps:

5. What is the outcome of my response; what worked, didn't work? How would I do it differently?

I use my hand to remind me of these five steps: I use my thumb to touch each finger beginning with the index finger..... What do my observations lead to?....how do I feel?....what do I need, and the little finger reminds me to be humble and gentle in my response, not angry or insensitive to other's feelings and needs. The thumb brings me back to the beginning and to

deeper integration as I reflect on the outcome and make any further observations, etc. to refine my learning and response. It's a way to ground prayer/reflection in the body.

This human process builds our trust in Wisdom's Way. J.D.K.

### Sustainable Wisdom

Our MorningStar Board is considering incorporating the United Nation's Earth Charter in our bylaws as fundamental to our vision of M\*. It is a comprehensive statement for Earth's Sustainability. MorningStar has been creating around the ideals and principles of the Earth Charter since 1980, before the Earth Charter was even penned! We are grateful for the comprehensive statement of the Charter and the work being done to promote it globally.

We believe MorningStar's Four-Fold Way is fundamental to the embodiment of the Charter:

1. **Devotion:** Listening for inspiration and guidance for living in right relationship with the whole of life.
2. **Simplicity:** Embodying right relationship with ourselves, with one another and with the Earth in ways that promote and sustain intimacy.
3. **Wholeness:** Embracing the edges of our unconscious, shadow reality with ongoing integration toward greater wholeness.
4. **Creative Service:** Employing our unique gifts in service to the well-being and renewal of life on this planet.

To this end we are called to model and encourage a life of evolving devotion, simplicity, wholeness and creative service, inviting others to take time to listen and reflect on their lives in a context of silence, simplicity, nature, play, learning, and

community. Our intent is to empower others to bring this four-fold way into their everyday lives and work. J.D.K.

To explore the Earth Charter:  
[www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org)



### Wisdom's Energy Policy

In our opinion, our new national energy policy is bad for our lungs, bad for our blood, bad for our cells, bad for our soil, bad for our food, bad for our wilderness, bad for our children and bad the soul of America because it is based on our continued high use and dependence on fossil fuels and on nuclear power. The effects of these are already bad enough.

The policy allows corporations the right to profit by exploiting the foundations of life; air, water, and earth without adequate accountability, which the rest of the world is waiting for us to exhibit.

Wisdom tells us this stunning globe is a crown jewel in the Creator's Universe. Wisdom would have us nurture the gift of life, not waste it. She would have us conserve our natural treasures, not exploit them. She would show us a vision of life in which everything and everyone is interconnected. She would help us overcome our self-centered, adolescent addiction for more, better, best, biggest and now!

If we are wise we will midwife with her the Creator's dream for the Earth through: relating to all life with compassion, refusing to do willful harm, reducing consumption of natural resources, reusing goods as long as possible, and recycling what can be re-created. NOW. This is the energy policy that will sustain life. That is Wisdom's Way, and yes, it is good, very, very good. J.D.K.



## On Dayspring Path

by Mary B. Weber

In April I took retreat time and set the intention, "Open my eyes!" (Will I ever learn to be careful what I ask for?) Over the course of these following months, I have become very aware of my deep goodness (Wisdom/Spirit within) and my shortcomings - where I profess one value yet act in an opposing way. I'd like to share an experience of these.

I work as a home health physical therapist and spend much of my work day on the road in my car. I have three bumper stickers: "Celebrate Diversity", "Speak for Peace", and "God Bless the Whole World, No Exceptions." They represent an inner and outer world I am aiming to embrace.

Last week while zipping down one of our gravel roads from one client's home to another, someone pulled out in front of me from a side road. I had to hit my brakes and travel at least a mile at 35 mph before I could safely pass him. I was angry. He was disturbing my tight little schedule, my PLAN! And besides, I was on a noble mission: to see my clients on time. I cursed him out profusely from inside my car. As I got the opportunity to zoom past him, I had a tiny twinge. I thought of my bumper stickers and that he would be able to read them, but I quickly quelled that feeling with righteousness.

Later that day I was walking with a client outdoors. He has great difficulty speaking and rarely says anything during our sessions. As we walked around his circle driveway, we came up behind my car. He stopped. I wondered if he was uncertain how to get around the car with his walker. He stood a long time and as I got ready to prompt him, he took one

hand off the walker, pointed to the bumper of my car, looked at me and said, "Yes, I like these." The thought of how I had acted earlier came back full force.

Seeing myself so clearly, feeling that lack of integrity, I wanted to rip the stickers off the bumper. Oh, yes, I like them too, but as my eyes are opened I am aware how hard it is to act consistently on these values I espouse. I "celebrate diversity" when the diverse people are diverse the same way I am. I "speak for peace" except when someone gets between me and what I want. And "God Bless" is the exact opposite of the words I had for that driver. These may seem like common, little shortcomings, but what war is not based on these attitudes?

While journaling the next morning, I found my inner wisdom asking questions even closer to home: How do I value the diversity in myself? I act in ways that are noble, manipulative, open, intolerant, loving, arrogant, honest, deceitful, altruistic, judgmental, greedy, bold and fearful. How do I bless all these parts of me with "no exceptions"?

How do I "speak peace" to myself rather than being a terrorizing tyrant who tries to beat me into goodness?

My only answers thus far: with patience over time, with "open eyes", honesty and loving kindness for my humanness from myself and my community, and with Grace...not without Grace.



EVER HAVE ONE OF THOSE DAYS?

## Wilderness Journal

by Julie D. Keefer

Recently my friend, Esther, who started the ministry, "Journey Into Freedom" with a passionate voice of transformation and freedom, announced through their newsletter that she was turning over leadership to others and leaving that ministry to let the Spirit blow where it would for her own greater freedom and wholeness.

I was very surprised at her decision, yet I could understand from my own questions and discernments, the longing to let go of the known and cast out into the uncertainties of new adventures, letting the wind blow me where it will.

Her writing hit many cords within me. She wrote of, as a young girl, the fun of rock hopping to cross a river and the metaphor it has become for this stage of her journey. I, too, know the art of rock hopping"; jumping from stone to stone on rocks in the water without exactly knowing my destination. I still love the challenge, when finding many large rocks crossing rivers or along waterways, of moving swiftly from rock to rock without planning my next move, trusting my balance and instinct to find the next available rock to move onto. It is exhilarating to feel that wonderful sense of freedom, flight and balance. The more I let go and just move forward, the greater balance I have.

I've learned that success on the journey isn't about what I achieve, but in keeping the forward momentum of my journey with faith that the path will unfold before me as it will, according to a greater vision I hold for my life and my work.

As the development of our space has slowed down here at MorningStar over the

last few years, I find more space for my beingness on one level, yet, to my surprise, I have been called out into the community of LeRoy for the past 4 years to serve on the planning and zoning commission because of my desire to champion the environment and to be more integrated into the local community.

The past two years I have been co-chair and facilitating the meetings. Only recently, over the past few months did it become clear to me why I was called to this service. In the past few months some angry citizens have shown up to express their unhappiness with the supervisor/zoning administrator and with zoning. It has been a huge opportunity and challenge to become a mediator, trying to build bridges of understanding within the community. It has given me a clear opportunity to bring the values of MorningStar into our local community through the way I work with this challenge.

The paradox is that 25 years ago, when I moved here, I felt threatened by the community around me, that my radical spiritual, feminist values would not be understood and even feared. Now I'm finding deeper healing and integration occurring with going out into this local arena with who I am and what my life stands for. And suprisingly finding acceptance, value, and respect for who I am and what I'm bringing to my own "back yard".

It's been a long journey of healing into greater wholeness, but it has brought me to a place of greater detachment from, as my friend Esther put it, "needing to be understood, needing approval, or needing to be seen as some great achievement. ....You know that every step or jump need not be successful or praiseworthy. Your only goal





is to remain faithful to the journey with God".

Through the journey with God through MorningStar, I've developed the courage, the wisdom and the strength to show up with a more clear and authentic voice in the world, for better or worse, for richer or poorer.....

This new sense of freedom is also enabling me to say "yes" to the rocks of new possibility for MorningStar's future. I don't feel so caught between "a rock and the hard place", as I'm remembering the joy in trusting the movement and the moment.

### Opening To Wisdom Meditation

Get comfortable and sink into awareness of your breathing.....note the sensations of the air entering your nostrils and filling your lungs.....notice the depth of your breath in your belly.....does your belly expand with a breath.....or just your chest.....try to expand your breath more deeply into your belly and pay attention to how your body responds to this deeper breath.....breathe into your eyes and the tension around them .....breathe out and release this tension with each exhale.....and the tension in your jaw.....your neck.....your shoulders.....your arms..... your hands.....your back.....your chest.....your hips.....your legs.....your feet.....and now place your awareness in the area of your heart.....visualize a place of beauty, of warmth, of light, of comfort and safety.....ask your Source of wisdom to be there with you, paying attention to the form in which it is being expressed.....when ready, if you have a particular need or question, ask for direction.....then just let go and stay with the awareness of your breath, and just dwell in your heart space, open and willing to receive a response to what you need or ask.....it may come in a word or phrase, a feeling, a sensation, a shape, a person, a memory, a place, a color, an image, an animal, or an object ....just stay open and willing to receive.....when you feel ready, express gratitude to your Source of wisdom in some way.....and begin to be aware of the outer room and your ordinary reality once again.... Ground

yourself by placing your right hand over your heart and your left hand on your belly. J.D.K.

### Seed Meditation

Do the body relaxation part of the meditation above..... then with your awareness in your heart, once again calling on your Source of wisdom..... now imagine your heart as a garden that has been planted with a very sacred seed....the seed of your own becoming....the garden has all it needs to support the life of this seed: water, sunlight, nutrients and a good relationship with everything around it because the Master Gardener who created the garden and planted the seed is tending it, making sure it doesn't become too dry, or too hot and that the conditions surrounding it are in harmony and support the germination, sprouting and growth of the seed..... the Master Gardener has many other gardens to start and seeds to plant, so She has empowered your seed with the Her wisdom to know how to germinate, sprout and grow through direct access to Her knowledge, wisdom and resources to care well for your seed's unfoldment.....if your seed seems undernourished, endangered, disconnected or resistant to growth or diseased in some way, just ask for the Master Gardener's assistance..... name what it is you are experiencing..... what intentions do you hold for the unfolding of your seed life?.....When you are ready to end the meditation, give thanks to the Master Gardener.....and slowly return your awareness to what is around you. J.D.K.

New Moon, Seed Moon



A Wise Woman

A wise woman turns within for answers,  
knowing there's a place deep inside,  
holding her truth.  
She becomes quiet enough to let the clarity of  
her inner voice shimmer through.  
And then she listens.

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MorningStar Adventures, Inc.  
20564 Morningstar Trail  
LeRoy, MI. 49655  
231-768-4368  
www.morningstarretreatcenter.net  
morningstar@netonecom.net  
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"Listen, a sower went out to sow. As she sowed, some seeds fell on the edge of the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Others fell on the patches of rock where they found little soil and sprang up at once, because there was no depth of earth; but as soon as the sun came up they were scorched and, not having any roots, they withered away. Others fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Others fell on rich soil and produced their crop, some a hundred fold, some sixty, some thirty. Anyone who has ears should listen!" (from the Gospel of Matthew)



"Listen to your life. See it for the fathomless Mystery that it is. In the boredom and in the pain of it, no less than in the excitement and gladness: touch and taste your way to the holy and hidden heart of it because in the last analysis all moments are key moments and life itself is grace."

-Frederick Buechner

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drop us a line and let us know. Thank you!!