

MorningStar

Empowerment for the journey
to wholeness and love

Spring 2005 Issue 1



Adventures

In the Dawn
of a new day

Volume 21

Receiving Peace

by Julie D. Keefer

On the bittersweet path to holiness, the suffering grows us up, the surrendering brings us Home!

With all the chaos happening in the world today, which seems not to be of peace, I find myself thinking ever more about what brings peace to my body, mind, soul and spirit.

After sitting in an hour-long meditation with our local Quaker group, these words came to me: "Peace begins with humility." As I reflected on this it seemed to point to an open recognition and acceptance of the way things are and a desire to make them better, beginning with myself.

Peace is a graced moment of yielding to a clarity greater than my own; a wisdom far wiser than mine. Yet, a clarity and a wisdom that can be accessed from within my own heart and mind as I yield my own agenda and seek to listen to this deeper "knowing" in the face of what is.

Peace is not something I can make happen with the power of intellectual comprehension or outer striving. I can only receive it as I release any desire to achieve it.

Peace requires great courage and trust that there is a larger Reality holding me, and all, in a vast network of relationships meant to serve a higher good than what my individual ego could ever comprehend without humility.

Humility breaks open the ground of my human limitation and enables the light of truth to penetrate the dark soil of fear within me and plant new seeds of hope for a peace that passes all understanding.

Peace is an unconditional gift, received as my attachment to my ego's fear of loss, and consequent effort to hold on, is relinquished.

Peace requires the humility to trust the One who made me to guide my way, step by step, as I wait in stillness for the dawn, listening for the inner call to Love's actions.

Through these actions of love a peaceful home, community, nation, and world can be built.

Without humility the door to Love's peace-giving Presence does not open.

"Ask and you shall receive..... knock and it will be opened to you".

May you know the peace that passes all understanding, enabling our broken world to find its way Home.

MorningStar News

Thank you!!'

Our fall fund raiser was a grand success with a total received of \$18,395, plus, a DVD player, labor and materials for Gabriel's roof!!

We are most grateful for helping open more space between that "rock and a hard place" we've been caught in, giving us more options to meet needs more effectively.

Ecology and Spirituality

Our little circle is growing as we continue to be encouraged by the speakers from last year's Bioneers conference, via DVD's. It's hopeful to hear of the human and eco-justice work being done to create a more sustainable world. Some of the projects we're working on: educating our local community about conservation easements, standing behind the village proposal for burn barrel ordinances, writing letters to the editor, and starting a local farmer's market.

Archetypal Circle

Currently, a group of 6 of us meet monthly to work with Angeles Arrien's The Four Fold Way.

The Cottage Book Shop

A reminder that M* receives 10% of your purchase when you order here and state your connection with M*. Free shipping. Toll free #: 1-800-254-5536 pin 7186 e-mail: siepker@aol.com. Thanks!!

Morning Glory Sabbatical:

Seeking Home

We are looking for persons who are ready to take a mid-life break of a month or more from December through March or May, to immerse in nature, silence, reflection, study, writing, meditation, snow shoeing, community and a little snow shoveling! It's a great way to break the spell of society's busy grip on the soul. Call if you are ready to explore this adventure.

Seeking Community in Times of uncertainty and Change

At this time of national and personal insecurity,

ecological disasters, life re-evaluation and deepening spiritual hunger, we recognize the importance of having a place and people with whom we can address our personal, work, community, national and global issues without fear and judgment. A place that encourages right relationship with ourselves, with others, and with nature.

MorningStar is such a place of seekers seeking to embody a lifestyle grounded in devotion, simplicity, wholeness and creative service with openness to the Creator Spirit's ongoing revelation for healing and integration.

We offer holistic opportunities and resources for your journey:

- * Individual or Small Group Retreats
- * Spiritual Midwifery (holistic discernment of the movement of Spirit in your life).
- * Newsletter
- * Community meditation
- * Monthly Creative Ritual
- * Monthly Ecology and Spirituality Circle
- * Monthly Archetypal Learning Circle
- * Volunteer Opportunities for the Maintenance and Ministry of MorningStar

We invite you to consider MorningStar as a place of empowerment for your authentic sense of belonging and creativity in the world.

ways for you to help:

Buy M* retreat or spiritual midwifery gift certificates to honor special occasions

Schedule a regular retreat for yourself and/ or your small group or family.

Contribute: TV for videos in the loft, good recycled or new blankets, paper products, computer paper

Spread the word.

Engage the adventure of an outhouse! It gives you a natural view on life.

Spring Unravels...

BY MICHELLE SIEPKER



Co-Creating a Peaceful Community

by Julie Keefer

I've been reflecting on the meaning of non-violence in my life and looking more closely at the subtle ways that violence can creep into my life: in attitude, word or deed that undermines integrity in my relationships, including nature. It is in these more subtle levels and layers of violence that I believe the roots of broken community and ultimately war are sown. If the thorns of violence can be recognized and clipped at their base, peace can come to prevail in outer relations.

Here are some thoughts and learnings about how to "be peace" together.

Listen with an open heart, mind and spirit, and respond in a way that lets the other feel honored and valued regardless of whether we agree; withhold judgment and blame and remain curious and compassionate from a detached perspective.

Dialogue for understanding of issues, not to defend a position.

Speak our truth when it is relevant information for an issue, situation or keeping integrity in relationship.

When another speaks a truth we share, find another aspect of it to speak to. Don't negate our personal voice.

Take personal responsibility to get pertinent information related to an issue or request.

Avoid assumptions or inferences by seeking clarification of intent.

Do not project power onto one or a few, but show up with what we have to offer in any given situation; assert personal leadership.

Avoid cross talk within a group dialogue; focus on listening to one at a time.
Provide space to reflect on and respond to what each person is sharing.

Make critical decisions on behalf of a group by a

consensus process.

When an issue arises between two members of a group, seek to resolve it within 24 hours, 3 days or one week (24-3-7 rule)

The following important reminder from Elizabeth O'Connor's Cry Pain, Cry Hope calls us to ask ourselves, in this time of great peril on the Earth, "What deep need do we have that intersects with a deep need in the world?"

"Each person, no matter how old, has an important work to do. This good work not only accomplishes something needed in the world, but completes something in us. When it is finished a new work emerges that will help us make green a desert place, as well as to scale another mountain in ourselves. The work we do in the world, when it is a true vocation, always will correspond in some mysterious way to the work that goes on within us."

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"We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds--and in the process heal our own--indeed, to embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder. This will happen if we see the need to revive our sense of belonging to a larger family of life, with which we have shared our evolutionary process.

In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other.

Wangari Maathai-- 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Winner. She started planting trees to save her community and is Founder of the Green Belt Movement in Africa.



As Clarissa Pinkola Estes has stated: "This is the time for which you were born".

Gardener's Gleanings

by Elise Schliakjer

On the night of the celebration of my seventieth birthday, friends gathered with me around a sacred altar covered with a deep purple cloth printed with labyrinths and holding a seven branched candelabra, each candle representing a decade of my life. On the tiers of the candelabra were carefully chosen pictures and symbols from each decade. Then golden and dark purple cords were woven around and through the layers, symbolizing God's presence throughout my journey as well as the times that it felt as though God was absent. Also resting on the altar was a scroll with the names of all whose lives had touched mine. This was tied with a golden cord.

Having found much joy in using J. Philip Newell's Celtic Benediction, Morning and Night Prayer, which is based on the seven days of creation, it felt right to use this theme for my ritual. The Celtic tradition sees each of these days as theophanies or showings of God. I spent nearly a month looking back over my life to see how God had manifested these various aspects in each of my decades, and how, at times, I had blocked them. Newell lists these showings as: the divine light that is the heart and origin of all life, the wildness of creativity, the earth's fecundity, the harmony of masculine and feminine, the goodness of the senses, the awesome mystery of being made in God's image, and the stillness that is essential to life's renewal.

As I looked back over the 70 years of my life, I could see the utter faithfulness of God, woven lovingly throughout my life even when I could not feel it. Or, for that matter, knew how to name this presence that kept calling me forward. Yet now I can look back with God and pronounce it "good". This is said with some qualms, knowing that I have often acted fearfully, and made what seemed to be bad choices, but I realize that I do not have the whole picture and never will. My thinking is still too much in a box and probably always will be, but I am definitely trying to break through those imaginary barriers.....to live in the wildness of

creativity, to trust in the earth's and my own fecundity, to savor all that my senses tell me, (certainly one reason I love to garden, cook and create altar out of table!) and to rejoice in the awesome mystery of being made in God's image.

Being made of clay, physically and spiritually, I feel God's hands constantly at work on me, shaping me more and more into a lover. They are always tender, but they are also strong and firm and they are always stretching me in my comprehension of what being a lover really means.....the inclusivity and responsibility that it calls me to.

And so, on this magical evening, as I shared with my friends the many threads of my life, they wove into this wonder filled fabric songs, poetry and readings of their own making. It was indeed a joy-filled evening and we did not stop dancing until two a.m.!!

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From Elise's Kitchen

Winter is still covering us in ice and snow, but hopefully it will be spring where you are when this arrives. One of the dishes that we have enjoyed this winter, but which is good beyond this time is red cabbage. Cooked to be meltingly sweet, it is a real comfort food. I hope you will try it!

Red Cabbage with Apples

1 small onion diced well
1 red cabbage approximately 2 lbs, quartered, cored and finely sliced
1 Tb caraway seeds
1 Tb oil (I like walnut)
Salt and freshly milled pepper
2 Granny Smith apples quartered, cored and diced
Apple cider vinegar
Heat oil in a large skillet. Add the onion and caraway and cook over medium heat until the onion is translucent. Add the cabbage and apples and season with 1 ts. salt. Cover tightly and cook very slowly until the cabbage is meltingly tender, about an hour or so. Taste for salt and pepper and toss with vinegar to taste. Enjoy!!

MorningStar Calendar 2005

Our theme this year is "Coming Home".

Taking time to be, to listen, to reflect, to create, to move, to wander, to grieve, to play, to let our souls be nurtured and our spirit uplifted can help bring us Home to to a deeper sense of Self. It is in tending the garden of our soul and spirit that God's Spirit ultimately calls forth our gifts in response to the needs of a troubled world.

Earth Day Ritual and Spring Clean up

April 22-23, 11:00 - 5:00

Come and celebrate our Mother the Earth with ritual, blessing and song as we tend to the land and spaces that make MorningStar's hospitality a sacred blessing for many. Lunch provided both days. Please let us know if you are coming.

Paying Attention to Your Life, May 7-8

beginning at 10 a.m. on Saturday, ending at 4:00 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: \$200-225 Bring your own breakfasts.

Finding Balance: Beginning Tai Chi

May 10, 12, 17, 19, June 7, 9, 14, 16,
July 12, 14, 19, 21 6-7:30

Learn the ancient art of balance, coordination, relaxation, optimum health and well-being through the exercises of Qigong and the flowing forms of Tai Chi.

The art of Tai Chi cultivates vitality by stimulating energy flows throughout the body for many health benefits related to stress reduction, posture, strength and flexibility, improved mental concentration and more.

Our Instructor is JoAnna Graves, a teacher, artist and writer. She has studied Tai Chi for 25 years. Lessons are sequential. Each 4 lesson set is \$45. All 3 lessons sets are recommended for deeper

practice. Total for all 12 lessons is \$135.

Enhancing the Joy of Learning Through Brain Gym Training, June 17-19, 9-6.

As a flower unfolds to the sun in pure magnificence, we, too, are born to bloom into our full radiance. What impedes our own beautiful unfoldment? What blocks us from seeing clearly, listening wholly, communicating effectively, creating freely? Brain Gym offers tools for the journey back to our true Self. Through simple, specific movements and movement processes, participants develop skills for noticing and dismantling learning blocks. These whole body movements activate the whole brain promoting integrated, joyful learning.

In addition to personal growth, this training will also be of great value to all who work as learning guides for others; teachers, physical therapists, parents, etc. Brain Gym has been used effectively with those identified as dyslexic, reading disabled and ADHD.

Join us for 3 full days of playful, profound and integrating activity. Our facilitator is Rebecca Kirk, licensed Brain Gym instructor.

Cost: Training: \$300-335, includes lodging 2 dinners. (Bring 2 breakfasts and lunches)

Solstice at Sleeping Bear: Fun-d Raiser

June 21-23, with Julie and Elise.

Join us at our favorite place in Michigan, Sleeping Bear National Park to celebrate the Summer Solstice! Lodging is at the quaint Sylvan Inn in Glen Arbor with hot tub and sauna. Check in time is after 1:00. Visit the beach and The Cottage Book Shop, then gather for the Solstice Circle on the beach at 8: p.m including, chant, dance, walking a portable labyrinth. Wednesday we have choices to connect with nature, awakening our senses to listen for the guidance we are needing for the realities of our lives; kayak, hike, walk, bike, walk beach, sit and enjoy a beautiful view, journal, draw, take pictures, and just be with our Mother Earth at some of our favorite sites in the park. We'll close with a camp fire circle in the evening. Check out is at 11:00 am. kayaks and meals are not included, but there are lovely restaurants and rentals within walking distance. Bring snacks.

Scholarship \$ was donated for this, so don't let \$ keep you away! We want you to enjoy this with us! Suggested donation: 1 night: \$100-125, 2 nights \$145 - 165 includes breakfast at the inn and facilitation. Let's Celebrate Life!

Letting Nature Speak To/Through You.

July 16, 10-5 with JoAnna Graves
Learn how to receive messages from Nature by tuning in to her hidden dimensions through a "senses on" exploration. Individual and group activities include 1) Individual and group oracle readings from Nature, 2)Gigong exercises to attune the body, mind and spirit on a universal level, 3) Entering and being in the forest, 4) Awakening the Muse within, and 5) Collective creating.

JoAnna Graves is an artist, teacher and therapist. She will guide us through the healing, magical and creative process of releasing, respecting and receiving, to experience the Wisdom of Nature. She will also be using her "Great Lakes Oracle" created from the wisdom she heard while listening along the banks of the Great Lakes. Come prepared for inclement weather.

Suggested donation: \$70- 80, includes lunch

River Kayaking Adventures with Julie Keefer

These river adventures are meant to help us re-connect with the "wild and natural" flow of our lives, to stay in the current and to navigate the obstacles. At lunch we will gather in circle to share our reflections. Bring lunch, and Rent (\$26) or bring a kayak. Instruction provided. Directions will be given upon registration. Free will donation.

Manistee River July 22, 10:30 at the Chippewa Landing Rental

Whether you are new to kayaking or not, this designated Natural River is wild and beautiful.

Pere Marquette River, August 21, 10:30 at Baldwin Canoe Rental

A clear and inviting designated Wild and Scenic River, good for canoe experienced, kayak beginners and up.

Paying Attention to Your Life October 8-9, with Julie and Elise (see description above)

Dreams: A Gateway to Wisdom, October 28-29, from 7:30 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- 6 p.m. with Inie Bijkerk, Julie Keefer and Sylvia Kallemeyn.

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: 231-768-43478
morningstar@netonecom.net Send a \$50 deposit, non-refundable 1 week prior to event. Please register at least 10 days in advance.

A Recent Letter From a Retreatant

We were given permission to publish the following letter. It is so reflective of the struggle so many women have in overcoming our fear, shame and anger in order to let our true light shine.

Dear Julie,

I have walked around with the question --- how to explore my adolescent self? While at Morningstar, I did some left hand/right hand conversation journaling and some drawing --- When I got home I looked at some things about inner child but didn't seem to connect. I did some remembering of stories and friends that came to mind. In the midst of this I attended a training and the speaker talked about how helpful drawing can be. So while I thought that remembering and journaling would be my primary way---I felt as if I needed to draw. However, I know that the remembering helped give shape to the drawing.

The drawing I did on retreat I entitled "Boxed in Light". Last night I came home from work late and did some reading and still had that sense that I needed to draw. What surprised me was that while the drawing is not the least bit similar to the one on retreat --- the message is the same --- but I saw the story in a different light. I selected the color orange which for me has represented courage since my adolescent years. I drew concentric circles. The center circle, the first circle, I placed some images; sun, a question mark, tears, a Christ symbol. As I did that I was so conscious that over those years there was a great deal happening at the center, I sensed a strong closeness to the Holy but I feared expressing what was happening; I feared the questions that were surfacing; I feared the tears that came. And so in the next circle, I encircled the word fear -- that is what held God's light, my light and my searching "boxed in". God knows and I know that she cannot be boxed in but it seems that was my attempt at control. What held the fear in place was the next circle - Shame -- I was positive I was not good enough, my thoughts, my questions did not count. What held the shame was silence.

That is where I stopped the drawing and I went to bed but I slept knowing a deep peace. In the morning I prayed again with the drawing and as I

did I felt I needed to add one more circle. It was anger, I am very aware that my anger was often a surprise to me and to others and that in the past few years that anger does not catch me by surprise. I also remembered something I heard last Easter: The Center holds. That was the sense that I had --- in my chaos, God was a very strong and deep presence. Today's gospel: You will know the truth and the truth will set you free.

All of this is a blessing and gift --- thank you for guiding me on the next path in my journey.

Julie's Response:

I appreciate your sharing this with me.

Your faithfulness to the questions is a testament to your adolescent's active and curious desire to uncover her treasure evermore! She will not be left in anyone's box! The color orange is reflective of the third chakra/energy center which is above the belly button which is about self-esteem. Yes, in our adolescence it takes courage to hold onto who we most deeply are in God. Most of us tend to lose some of that, if not all of it. But your inner wise woman has not lost that connection and her courage has carried you this far. She is returning, returning --- getting stronger and stronger...able to hold her Center and bring that Light more confidently into the world.

It is so archetypal for women (the "feminine" in women and men), this struggle to hold onto center when who we are as beings of compassion and Light in a patriarchal culture is not received with the full dignity, truth, beauty, and grace of who we are in God. We may hold the memory of Her face, even when we are not valued for the gift she bears into the world through us, but it is difficult for us to truly value what we bring of Her Light and Life, thus keeping Her Light from shedding Truth on the ways of broken relationship, and the ways that must be re-established to restore and keep the Whole Light shining brightly through our lives.

Yes, when we face the lie of shame which keeps us hidden, and the anger of truth which wants to activate our courage to live from our Center without apology, we truly liberate Her Light and more fully become the Co-Creators we are meant to be!

As I'm writing this I'm wondering how you would feel if your writing and

mine were shared in our newsletter? Yours anonymously of course, unless you were wanting to be identified. Your story is one of hope and resurrection for all who have and do struggle with this Light business.

I will fully understand and honor your choice not to share this also.

Her reply:

I thought about your request. For me, even though I would want to be anonymous, it represents breaking the silence. There is a part of me that doesn't want my vulnerable self to be seen --- however, another part of me wants my strong self to be seen. Both are present in what I wrote. All of that is to say, the answer is "yes". I simply ask that you not use my name.

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The Our Mother Prayer

By a Contemporary freelance lover of Wisdom, who wishes to remain anonymous.

Our Mother, thou who art in the darkness of the underworld,
May the memory of the holiness of thy name shine forth,
May the breath of the awakening of thy kingdom warm the hearts of all homeless wanderers,
May the resurrection of thy will enliven eternal faithfulness even unto the depths of corporeal substance.
Receive this day the living remembrance of thee from human hearts,
Who implore thee to forgive the debt of forgetting thee,
And are ready to fight against the temptation in the world which has led thee to existence in the darkness.
That through the Deed of the Son the immeasurable pain of the Father be stilled,
Through the freeing of all beings from the tragedy of thy withdrawal,
For thine is the homeland, and the all-bestowing greatness, and the all-merciful grace, for all and everything in the circle of all.

A Call to Council

Arise, then, women of this day!
Arise all women who have hearts, whether your baptism be that of water or of tears!

Say firmly:

We will not have great questions decided by irrelevant agencies.

Our husbands shall not come to us reeking with carnage, for caresses and applause.

Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn all that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy, and patience.

We women of one country will be too tender of those of another country to allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs.

From the bosom of the devastated earth a voice goes up with our own. It says, Disarm, Disarm!

The sword of murder is not the balance of justice!

Blood does not wipe out dishonor nor violence indicate possession.

As men have often forsaken the plow and the anvil at the summons of war, let women now leave all that may be left of home for a great and earnest day of counsel.

Let them meet first, as women, to bewail and commemorate the dead.

Let them then solemnly take counsel with each other as the means whereby the great human family can live in peace, and each bearing after her own time the sacred impress, not of Caesar, but of God
(from Julia Ward Howe, *Reminiscences*, 1819-1899)

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KEEP WALKING,
THOUGH THERE'S NO PLACE TO GET TO.
DON'T TRY TO SEE THROUGH
THE DISTANCES,
THAT'S NOT FOR
HUMAN BEINGS.
MOVE
WITHIN,
BUT DON'T
MOVE THE WAY
FEAR
MAKES
YOU
MOVE.
-Rumi

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Transition Time by Mary Weber

On day's edge, darkness yields to light.
In the depths a seed sleeps until dawn.
Nudge me. Sweet Light, into wakefulness.

"I feel like I have suddenly landed, feet first, into the soft fertile ground after floating in limbo a long time. I have landed. I am here. My tap roots dive deeply into the ground from the bottom of my feet. The fears and the questions have calmed, and I stand firmly in the right-ness of my place. I am here, and I am worthy. My gifts are complementary and needed. This is my home and my community. I need not be sheepish about my involvement. I am here. I am home."

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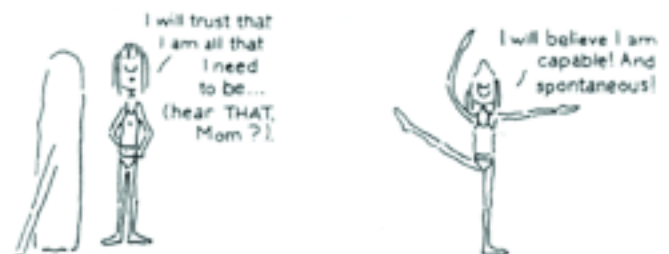
The following excerpt from Elizabeth A. Johnson's Woman, Earth, and Creator Spirit underlies MorningStar's call:

"I propose to explore the thesis that the exploitation of the earth, which has reached crisis proportion in our day, is intimately linked to the marginalization of women, and that both of these predicaments are intrinsically related to forgetting the Creator Spirit who pervades the world

in the dance of life. Within a sexist system the true identity of both women and the earth are skewed. Both are commonly excluded from the sphere of the sacred; both are routinely taken for granted and ignored, used and discarded, even battered and "raped", while nevertheless they do not cease to give birth and sustain life.

These three relationships, human beings to the earth, among each other, and to God, are profoundly interconnected.....Thus, for a flourishing human community on a thriving earth to come about, all three must be rethought together in a new vision of wholeness that begins with lifting up what has been disparaged."

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LeRoy, MI

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How We Wrestle Is Who We Are

What if we could grow new hearts out of old ones?

What might we be then? What might we be if we rise and evolve, if we come further down from the brooding trees and out onto the smiling plain, if we unclench the fist and drop the dagger, if we emerge blinking from the fort and the stockade and the prison, if we wrench the steel from around our hearts, if we haul the beams and motes from our eyes, if we do what we say we will do, if we act as if our words really matter, if our words become muscled mercy, if we grow a fifth chamber in our hearts and a seventh and a ninth, and become as new creatures arisen from our shucked skins, the creatures we are so patently and brilliantly and utterly and wholly and holy capable of becoming...
What then?

Excerpt by Brian Doyle Orion Magazine Jan/Feb. 2005