

MorningStar

Empowerment on the journey
to wholeness and love



Adventures

In the dawn
of a new day!

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A Sense of the Future

Recently I was listening to a tape from the 1992 Institute of Noetic Sciences Conference which explored aspects of the interface of science and spirituality. Marilyn Schiltz, Ph.D., shared a Hopi elder's prophetic words to his people, which are no less prophetic for today:

"You have been telling the people that this is the eleventh hour. Now you must go back and tell the people that this is the hour. And do not look outside of yourself for the leader.

There is a river flowing very fast, it is so great and swift that there are those who will be afraid, they will try to hold onto the shore, they will feel that they are being torn apart and will suffer greatly. Know the river has its destination. We must let go of the shore, push off into the middle of the river, keep our eyes open and our heads above the water. See who is in there with you and celebrate! The time of the lone wolf is over. Gather yourselves, all that we do must now be done in a sacred manner and in celebration. We are the ones we've been waiting for."

In the Spirit of this call, MorningStar is inviting you to consider an extended time of solitude to connect deeply with the ground of your being. A call to find clarity and vision for a future which honors life, honors death, honors re-birth and honors diversity within and without; a vision of a

new future that joins together life in a circle of harmony, health and justice for all, including the natural world. If we don't work toward this, who will?

Every action toward integrity of life for ourselves, for others and for nature is a step toward the salvation of the Earth and the soul of our humanity. We must all be willing to remember what is of utmost value for the sustainment of life. It isn't about having things. It is about valuing and honoring the things we have as gifts from nature, and thus, from the Giver of Life. It is about cherishing, protecting, and nurturing our natural resources and using them wisely. Abundance flows when we honor right relationship with self, other and nature. Scarcity reigns when we live our lives cut off from a conscious relationship with both Creator and created. We are meant to live as whole individuals in the context of a whole, sacred community which incorporates every aspect of life. If not now, when?

We cannot afford to be passive spectators or exploitive consumers of life. We must show up with our feet and our hands dedicated to giving all we can to the practical re-construction of structures and infrastructures that are "green" and will support life, not destroy life. We need: families dedicated to the well being of the child and her/his holistic, green education;

alternative energies and building materials; sustainable forestry and agriculture; non-hierarchical forms of leadership with the well being of the whole community as its goal; holistic, affordable health care; collaborative efforts in the human services and business; "smart growth" concepts to encourage more local economies with investment in local food, services and leisure pursuits; and religious world views that see the Divine embodied in every process of life, not just some disembodied deity separate from material existence.

MorningStar's vision has always been to foster soulful and spiritual connection with self, other and nature as the Ground upon which Spirit can work in and through us for the well being of all. The future is in our hands. We can not afford to turn the other way; life is too precious. Are you in there with us?

by Julie D. Keefer

Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?
— Mary Oliver

M*'s Retreat Theme for 2006: Renewing Vision and Hope

Instead of programed retreats and workshops this year, we are encouraging extended personal retreat time (whatever you can allow yourself) to immerse in silence and nature; a type of vision quest to ground the future in new possibilities and hope.

A vision quest is an age-old rite of passage valued by all great traditions where individuals go alone into the

wilderness to seek spiritual vision for themselves and for the benefit of the whole community.

It is helpful to prepare for retreat/quest time at least three days before arriving; paying attention to your inner and outer realities, capturing your dreams, journaling your current reality and making an intention/prayer for your time away. The more attention you pay to preparation the more readily your inner process will unfold in solitude. It is suggested that you have a guide during your time, but not essential if you are not a stranger to solitude and inner work.

Julie is available, if needed, to provide guidance for your preparation (via phone or e-mail), upon arrival before entry into your quest, and at the end of your time. You are also held in prayerful ways by each of us here in community at MorningStar.

The following questions may help you discern if you are in need of a time apart to seek greater vision/clarity for your life:

Have you lost connection with yourself, with who you really are, with your own spirituality and the Earth? Is life fragmented or stagnant for you? Are you mourning a loss? Was something left behind when you chose something else? Do you have an image of life as you had always imagined it would be? Are you seeking new directions for your life, your relationships, your job, your health, your lifestyle? Then, a vision quest may be calling you.

Group/Circle

If you have a group/circle, or one friend, and want to deepen connection with self, other and nature, that, too, is encouraged. If interested, facilitation is available around your theme or one that might be suggested, depending on your interests and our availability.



"You have friends who know that your inner voice speaks the truth and who can affirm what it says. They offer you the safe place where you can let that voice become clearer and louder. There will be people who will tell you that you are wasting your time and talents, that you are fleeing from true responsibility, that you fail to use the influence you have. But don't let yourself be misled. They do not speak in God's name. Trust the few who know your inner journey and want you to be faithful to it. They will help you stay faithful to God's call."

--Henri Nouwen



MorningStar News

Fundraising Letter Response: Great!!

Thank you to all who responded to our annual support request toward our 2005-6 fiscal year with a total so far of \$12,625!. In spite of a year of devastation and need everywhere, we were humbled and blessed to receive your outpouring of generosity. This, with Julie's decision to begin receiving social security benefits and therefore a lower income from M*, and your response to our invitation to take some quality retreat time for personal deepening, will allow us to meet this year's needs. Our current budget is \$40,000.

Showers

Thanks to those of you who responded to our question about showers. Here is a sample of the dominant attitude in response:

"I like not having a choice when I'm there--to bathe like a westerner or like women in many of the places around the world and through out time. The absence of an "easy", thoughtless means of daily care not only connects me to women who must walk to the river to bathe or to get water to carry home, but it connects me in a more thoughtful way to my own body. I'm sorry for the other guests who feel inconvenienced without an easy means of self

care. Perhaps that inconvenience can help inform them in ways that may benefit us all.... Should all our "needs" be met?"

We feel it important for women to reconnect with their bodies and with nature in simple and direct ways. It seems critical to encourage this at a time when our western lack of connection with nature and our bodies has contributed to the demise of what we hold so dear; the natural world as the Gift of beauty, nurture and mediator of Sacred Presence.

The Cottage Book Shop

Please remember to order your books through The Cottage Book Shop to benefit M*. 10 % of your purchase comes back to M* and you receive free shipping. The new number: 1-800-303-6956, or e-mail: info@cottagebooks.com

MorningStar Visioning: Generativity Circle

Since November we have been in a new visioning process with our Sisterhood and a small group of others concerned about MorningStar's future, as well as to promote shared values and to empower the lives and work each person is called to. We are seeking to generate possibilities for MorningStar's future through listening deeply enough to ourselves and to one another for Spirit to guide our way.

We seek to expand our community for the sake of the continued healing and educational work of MorningStar. If you feel a call to MorningStar's future, let us know so we can begin a discerning dialog with you.

Ways for you to help MorningStar:

- * 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: good recycled or new blankets, paper products, computer paper,
- * A good hi-fi amplifier and speakers,
- * Spread the word about M*
- * Make a tax-exempt contribution
- * Engage the adventure of an outhouse! It gives you a natural view on life!
- * To save paper and postage, please Let us know if you do not wish to receive our mailings.

Wilderness Journal

by Julie D. Keefer



I am experiencing the entry into the last third of my life as a rite of passage as I "harvest" the fruit of the first two thirds of my journey. It is the time to spin wisdom from the joys and sorrows of my life, and the life of MorningStar, for greater integration and wholeness.

It is also a time to be clear about that to which I am being called, and that which I must release to be true to myself at this time. I've been letting my energies be renewed through a process of looking back and seeing the past with ever more clarity. I've had to do some grieving of lost opportunities and failures, of disappointments and betrayals, and for the weight of carrying, as a "leader", too many projections of other's expectations as well as unrealistic expectations of myself. I've also had to face the fear of breaking through to new levels of my capacity to trust. Yet, at the same time, I am able to give thanks for the learning, personal transformation, and deepening of community with those willing to "hold the tension" of differences, where compassion for self and others can grow.

The journey has brought me to greater personal authenticity, and detachment from needing a particular outcome for MorningStar. Trusting what is still evolving and being willing to let go as needed, I can focus more on what I am called to offer at this time.

My original call was to provide space and support for women in a natural environment to re-connect with the archetypal "wild woman", as Clarissa Pinkola Estes calls our essential Selves. This aspect of the Divine is connected to the Spirit of All Life. This work is still at the

heart of my call because I have recognized the need go more deeply into Her ways and to learn ever more effective ways to express Her values.

Beverly Lanzetta in Radical Wisdom: A Feminist Mystical Theology, states, "A woman is not able to reject, suppress, or mystically override her soul wounds, but is compelled to feel them at a deeper level and to bear them until they bring forth the birth of her full humanity." I know, for myself, how long a journey this is. From centuries of having women's divine image fractured by thought patterns that deny women's deep instinctual knowing, we each have to slog through the deep lies and violations to uncover our essential Selves, setting free our wild and authentic spirits. As Lanzetta also states, "Only as a woman approaches her own spiritflesh in amazement and respect, with the gratitude offered the holy, does she discover the gift of her prophetic presence."

My experience reveals to me that She is found in the inner sanctuary of my heart. And as I open my heart in wonder and awe, give from inner abundance, stand firm on what has meaning and value, and choose to listen to Wisdom's guidance, I come more fully into my humanity and manifest more fully my Divine Self.

Quiet time in a safe and nurturing environment is still the vital way I come into the presence of this "Mother Center". With her I continue to learn to see with the eyes of my heart what is good and right for me and what is wrong and harmful, wise and shallow, prudent and foolish. Silence makes me think about what to avoid and what to seek on my journey to wholeness and love. With Her I can be assured that the last third of my life will be quite the adventure!!



Monthly Circles

To nurture the seeds of deepening transformation and community, we will continue to offer:

First Sunday, 10 - 4 April - November

M* Midwifery Circle: The Second Half of Life

This circle is an invitation to women in the second half of life to come together to work with The Second Half of Life: Opening the Eight Gates of Wisdom, Angeles Arrien's newest work. The eight gates emphasize the poignancy of the time and the need to integrate all aspects of our life's experience. Each gate represents tasks, challenges, gifts, reflections, and practices which help us identify and re-assess what and whom we cherish, what is truly important to us, and what we deeply value. They also reveal what we choose to mend, redo, or correct in our life and what longings we have yet to satisfy. We will use meditation and creative work and circle process to integrate each gate.

This process will help us identify which gates we need to revisit for additional inspiration or deepening work as our journeys continue.

This commitment will necessitate reading, reflecting and journaling throughout the month to maximize the learning each gate offers.

Suggested donation to MorningStar will be discerned by each participant according to MorningStar needs and the needs and talents of the participant. Limited to 7. Call to register.

Last Sunday Community Ritual and Meditation

11:30 - 1:00 ... followed by brown bag lunch and dialogue or other activity. This is a good time to connect with our local community and also to introduce new people to MorningStar.

Third Monday: 7:00 p.m. - 9 p.m.

Ecology and Spirituality

Starting with a short meditation, we focus on videos to learn more about the nature of the universe, issues of Earth's ecology and the art of living more simply, compassionately and sustainably.

We also seek to engage injustice issues and actions at the local, state, national and global levels.

Generativity Circle

This group is already formed and is deepening life together as we continue to discern the needs and future of each of us, and of MorningStar. We've been meeting monthly.

A Gardener's Gleanings

by Elise P. Schlaikjer



Each year I can hardly wait until it is warm enough for me to go barefoot. The contact with the earth is so satisfying. My bare body pressed against her bare body. It is sensual and enlivening in ways that my soul needs as well as my body. As the sun warms the earth, familiar smells once more quicken my heart, and my hands reach eagerly into the soil, much like touching the face of one's beloved. There is an intimacy in all of this that I treasure. The earth IS my mother, and every cell in my being knows it. Someday we will truly be one once more, and that will indeed be good.

Because of this deep bond with the earth, I try to avoid chemicals and poisons that I think might be harmful to the earth when I garden. I compost leftovers from the table and choose seeds for the gardens that have been used by generations of farmers or are some that I have saved. So when I recently learned that there is a bill about to come up before our State Representatives that wants to limit the power of local communities to have a say over what kinds of seeds get planted in our farms, I was very upset. Livid, actually! There are various companies now that are heavily invested in genetically modified organisms (GMOs), and they do not want people to oppose their use in any way. Some organic farmers are losing contracts because of pollen drift

polluting their crops, and others are very worried about what may soon happen to them. GMOs are already in our food system, yet the FDA does not require labeling or even testing, so the consumer has no choice in the matter. This is serious because the scientists are working on things like inserting fish genes into tomatoes to insure their ability to resist cold. How will this affect people who are allergic to fish and have no idea of what they are really eating? This is the first time in history that the line between different species has been crossed, and to me, it feels like we have opened Pandora's Box. To make matters worse, some scientists are inserting drugs into plant genes and testing them outdoors. With pollen drift that no one can control, these plants may soon be appearing on farms across the nation and on our grocery shelves.

GMO seeds are patented, and the companies that make them can sue farmers if they find their plants or seeds on a farm that did not purchase the seeds. And that could happen very easily since wind and insects move pollen all over the land. It seems to me that these companies want to be in charge of the life force instead of God being in charge of the life force. And to charge for it!

Already there are similar bills on the federal level, and the U. S. is pressuring heavily the governments in Europe and Africa to let GMO seeds in. So far these countries have refused, but economics may yet force them to change.

I believe that God wants us to feed the hungry and protect the earth and its inhabitants, but putting GMOs into the food system and giving control to a few corporations over the lives of many is not, to

my mind, honoring God or being good stewards of this beautiful and very precious earth.

On Dayspring Path

by Mary E. Weber



I am discovering that the path to wholeness is full of HOLES! It is a hole-y path! By Grace, the intervention of the Divine within and all around me, and by being held in Love by my supportive community, I have been able to stay on or near that path. Yet, in my humanity, I have tripped or fallen in many of the holes. I walk this path with growing awareness through my encounters with others. This does not mean that I fall into fewer holes. Actually, by living in community, there are more holes to fall into and fortunately, more awareness of when I have fallen into them.

So, it has been a long winter of becoming a little more "sober." This is Julie's expression, and an apt one, for approaching with awareness and living into one's reality, and among other things, releasing and resolving projections. It has been my winter inner work.

I've learned through MorningStar circle work and using Angeles Arrien's book, The Four-Fold Way, that projections can manifest from unseen, positive and negative traits; shadow aspects of myself. It relates to the old 12 step adage, "You spot it; you got it!" But I always thought of only the challenging, negative projections. For instance, saying to myself about someone whose behavior leaves me feeling inordinately angry, "I am not at all like that! Bad-ness like that could be no part of me!" A projection of a positive yet disowned self perception onto another may

be in play when, regarding someone I admire, I say to myself, "She/he is so _____, and I could never be like that." (Fill in the blank with the projection of your choice: good, noble, beautiful, healthy, smart, holy, bold, loving...)

I have often idealized individuals or communities who have dedicated their lives to that which I value, especially ones who live and serve simply, for example: Mother Teresa, some civil rights and environmental activists, Fred Rogers, the Roman Catholic sisters who taught me as a child...anyone or any group who appear deeply spiritually rooted, living out of that depth with creative service. No wonder I've been drawn to MorningStar!

In this case, that early projection has gotten me right where I belong. By being face-to-face regularly with the realities of the wholeness of each of us, cracks appeared in my illusions of community. As the illusions slipped, the projections began to fall away. Since I have chosen to stand still with eyes open and take in reality, I am becoming able to see the projections.

I have grieved this winter for the loss of my idealized versions of community. I have felt the pain of seeing others through such a narrow and polarized lens as to objectify them. And I have grieved and rejoiced over a lost part of me that, for so many years, I have searched out in others, now finally coming home.

So what is my sobering truth? It is that I am, as is every other person, a whole human being infused with the Divine. That I, too, am being called to a life of devotion, to care of the soul, as Thomas Moore puts it, "cultivating depth and sacredness in everyday life" - my own and others. That I am called to root deeply in the spiritual, being drawn into solitude, silence, and

slow time, and that my service to this world needs to emerge from that deep place. The sobering truth is that for so long I have not acknowledged nor honored these parts of me, believing that only special others could be so called. It opens me to a deeper responsibility to myself and to my relationships with others.

I am coming to believe that it is the falling into the holes of projection and climbing back out of them, owning those parts of ourselves, which speaks to the process of living a whole and holy life

Meditation Before Dawn

by Mary E. Weber

I am a spiral held in a circle
Held in a circle of Love.

I spiral in to the depth of my being
Held in a circle of Love.

I spiral out to a world in need
Held in a circle of Love.

I am a spiral held in a circle
Held in a circle of Love.



MorningStar Adventures, Inc.
20564 Morningstar Trail
LeRoy, MI 49655
231-768-4368
morningstar@netonecom.net
www.morningstarretreatcenter.net
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We need to understand from a global perspective what it is to have enough; what it is to have freedom, not only external freedom, but internal freedom. Spirituality is about living a life of depth, where we look within ourselves at those things that cause us to close our mind, to be reactive in some way and to be less than open to the present moment to the suffering of other people and of the natural world. Part of the spiritual journey is rooting out reactivity so that we become present, with our full capacity to every moment so that we are able to respond in a very clear and compassionate way to all of life; to ourselves, to one another, to children, to the world situation, and to the cries of nature which is being sacrificed on the altar of consumerism.

The U. S. is the greatest consumer of natural resources in the world. We consume twice as much food, water and energy as we can generate. We are a culture addicted to consumption at an unprecedented rate. Yet, we are hungry for a spirituality of embodiment which grounds us back to the Earth and feeds our souls with life that is vital, passionate, compassionate, and free to unfold from within this Divine Grace. Slowing down and learning to plug back in to our deep inner lives and guidance is imperative at this time on Earth.

We may feel we are in the worst of times as we look around our globe. But it's also the best of times because we have the ability to feed the world. We have the technology to curb pollution and global warming. Yet, we must feed the world not only with food and appropriate technology, but with life-giving spirituality grounded in the precious Gift of Creation; our true source of health and wealth. We need to integrate the inner journey with an outer response to the needs of the world around us. We need to bring our lives to a very local level of personal responsibility and action. It all starts here. If we don't engage our spirituality in meaningful and loving actions toward solving our nightmarish problems, who will? And if not now, when?

Julie D. Keefer