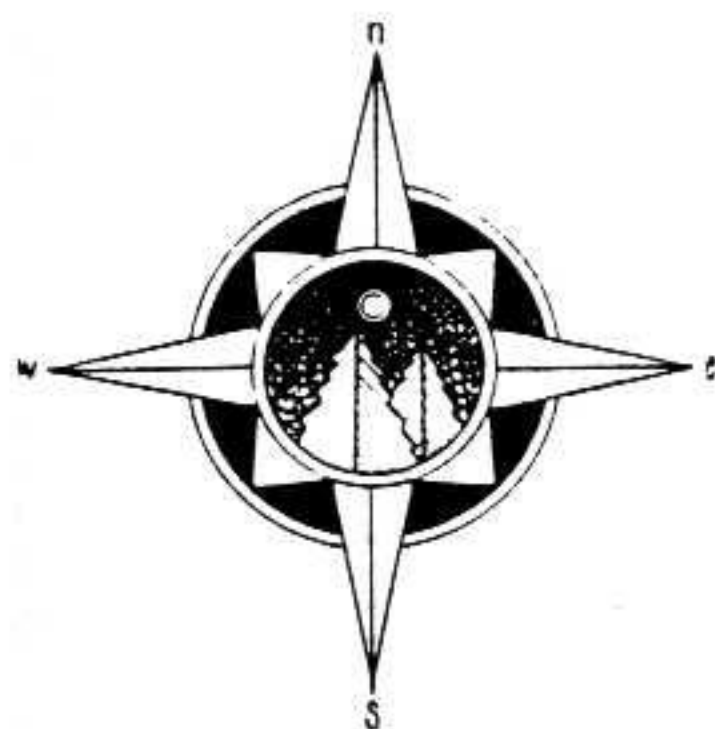


MorningStar

Empowerment for the journey
to wholeness and love



Adventures

In the Dawn
of a New Day

Spring 2004 Issue 1

Volume 19

HAVE YOU EVER...

felt that something important is missing from your life? There are many life circumstances that can accentuate that "empty" place deep within you that is indescribable to anyone else—even to those whom you love. Then one day, you awaken to the realization that the chaos and expectations that you and society place upon you have drained the reserve of energy you once had and emptiness prevails.

For me, I knew that I lost my soulful and spiritual connection to my authentic self and that the emptiness and void could no longer be ignored. That knowledge came from the fact that I attempted to take my own life in my own desperate need for "escape". My life was spared through God's grace, but I could not feel the Spirit's Presence in my life at all. My relationship with God had always been the stronghold and powerful source of love in my life. So, this was an enormous loss.

It was the longing for wholeness and freedom from the tyranny within that brought me to MorningStar in 1998. My journey towards healing began there through various means. One was, and is, spending time with Julie through the soulful gifts she brings as a spiritual midwife (by providing a safe place to explore life's lessons, listening, reflection, and encouragement to explore nature and what spirituality means to me).

During the time I've spent at MorningStar, I've come to learn how nature nurtures the spirit and soul. In one of my letters to Julie I stated, "I went for a walk in the sunshine with the gusty wind blowing all around me. It felt so good as I walked along the two-track leading to the Labyrinth-breathing in the fresh air; feeling the warmth of the sun. As I walked, my senses were aware of nature all around me—the birds singing; the rush of the wind through the trees, my hair and on my body; the carpet of leaves on the forest ground; the shades of colors of

the bark on the trees; the greens of the pines; the white snow peeking out in different areas; and the beautiful, peaceful creek swiftly moving along its path. I stopped two different times along the creek and sat there reflecting on the beauty of creation—just drinking it in. It was so good to spend time on the sacred land of MorningStar. To be wrapped in its embrace."

One of my other memories of being nurtured by nature's presence was during the fall season in 2002, shortly after my beloved sister's death. I was walking aimlessly through the forest deep in thought and grief about my sister. I decided to rest and process some of my feelings. As my body rested on the carpet of colorful leaves, I looked up at the blue sky and the trees that towered above me. The trees' branches moved back and forth in the gentle breeze. Slowly and gracefully the colorful leaves danced through the air as they floated to the ground. How wonderful to see and hear life surrounding me at a time when my heart was heavy with grief. It was a reprieve; a place of realizing the comfort that nature brings as it touched my wounded heart and soul.

It amuses me now to remember what occurred after my first walk in the forest in 1998. I mentioned to Julie that it would be nice if MorningStar had benches for people to sit on in the forest. Her reply was something to the effect of "Do you think that you could sit on the earth?" I was a city slicker through and through and the thought of sitting on the earth never occurred to me—plus I would get dirty! How far God has brought me since that time!

This article is meant to be an encouragement to all who seek wholeness, freedom, solitude, community, a nurturing refuge in the "wilderness of your soul," and a place for the child within you to play and explore. MorningStar is beautiful in all of the seasons of the year for you to experience. Make time for you and above all else, "Choose Life."

Sally B.

I believe that spiritual resistance -- the ability to stand firm at the center of our convictions when everything around us asks us to concede -- that our capacity to face the harsh measures of a life, comes from the deep quiet of listening to the land, the river, the rocks. There is a resonance of humility that has evolved with the earth....Once strengthened by our association with the wild, we can return to family and community.

Terry Tempest Williams, from *Red*



MorningStar Calendar 2004

Unless otherwise indicated, the suggested donation for day-long retreats is \$55-65 and includes facilitation, lunches by Elise, and materials. Please consider the larger donation to offset the cost for someone of lesser means. Thank you!

NOTE: Consider incorporating a personal retreat overnight with your retreat day for \$40 per person.

May Day Land Celebration and Hike,

May 1, noon to 5

By the end of April Elise, Sylvia Kallenmeyn and Julie will have purchased 10 acres between Sylvia's cabin and M*land. For 24 years the goal has been to secure all the land around M* that would protect the wilderness sanctuary of MorningStar.

We think it's time to celebrate!!

We will start with a potluck, have a ritual blessing of the new land and rededication of all the land with a May Day Land Dance! Our intent is to see this land continue to host healing, learning, creativity, play and communion into the future. Those who want can hike the seldom trodden wild places of the land with Julie while others enjoy other activities such as a labyrinth walk or stillwatching in the sun. Come, help us celebrate... a new beginning!! Please call if you plan to celebrate with us!

Pathways of Prayer as Gateways to Healing May 8, 10-5, with Julie Keefer

This is a quiet day of exploring various ways of prayer which prepare us for the healing and integration of mind, body, soul and spirit. These ways include methods for quieting the mind, listening to the body and nature, reflective journaling, and prayer collage. Julie has explored and practiced forms of prayer for many years. She is certified in spiritual formation and trained in spiritual direction. Suggested donation: \$55-65

Expressive Play and Sand Tray Play

May 22, 10-5:00 with Dikke Hansen and Tina Johnson - In an atmosphere of creativity, fun and relaxation, this workshop will help you find, explore and stretch your personal growing edge through expressive play and sand tray play. Dikke and Tina are facilitators of personal growth and transformation in Lansing through Growing Edge Adventures, which encourages the enrichment of personal and spiritual capacities.

Suggested donation: \$ 55-65

Singing Back the Earth, Water, Air and Our Lives June 5, 10-5 with Kathryn

Christian and Julie Keefer - On this designated "World Environment Day", come, let us join our hearts and voices to sing back the land, sing back our souls, sing back our connection with each other and the earth and the heart of the Great Mother. Using song, movement, attunement exercises, and breathing we seek to bring about healing with earth, with self, with all of creation.

Kathryn is an inspired singer and songwriter who will help us weave our inspirations into songs for healing. Julie has been humming alongside the creek at MorningStar for 24 years. Suggested donation: \$55- 65

A Labyrinth Day

June 26th 10-5 pm, with Elise Schlaikjer

What is so rare a day in June....and especially outside at Morningstar! On this day there will be opportunities to walk the MorningStar Labyrinths, as well as time for journaling and using touch painting to enhance the process. The labyrinth is a wonderful tool to get in contact with one's inner world, to find balance and fresh perspective. And so the day will flow according to your inner rhythm and needs. There will be a simple lunch that you can eat by the creek or on a mossy forest floor. It is a day to be in touch with earth and spirit. Elise is a certified labyrinth facilitator.

Suggested donation: \$55-65

Play Day! Kayaking the

Marquette, Wed, July 7th 10:00 a.m.

We will meet at Baldwin Canoe Rental on U.S. 37. Either bring your kayak or rent one, bring brown bag lunch. Instruction given if needed. Let Julie know at least two days before if you will be going.

Future for Women

July 23 and 24, Starting at 10 a.m. on Friday and ending at 5 p.m. on Saturday, with Marchiene Vroon Rienstra - This retreat is for women exploring how we can empower each other to fully use our power and our gifts for the sake of the flourishing of the world. We will explore nine crucial questions, and use a process which draws upon the wisdom of Native American and twelve-step groups, modified for our particular purpose. This retreat will provide you with a hands-on experience of how a N.E.W. (Network to Empower Women) Circle operates and equip you to start a circle in your own area. To attend, you will need to read "The Future for Women" by Marchiene and Leigh available through www.networktoempowerwomen.org. or Xlibris pub.: 1-888-795-4274, or your favorite bookstore. (Cottage Books)

Suggested donation: \$150

Archetypal Journey to Wholeness

and Love August 7 10-5 with Julie Keefer using the Pearson-Marr Archetype Indicator as a springboard, we will explore twelve universal patterns of human behaviors called "archetypes" in depth psychology. The Indicator will reveal how active/conscious the twelve archetypes are in your

life at the time. These archetypes can serve as a mirror for greater consciousness and understanding of your journey to wholeness and love. Using material from Carol S. Pearson's book, *AWAKENING THE HEROES WITHIN* we will explore patterns relevant to our human/spiritual developmental journey. The more aware we are of this inner diversity and the needs it represents, the more clearly we can make creative choices enabling us to live more compassionately in the moment and effectively in community.

Julie Keefer is a certified Journey Guide trained through the Center For Archetypal Studies.

Suggested donation: \$60 - \$65 PMAI, several handouts and lunch.

Play Day! Kayaking the Manistee

River Wed, August 11th 10:00 a.m.

We will meet at MorningStar (9:00) to carpool or at Chippewa Landing on U.S. 131 north of Manton where you will either bring your kayak or rent one. Bring brown bag lunch. Instruction given if needed. Let Julie know at least two days before if you will be going. No experience needed.

Nature is always wrapped in seamless prayer. Unlike us, nature does not seem to suffer the separation or distance that thought brings. Nature never seems cut off from her own presence. She lives all the time in the embrace of her own unity. Perhaps unknown to us, she sympathizes with our relentless dislocation and distraction. She certainly knows how to calm our turbulent minds when we trust ourselves into the silence and stillness of her embrace.

from John O'Donohue's, *Eternal Echoes*

Re-Connecting with Nature and Self

September 18, 10- 5:00 with Elise Schlaikjer and Julie Keefer in the simplicity and beauty of the fall forest we will explore various ways to heighten our senses and open the windows of perception before you are given time to just "be" on the land. The aim is to bring awareness of our embeddedness in nature and experience nature as a source for restoration and inspiration. A cosmic time line will be set up for you to walk through the 13 billion years of Earth's unfoldment. We'll begin and end with a Circle of sharing. Suggested donation \$55-65

Dreams; A Gateway to Wisdom

October 22 - 23 from 8 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 together 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 may want to work on, and/or you may want to incubate one while staying overnight.

Suggested donation: \$100 - \$125 Includes, lodging, facilitation, breakfast and lunch

Embracing Anger as Creative Ally

November 6th, 10-5 with Julie Keefer
Fear and guilt about having anger are huge for women. Blocked anger is a major obstruction to receiving and experiencing the joy of spiritual, and relational connectedness. Buried, it reaps depression, self-destructiveness or physical illness. Our day will give time for dialogue about our relationship with anger, how we express it, how it affects our lives, and how we can embrace this energy as a creative force for good in our lives. Readings, journaling, silence, movement and clay work will punctuate our circle dialogue. Suggested reading: Transforming Fire, by Kathleen Fischer. Julie has much experience with her own anger and in the ways of helping this creative energy to be set free for empowering action. Suggested donation: \$55-65

Integrative Breathwork November 20th

10- 6 with Inie Bijkerk, Sylvia Kallemeyn, Julie Keefer - 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. The experience will be followed with making a mandala. Inie Bijkerk, Ph.D., a therapist, has worked with dreams for over twenty years. She is also a cherished member of our M* Sistery. Sylvia is a certified massage therapist and

will be doing partial massage. Suggested donation: \$55-65 .

To Register for a retreat:

Send your name, address,
phone number, e-mail and retreat title and \$40
non-refundable deposit to :
MorningStar Adventures
20564 MorningStar Trail
LeRoy, MI. 49655

If you want an overnight, please call and make a
reservation @ 231 768-4368

Amongst Nature we come to remember the wisdom of our own inner nature. Nature has not pushed itself out into exile. She remains there always home in the same place. Nature stays in the womb of the divine, of one pulse-beat with the Divine Heart. This is why there is a great healing in the wild. When you go out into Nature, you bring your clay body back to its native realm. A day in the mountains or by the ocean helps your body unclench. You recover your deeper rhythm. The right agendas, tasks, and worries fall away and you begin to realize the magnitude and magic of being here.

—from *Eternal Echoes* by John O'Donohue's

Snow in the city
softens the hard lines
whitens the dirty streets
slows us
shows us
a lighter side
a whiter space
a wider space
a slower pace
to daydream
to soul search
to relax
to recreate
our space
N.A

MorningStar News

Thank You!!

We are grateful to all who made a contribution to M* this past year to help sustain our work. And for the many cards and financial support we received over the holidays in response to our fund raising letter. We raised over \$4,000!! Although costs have risen, we continue to spend conservatively and trust that our needs will continue to be met through your retreats and generous contributions.

The Cottage Book Shop

Remember to order any books with free shipping through The Cottage Book Shop. Stating your connection with M* will give MorningStar 10% for every book sold. What a deal!! 1-800-254-5536, pin- 7186 e-mail: siepker@aol.com Thank you!!

Water and Art

On June 16th Lois Hartzler and Hartzler Motercoach Co. is sponsoring a bus trip from Mt. Pleasant to Newago, stopping for pick ups along the way, to inform you about Michigan's threatened waters, how it affects us all and what we can do about it.

Breakfast is included. The story will be told thru songs, sharing, and a video. In Newago artist Val Deur will share how living by the Muskegon affects her life and work. Opportunities for nature walks and visiting artists studios and more. All for \$35 which will go to Michigan Citizens For Water Conservation to pay for legal fees in their quest to hold Nestle/Ice Mountain accountable for their impact on our environment. Conservation. Call Lia Hartzler at 989-644-2261.

Sabbatical: Finding Soul

We are looking for a person who is ready to take a mid-life break of a month or more from December-April, to immerse themselves in nature, silence, reflection and community. It's a great way to break the spell of society's grip on the soul!! Call if you are ready!

Personal Retreat and Spiritual Midwifery

If you are uncomfortable coming on retreat alone, yet want to experience the nurture and healing found in solitude and silence in a cozy cabin amidst nature, you can schedule a single or daily session of spiritual midwifery with Julie Keeper to

explore and work with what is surfacing in your awareness. This helps bring greater understanding and integration for your journey.

\$40 per 24 hrs for lodging and \$40 for spiritual midwifery

Come, take time this year to be on the earth, by the water and be inspired to live from what bubbles up from the Heartbeat of Creation.



JUST BE

Root of the root,
Mother Matter, for whom nothing is ever lost,
only transformed,
you teach us how to change
and how to sit in stillness.
When life scatters us in all directions
you whisper, "Just be."
You urge us, "Honor the body."
You tell us, "I will never let you go, I will hold you
safe forever."
All praise to the humble holy ground.
We are part of you no less
than seed or grass or antelope.
We belong.
May we learn new ways to honor you.
May our presence here be of benefit to you.
May we heal the harm we have done to you.
In the name of earth,
Be so.
-- Cait Johnson in "Earth, Water, Fire, and Air:
Essential Ways of Connecting to Spirit"

"Observe the wonders as they occur around you.
Don't claim them. Feel the artistry. Moving through.
And be silent."

-Rumi

Eco-Sapience (Wise Home)

by Julie D. Keefer

Our wetlands are the quiet, humble, nurturing, housekeeping, undervalued, exploited, and abused, critical resource of the Earth.

Does this remind you of something? Might our wetlands be to the Earth what our souls are to our bodies? Might the destruction of over HALF of this country's wetlands parallel what we in the west have done to our souls, or what I call the vulnerable and watery depths of the feminine?

Wetlands, so often referred to as "junk or waste" land, are the very resource that insures that the Earth's waters stay clean through filtration of pollutants and excessive nutrients. They store water and help prevent flooding.

Wetlands provide migratory and permanent habitat to a tremendous amount of aquatic and wild life, including threatened species.

Standing up for wetlands is like standing up for the watery and mysterious depths of our own souls. To fail to do this is to fail to stand on the side of what our souls hold most dear; the gift of the web of life-sustaining relationships, within and without.

When the lost feminine is grieved she has the possibility of returning, of things changing, of right relationship with the whole being restored. Perhaps this is what our wetlands are waiting for.

And how does this return occur? Through me and through you as we grieve our losses and listen for our soul's deep memory bubbling up from the watery depths moving us to compassionate action on behalf of that which is vulnerable in our world.

It seems the time of return has arrived.

WORDS TO INSPIRE

"Wilderness itself is the basis of all our civilization. I wonder if we have enough reverence for life to concede to wilderness the right to live on?"

--Mardy Murie

(Passionate wilderness advocate who died in 2003 at 101. She, with her husband Olaus, were instrumental in protecting much of Alaska's wilds.)

To Practice This Today: Take a good hard look at your schedule and your commitments. Block out some time to nurture your inner wisdom.

A GARDENER'S WINTER CLEANING

by Elise Schlaikjer

While snow shoeing the labyrinth a number of years ago, I was given a precious gift of understanding. My creator side had been seeking for some time an interior "knowing" of the path of our 87 foot Chartres labyrinth. Up until then I could not discern the true pattern. Yes, I walked mindfully, but a certain intimacy with its true unfolding was missing and I longed to know it. Then, that snowy day when all was blanketed in white except for the tips of the stones, I saw the pattern.....a quarter circle, a half circle, a quarter circle, etc. Ails saw with great clarity how my artist's eye always took in the myriad details of the world about me: color, texture, height, hue, placement, light, material, shape, not to mention smell, temperature and sound. It was difficult, if not impossible, for me to sort out all of this wealth of information and find the path that lay beneath it until the gift of the snow.

That is why I look forward to November. After the exuberance of summer with its abundance flowing over the land, gully and garden alike becoming jungles of color and fertility; it is refreshing to gaze upon the skeletal purity of the November landscape. Tree and flower stalk are reduced to their essence. Stark. No snow yet to blur the truth of their being. And my soul rejoices, knowing that this is what I need: a stripping down, a letting go, a search for the essence of who I am. The abundance of my own creativity and fields of interest, plus the world about me with its overload of information, all produce a proliferation of chemical and emotional responses that often keep me from seeing my deeper truths, the pattern of the path. So I set my feet on the labyrinthine path, one step at a time, and pray to have the courage to let go of all but the essentials. To stand naked before God.....and wait.

The beginning of December is also the beginning of Advent, the church's preparation and waiting for Christ, the Light of the World. I love Advent. I savor waiting. I never used to but now I look forward to this time. Some of this, I know, comes from my age. The last third of life can bring a whole new way of being, often marked by simplicity and what truly gives heart meaning. The world is so full of glitz and hype. It does not know how to wait. I do not know how to wait. But I know it is important. Just as important as stripping down to my essence. And so I turn away from my ego each time it makes a suggestion, which is often, or ridicules this "wasted" time. Sometimes this is easy; sometimes

less so. Sometimes it is just plain boring to listen to this overactive ego. And what exactly am I waiting for? I do not know, but I trust that just as the seed now resting in the dark earth knows when to sprout, so too will my soul recognize the Spirit's movement when it comes. The discipline of stillness, of keeping the ears of my heart ready and waiting are gift enough for me now.

The calendar Christmas has come and gone. However, my inner life frequently does not correspond to the church's calendar, although it certainly reflects my process. Like the world beyond my window that is transformed and hidden now by deep snow, so too does my soul rest hidden, waiting for the transforming Light of Christ to touch it once again. As Psalm 147 in Nan Merrill's Psalms for Praying says, "Wisdom flows from the Heart of Divine Love to all receptive hearts nurtured in the Silence. Yes, the Divine Word is written on every heart-scroll, a guide to pilgrims on the way. May everyone awaken to Divine Love, that peace and integrity and assurance may be born again in every land.

O my soul, praise the Beloved!"

"At a certain point you say to the woods, to the sea, to the mountains, the world,
Now I am ready. Now I will stop and be wholly attentive.

You empty yourself and wait, listening..."

-Annie Dillard

To live content with small
means,
to seek elegance rather than
luxury,
and refinement rather than
fashion,
to be worthy, not respectable,
and wealthy, not rich,
to study hard, think quietly,
talk gently, act frankly,
to listen to stars and birds,
babes and sages, with open heart,
to bear all cheerfully,
do all bravely,
await occasions,
hurry never-- in a word,
to let the spiritual unbidden and
conscious, grown up through the
common.

This is to be my symphony.

- William Ellery Channing

The eyes of the future are looking back at us and they are praying for us to see beyond our own time. They are kneeling with hands clasped that we might act with restraint, that we might leave room for the life that is destined to come. To protect what is wild is to protect what is gentle. Perhaps the wildness we fear is the pause between our own heartbeats, the silent space that says we live only by grace. Wilderness lives by this same grace. Wild mercy is in our hand.

Terry Tempest Williams from Red

What stands are you willing to make on behalf of all that is yet wild?

If I must Kneel

If I must kneel,
let it not be on marble
before a golden cross
where I lower my spirit
in humiliating shame
as I confess
false guilt for humanness.

If I must kneel,
let it be on soil,
Let me sense earth's firmness.
Let me feel
its soft resilience.

On the soil
I can see the earthworm
and smell fragrant musk.
My fingers can touch
humus-rich loam -
full of life-mystery
and God's creative presence.

Harold R. Hodgson

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to receive our mailings. Thanks!

Return Service Requested

We give thanks for places of simplicity
and peace.
Let us find such a place
within ourselves.
We give thanks for places
of refuge and beauty.
Let us find such a place
within ourselves.
We give thanks for places
of nature's truth and freedom,
of joy, inspiration and renewal,
places where all creatures may find acceptance
and belonging.
Let us search for these places
in the world, in ourselves, and in others.
Let us restore them.
Let us strengthen them and protect them
and let us create them.
May we mend this outer world
according to the truth of our inner life
and may our souls be shaped and nourished
by nature's eternal wisdom.
Amen
(author unknown.)