



Walking El Camino, traditional Pilgrim's Shells on their backpacks

Sept/Oct/Nov 2008  
Year Ten, Issue One  
Number 53

## El Camino de Santiago . . . “When it comes, give thanks” by the Rev. Dr. Jill Geoffrion

For thirty-eight hot days during the summer of 2006, the four members of our family walked five hundred miles across northern Spain on the ancient pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela. We had looked forward to sharing the time before our youngest son left for college. We had not anticipated how honest we would be willing to be with one another or how—in journeying on an external trail—we would also commit to journeying towards more authentic relationships with one another.

Before I left for the Camino, I celebrated my forty-eighth birthday with joy. Physical age had little to do with how I understood myself. In my mind I didn't imagine myself to be forty-eight years old; I was twenty-four years young. That twenty-four year old was agile, energetic, strong, and nearly invincible. She was sure that on pilgrimage she would have no trouble walking the same distances at the same pace as her eighteen- and twenty-year-old sons. She imagined that her body would heal almost instantly when injured.

The physical challenges we faced were difficult, especially for me when an injury to my leg caused each step to burn with pain, but not nearly as daunting as the emotional and spiritual ones. Now, two years later, we continue to experience the changes that began on the Camino . . . orienting our lives by what is most important to us . . . being more willing to admit our weaknesses to ourselves, to God, and to one another . . . and traveling more lightly, both physically and metaphorically.

I kept a journal as we walked. Here are some mostly unrevised traces of what I felt and thought along the way—expressions of the raw nature of the experience, recorded when I was in the midst of it.

**Following the path.** The call to journey towards God is unrelenting. . . . we leave the Known Presence in search of the Unknown Reality . . . as we go seeking God, God walks with us . . . along the way we discover God-close-by and God-far-away. We travel far to move into the sure knowledge that:

*“When it comes, give thanks” . . . continues on page 2*

page 3

Ongoing Opportunities

page 4

One-Time Opportunities

page 8

Reading Opportunities

page 10

Afterwords

An ecumenical sampler of events and resources for spiritual growth, with a particular interest in the contemplative spiritual journey, published by the Spiritual Growth Community of Westminster Presbyterian Church



**WESTMINSTER**  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

1200 Marquette Avenue  
Minneapolis, MN 55403-2419  
612.332.3421  
www.eWestminster.org

Look for *Thin Places* at: [www.thinplaces.us](http://www.thinplaces.us) or [www.ewestminster.org/thinplaces.asp](http://www.ewestminster.org/thinplaces.asp)

God was at home,  
God is on the road,  
God waits for us  
where we will arrive.



**Physical spirituality.** Pilgrims can do the stupidest things! When I asked a man hiking up a mountain why he was wearing sandals, he told me, "I didn't hear that we needed good walking shoes until it was too late to buy and break them in, so I just bought a pair of sandals. I figure they will probably last for the eight hundred kilometers between here and Santiago." A woman answered my inquiries about the bloodstained gauze wrappings on her feet and legs. "A podiatrist treated me in the last town. He told me that I needed to stay off my feet for three days before continuing, but I don't have any time to spare! I'm just going to see what happens." And now I have to face up to it—what I saw as "others" is me.

What have we been thinking? We haven't. We had a goal, and we wanted to reach it. We believed we could make our bodies follow the lead of our wills. . . . How can our bodies serve as our spiritual teachers, especially as we encounter our physical limitations? . . . In what way is God present in us, inside our fleshly inhabitation, especially when our bodies are sick, suffering, weak, or dying?

As I was in the cathedral praying before a piéta of Mary holding a dead Jesus, I realized in a new way that there is enough suffering that comes naturally in life without my needing to add to my own suffering, whether it be mental or physical. I understood that right now I must rest my injured legs and bus the Camino until I can walk without hurting myself. This is not what I had planned, but it is what is needed. I feel quiet and at peace within this reality—at least for the moment.

**Questions, mostly for me.** How would your life change if you were willing to accept that expressing your worst self is a vital part of what you do every day? . . . If you acknowledged to yourself, "I am most prone to disappoint God when..." what could shift? . . . What if you discovered that you were ready to let go of those beliefs and behaviors that no longer serve you (and hurt both you and others)? . . . Might you be readying yourself to give up something you value? . . . Honesty precedes release. What are you willing to know about whom you have been? and whom you hope through the grace and help of God to become? . . . Are you willing to pay the costs of confession: sincerity,

truthfulness, and integrity? . . . Acceptance can be very painful. . . . It can also be liberating.

**Nearing Santiago.** We feel as if we are just getting started on the internal work that we came to do. TC would like to be walking faster. Dan loves it when we land in a hostel that has internet access. Tim Sr. is aware of the lack of intellectual stimulation, and is really enjoying walking alone for a part of each day so that he can go deeper within. I love this experience and the space of it.

At the end of the day my legs hurt, but I haven't injured them more. They are my teachers. We are not where we started in the morning. We are not where we were going to be tomorrow. We are where we have been able to arrive. What is true of my legs is also true of my relationships, of my spiritual journey with God, and of my internal psychological relationship with myself.

And now we are here. Here is not only the physical place, but here is where we have come inside ourselves, as members of a family, as part of a group that spans centuries, as those who belong to the human family and part of this amazing world that we walk upon.

*from* **Unfold Your Own Myth**

. . . But don't be satisfied with stories, how things  
have gone with others. Unfold  
your own myth, without complicated explanation,  
so everyone will understand the passage,  
We have opened you.

Start walking. Your legs will get heavy  
and tired. Then comes a moment  
of feeling the wings you've grown,  
lifting. . . ."

Rumi

I give thanks that we have had this time as a family. We are not the same family that left. We have worked so many difficult communication patterns that were well ingrained. We have learned to tell the truth to one another without needing to separate ourselves from each other. We have learned to share our weaknesses without feeling that we will be hurt by each other. We have learned to be with each others' pain without feeling a need to experience it ourselves. We have learned to honor that we are in process and that each day at least one of us will do something that will be hard for another of us. We have learned that we are more different than we had known, and we have learned that we are more committed to helping each other than we had experienced before. And that is for starters.

**Looking back.**

*"When it comes, give thanks"* . . . concludes on page 3

As I walked intentionally toward Santiago;  
unknowingly, I moved away from life as I had lived it.

As I climbed mountains,

I descended towards my vulnerabilities.

As my suffering body limped painfully along the path,  
my curious imagination grew more flexible.

As I drank litres of water to hydrate my body each day,  
my spirit sought thirstily for a seemingly elusive oasis.

As I faithfully recorded my thoughts and experiences,  
invisible understandings of Reality were being erased.

Orientation towards Compostela was unwavering.

Whenever there was a choice of which way to go,

lovingly placed yellow arrows

pointed towards my pilgrimage goal.

Even now, I remember with relief and gratitude

the joy of arriving.

"I made it!

Where am I?"

I asked as I prayed in the sanctuary.

I still cannot find the place

on the map entitled, My Former Life!

### Mini-pilgrimage.

Remember in God's presence

a time when you thought you knew "where you were  
going,"

but you ended up somewhere else.

Ask to be given more understanding.

When it comes,

give thanks.

Jill Kimberly Hartwell Geoffrion feels deep gratitude for God's supporting presence. Her desire to know and serve Christ orient her life and work at DeepHaven Labyrinths and Retreats in Minnesota and Faith, Hope and Love Global Ministries. To learn more about Jill's passions: pilgrimage, labyrinths, and the Chartres Cathedral, visit her website at: [www.jillgeoffrion.com](http://www.jillgeoffrion.com). Jill is seeking a publisher for her memoir, *What Was I Thinking? Leaving Behind Illusions While Walking and Praying the Camino*.

Jill's husband, Tim Geoffrion, is also a pastor and pilgrim. His *One Step at a Time: A Pilgrim's Guide to Spirit-Led Living* (The Alban Institute) is due out soon. For a preview go to: <http://spirit-ledleader.com>.

### Christos Center for Spiritual Formation

*Encouraging spiritual maturity through the historic Christian traditions of contemplative prayer, discernment, spiritual direction, silence, and solitude.*

This is the mission of Christos Center for Spiritual Formation, located in the St. Paul suburb of Lino Lakes. Founded 30 years ago as a retreat ministry, Christos' purpose has always been to remind the Church to, "Slow down and listen to God in the silence of your heart." Christos is an ecumenical ministry, with Lutheran roots, that serves people of all Christian denominations through spiritual direction, extended spiritual formation programs, workshops, retreats, and pilgrimages. Located on 50 acres of natural land, Christos is a safe place for people to enter the quiet and ponder the deeper questions of life through prayer and reflection.

Christos' two-year spiritual direction preparation program, **Tending the Holy**, began in 1990 and was one of the first in the Minneapolis St. Paul area. This program, along with the nine-month **Spiritual Deepening** through the Ignatian Exercises program, is available via the Internet to participants in other states and countries. Christos spiritual directors serve the Twin Cities area as well as other cities in Minnesota and the Mid-West, and Christos also offers **Tending the Holy** in the Chicago area. Christos graduates have experience in conducting retreats and can speak on a variety of spiritual topics, and some can provide congregational consultation.

Christos sponsors workshops at its Lino Lakes location and at a location in Edina. Up-coming workshops and retreats include: "Awake and Aware: An Ignatian Experience," "Celtic Spirituality," "Deepening Truth: The Practice of Living in the Spirit," and more. Christos also offers local and international pilgrimages-coming next March: "Be Thou My Vision," a contemplative pilgrimage to Ireland and Iona.

**Christos Center**, 1212 Holly Drive, Lino Lakes, 55038

For additional information: [www.christoscenter.org](http://www.christoscenter.org) or [christoscenter@msn.com](mailto:christoscenter@msn.com) or 651.653.8207.

"In being true to the small voice within, you are being of service to others and to the world in the most profound way. You cannot know where that voice will take you, but in being willing 'to save the only life you could save,' you are affirming one of the deepest and most sobering truths of all:

no one else can ever  
walk your journey for you.  
You alone can respond to your call."

Roger Housden, in *Ten Poems*

### **An Offering by Christos: “Awake and Aware: An Ignatian Experience”**

Today’s hyperactive society can too often distract us from spending quiet time with God. At this retreat we will be invited to step apart from noise and clutter—to enter the simplicity of silence. We will be shown how to use passages of Scripture to quiet the mind in preparation for prayer and reflection. And then, in the peacefulness of a wooded setting, have time to rest in God’s presence.

**Friday, Sept. 26 at 7:00 p.m. to Saturday, Sept. 27 at 3:30 p.m.**

Christos Center for Spiritual Formation, Lino Lakes

For information or registration: 651.653.8207 or [janetchristoscenter@msn.com](mailto:janetchristoscenter@msn.com)

### **Ecumenical Evening Prayer**

Central Presbyterian Church, in downtown St. Paul, is offering an ecumenical prayer service in their lovely Sanctuary each evening during the Republican National Convention. Central’s normal Wednesday Community Lunch will be offered each day of the Convention, 11:30-1:30 p.m. (simple, healthful food and good conversation).

Monday through Thursday, Sept. 1-4, 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Also, A “**Peaceful Presence**”

In partnership with local Ignatian Associates, Central also opens its Sanctuary each day as a “Peaceful Presence,” as a place for quiet and meditation and prayer.

On Wednesdays, from 11:45 to noon, there is a simple worship of Scripture, hymns, and prayer to refresh our spirits in the middle of a busy week.

**Each weekday, 8:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.**

Central Presbyterian Church, 500 Cedar Street, St. Paul  
For information: 651.224.4728

### **Contemplative Prayer**

A prayer of silence, an experience of God’s presence as the ground in which our being is rooted, the Source from whom our life emerges at every moment. This service

“To journey without being changed  
is to be a nomad.

To change without journeying  
is to be a chameleon.

To journey and to be transformed  
by the journey  
is to be a pilgrim.”

Mark Nepo, in *The Book of Awakening*

is a wonderful way to learn about and experience prayer.  
Every Thursday, 8:00-8:30 a.m., in the All Saints Chapel

Also: **Celtic Liturgy**

St. Mark’s joins Pilgrim Lutheran and Westminster Presbyterian in offering a monthly worship opportunity drawing upon the rich traditions of Celtic Christianity.

**Every Second Sunday, 4:00-4:45 p.m.**

St. Mark’s Episcopal Cathedral, in the Sanctuary,  
519 Oak Grove Street, Minneapolis

For information: 612.870.7800

### **Taizé Candlelight Service**

These services are simple, quiet, contemplative, and non-denominational. They include a reading from Scripture, simple sung chants, and spaces for silence and prayer. Our version includes violin accompaniment and stations for prayer and contemplation. We also offer weekly Compline and bi-weekly Centering Prayer.

**First Thursday of each Month, 7:00-8:00 p.m.**

St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church, 2136 Carter Ave., St. Paul  
For information: 651.645.3058 or [www.stmathewsmn.org](http://www.stmathewsmn.org)

### **Taizé Evening Prayer**

In the Chapel, overlooking a flowing stream, you will find sung prayer, Scripture, and silence in a candle-lit setting. (St. Stephen’s Evening Prayer is now the longest running, regularly scheduled Taizé Prayer in the region.)

**First Friday of each month, 8:00-9:00 p.m.**

St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, in the Chapel  
4439 West 50th Street, Edina

For information: 952.920.0595.

### **Quiet Worship**

Once each month, all are invited to begin their weekend by taking an hour to be quiet and to be present to God’s love, by taking some time for prayer, for Scripture, for silence, and for sung prayers from Taizé and Iona.

**Fourth Saturday of each month, 9:00-9:45 a.m.**

Westminster Presbyterian Church, in the Chapel  
1200 Marquette Avenue, Minneapolis

For information: 612.332.3421 or [kfisher@wpc-mpls.org](mailto:kfisher@wpc-mpls.org).

Do you know of anyone who might like to receive  
*Thin Places?* It’s sent free to all who request it.

Or do you know of an up-coming Opportunity that  
might be of interest to others?

If you can answer, “yes,” to either of these, please contact  
Kathy Fisher, [kfisher@wpc-mpls.org](mailto:kfisher@wpc-mpls.org) or 612.332.3421.

**“A Lived Life: Spirituality and Writing”**

This is a newly established series of courses which can lead to a Certificate in Spirituality and Writing. This Fall's offering, “Reading and Writing Spiritual Memoir,” will immerse students in the work of writers—from many times and many religious traditions—who link personal experiences of the sacred with universal themes: including spiritual memoir, poetry, sacred eastern texts, and more. Students will use the texts as a guide to reflect their individual spirituality through poetry and creative non-fiction.

**Wednesdays, beginning September 3, 6:00-9:00 p.m.**

Hamline University, 1536 Hewitt Ave., St. Paul

For information or registration: 651.523.2047 or visit [www.hamline.edu/gls](http://www.hamline.edu/gls).

**Men's Spirituality Group.**

This is the first of monthly gatherings for men, led by a spiritual director and former Benedictine monk who is helping to form a lay-contemplative community. Each evening will include silent prayer and discussions on spiritual deepening and stability, changing images of God, life transitions, and more.

**Sunday, September 14, 7:00—9:00 p.m.**

Loyola Spirituality Center, 389 Oxford Street, St. Paul

For information or registration: 651.641.0008 or [loyolasrr@comcast.net](mailto:loyolasrr@comcast.net) or [www.loyolaspiritualitycenter.org](http://www.loyolaspiritualitycenter.org).

**“Will You Drink from this Cup?”**

As City House has gone about its work of “tending to the spiritual life of the poor, inspiring hope,” it has learned “that this ministry is as much about God's work within each of us as it is about the persons on the margins of society with whom we are privileged to walk.”

Now—based on the huge success of its first offering last spring—we are pleased to offer “Will You Drink from this Cup” again this fall. This program invites people into spiritual formation through relationship with the poor, in a supportive environment of fellow travelers. Details (including testimonials from the spring offering) of this spiritual enrichment opportunity may be found at: [www.city-house.org](http://www.city-house.org). On the right hand side of the page, scroll down and click on the “City House Blog.” Scroll down to “Will You Drink from this Cup—Fall '08.”

“Cup” is presented, in collaboration, by four long-established spirituality centers: City House, Christos, Loyola, and Sacred Ground.

**Six Wednesdays (7:00—9:00 p.m.): Sept. 17, Oct. 1 & 15, Nov. 5 & 19, Dec. 3—plus an all-day inner-city pilgrimage on Saturday, Oct. 25**

Loyola Spirituality Center

389 North Oxford Street, Saint Paul

For information or registration: 763.227.0686 or [tomallen@city-house.org](mailto:tomallen@city-house.org).

**The Practice of Sabbath**

God said, “Keep holy the Sabbath.” This is an opportunity to spend a day learning, reflecting, practicing how to keep the Sabbath . . . in this culture . . . in this century . . . right here.

“Like a path through the forest, Sabbath creates a marker for ourselves so—if we are lost—we can find our way back to our center. ‘Remember the Sabbath’ means ‘Remember to delight in your life, in the fruits of your labor.[and] remember to stop and offer thanks for the wonder of it.’” Wayne Muller in Sabbath.

**Offered twice: Saturdays, Sept. 20 and Oct. 18, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.**

Sabbath House, 3228 Portland Ave. So., Mpls.

For information or registration: 612.822.2623 or [sabbathhouse@fslf.org](mailto:sabbathhouse@fslf.org).

**Peace Day, 2008**

We welcome you to our Peace Day, which commemorates the International Day of Peace established by the United Nations. Each year on this day—September 21—we join with our community and with others around the world to pray for peace in our troubled times.

You are invited to stop by at any time during the afternoon to pray silently, to light a candle for peace, or to walk the labyrinth. The Sanctuary will be decorated with pictures of peace, created by the children of the church.

Specific events include 1:00 p.m.: Tolling of the bells. Welcome and greetings. Prayers for our service people. 3:30 p.m.: “Paths to Peace,” speaker Jim Klobuchar. 5:00 p.m.: Taizé Vespers.”

**Sunday, September 21, 1:00-5:45 p.m.**

Shepherd of the Lake Lutheran Church

“Pilgrimage is about the discovery that our real pilgrimage is the one we are engaged in each day.”

Ed Sellner, in *Pilgrimage*

“The contemplation of sacred [places] with their special power to awaken another, deeper way of experiencing reality, opens us to a sense of the sacred in our own homes and communities—a sense that we need to cultivate in order to live in harmony. . . .”

Edwin Bernbaum, in *Sacred Mountains*

3611 North Berens Road, Prior Lake  
For information: 952.447.2007 or [www.sollc.org](http://www.sollc.org).

### **An Ecumenical Benedictine Experience**

This is a six-day experience of the Rule of St. Benedict. The retreat is especially for those who have had some exposure to the Rule or have attended a previous Benedictine Experience.

We will explore more deeply the values, insights and wisdom of the Rule. We'll join the monks at St. John's for morning and evening prayer and the sisters at St. Benedict's for evening prayer. Presenters will include members from both monastic communities. This is a chance to go deeper into the Rule and on your own journey. (Offered in collaboration with The Friends of St. Benedict.)

**Tuesday, Sept. 23, at 3:00 p.m. to Sunday, Sept. 28, after lunch**

The Episcopal House of Prayer, Collegeville  
For information and registration: 202.363.8061 or [saintbenedict@prospect-tech.com](mailto:saintbenedict@prospect-tech.com).

### **"Manna for Everyday Lives"**

Restless? Wanting to go deeper in your faith journey? Searching? Come to the spiritually rich High Dessert—a region which now has Sufi, Buddhist, Hindu and Christian monastic communities—of Northern New Mexico.

During this retreat week, we'll experience spiritual disciplines that can open us to greater awareness of God's presence. We will explore what it means to be people on a journey in faith, both individually and together in deeper community. We'll listen for God's voice as we experience multiple ways to pray and to deeply enter into Scripture.

**Monday to Sunday, September 29 to October 5**

Casa del Sol Spirituality Center  
Ghost Ranch Presbyterian Retreat Center, Abiquiu, NM  
For information or registration: 505.685.4333 or [www.ghost ranch.org](http://www.ghost ranch.org).

"Most of the time, we are lost in the past or carried away by the future. When we are mindful, deeply in touch with the present moment, our understanding of what is going on deepens, and we begin to be filled with acceptance, joy, peace, and love."

Thich Nhat Hanh, in *The Long Road to Joy*

### **Men's Spirituality: "Families as Peacemaking Visionaries"**

This is the first of six in this year's on-going Men's Spirituality Series, continuing to provide "a sacred space for men to explore their spirituality together."

"Families as Peacemaking Visionaries," a breakfast gathering, explores how a family imagines, shapes, and sustains its particular peace-/war-making story. Our presenter will provide a framework for the development of a family story about peacemaking. He will offer practical tools and rituals that can help a family identify, articulate, and evaluate their inherited generational stories about peace-/war-making, and—in response—develop a way to engage both personal and public challenges.

**Wednesday, October 1, 7:15-9:00 a.m.**

Wisdom Ways Center for Spirituality

1890 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul

For information or registration: 651.696.2788 or [www.wisdomwayscenter.org](http://www.wisdomwayscenter.org).

**Note:** to preview all six of this year's offerings, go to: [www.wisdomwayscenter.org](http://www.wisdomwayscenter.org) and click on "Men's Spirituality."

### **Contemplative Nature Retreat**

This retreat includes outdoor contemplative exercises to attune yourself to the natural world and to enhance your relationship with God through nature. Participants will also come together for morning and evening prayer services and will have time (and instruction) for light yoga and breathing exercise and for personal spiritual direction (if desired), and time to walk the wooded trails and the outdoor labyrinth.

Sponsored by Loyola Spirituality Center; held at the 70-acre Villa Maria Interfaith Retreat Center ([www.villamariaretreats.org](http://www.villamariaretreats.org)).

**Friday, Oct. 10, after supper to Sunday, Oct. 12, after brunch**

Villa Maria Interfaith Retreat Center, at Frontenac Station near Lake Pepin

For information or registration: 651.641.0008 or [loyolasrr@comcast.net](mailto:loyolasrr@comcast.net) or [www.loyolaspiritualitycenter.org](http://www.loyolaspiritualitycenter.org).

### **"Third Act Life Development Retreat: Exploring Your Spiritual Genealogy"**

Who are your spiritual forbearers and where have they come from? How have you been influenced by them? What spiritual role models do you now have in your life? We will create a spiritual family tree and scrapbook of those we are related to and those whom we have chosen as

spiritual family to us, examining what we would like to pass on and what we would like to leave behind.

Presented by Third Act Ministry at ACR, a retreat center staffed by its own ecumenical residential community.

**Saturday, Oct. 11, at 9:00 a.m.—Sunday, Oct. 12, at noon.**

ARC Ecumenical Retreat Center, Stanchfield

For information and registration: 763.689.3540 or office@arcretreat.org or www.acrretreat.org or www.thirdactministry.org.

### **“The New Retirement: Integrating the Active life and Contemplative Practices”**

If you are one of the 76 million American Baby-Boomers approaching retirement, this four-part series offers you a new way of looking at the important rhythms of your life and work, providing the tools you need to create a more purposeful and more peaceful life.

Topics include work/service opportunities, health, relationships, spirituality, and prayer.

- Gain insight into your interests, skills, gifts, and options for work/service
- Learn and practice Centering prayer
- Design a personal plan for facing the retirement transition with confidence

**Four Thursdays, Oct. 16—Nov. 6, 6:00—8:00 p.m.**

Also **Introduction to Centering Prayer**

Have you recently begun to practice—or have you wondered about—Centering Prayer? This is an opportunity to learn more about the ancient practice of contemplative prayer, which quiets your faculties to cooperate with the gift of God’s presence. Since the time of the Desert Mothers and Fathers, men and women have learned to respond to the Spirit of Christ by consenting to God’s presence and action within.

**Saturday, September 27, 9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.**

The Benedictine Center

2675 Larpenteur Ave. East, St. Paul

For information or registration: 651.777.7251 or benedictinecenter@stpaulsmonastery.org. or www.stpaulsmonastery.org.

**Note:** One of the founders of modern interest in the practice of Centering Prayer, Fr. Thomas Keating, will be in the Twin Cities next February 27 (details to follow).

### **“Looking Within: an Introduction to the Enneagram”**

The Enneagram is about people . . . how we are the same, how we are different and what makes us tick. It is a profound tool which helps us on our faith journey to look

closely at our gifts and our limitations as potential for spiritual growth and freedom. This time-honored wisdom describes nine personality styles and their inter-relationships. Through the study of the Enneagram we look to deepen our understanding of and compassion for ourselves and others.

The workshop will be led by Noreen Shaughnessy, who was one of the first 200 to be certified to teach the Enneagram nationwide. Please join us for this experience of discovery and transformation.

**Friday, Nov. 7, 5:30-9:00 p.m. & Sat., Nov. 8, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**

Colonial Church of Edina, 6200 Colonial Way, Edina

For information or registration: 952.925.2711, ext. 22.

### **“Premeditated Mercy; forgiveness when forgiving is hard”**

“Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you.”

“Make peace before the sun goes down.” The Gospel call to forgiveness is always challenging and can seem impossible when we experience betrayal, rejection, mistreatment and injustice of any kind. Reflections on what forgiveness is and is not, whether reconciliation is always possible, obstacles to forgiving, ways to move toward making the forgiveness of Christ our own. Presentations, reflection, shared and personal prayer in an atmosphere of quiet. Participants are welcome to join the monastery community for Liturgy of the Hours and Eucharist, if desired.

**Friday, Nov. 21, at 6:30 p.m.-Saturday, Nov. 22, at 4:30 p.m.**

Spirituality Center, Saint Benedict’s Monastery, St. Joseph

For information and registration: 320.363.7116 or DManuel@csbsju.edu or www.sbm.osb.org.

### **“Mystery: it is all around us, and we do not know it . . .**

But sometimes when we give it time and space—whether in deep peace or great anguish—it will come up behind us, or meet us face to face, or move within us, changing the way we see everything, and filling our heart with joy and an upspringing of love that needs no direct object because everything is its object.”

Mary C. Morrison, in *Let Evening Come*

**Looking Ahead:****J. Philip Newell, “Songs for the Earth: a Celtic Mass for Peace”**

Plans are well started for Philip’s return visit to the Twin Cities, Tuesday through Thursday, May 19-21, 2009. It is anticipated that the visit will culminate with his participation in the Sixth Annual *Thin Places* Ecumenical Worship Service, including his recently completed “Songs for the Earth: a Celtic Mass for Peace.” In very broad terms, as now envisioned:

- **Tuesday**—offered by Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church and Mayflower Community Church—will explore “Christ of the Celts: The Healing of Creation” (working title).
- **Wednesday**—offered by Wisdom Ways, Sacred Ground, and Pilgrim Lutheran Church—will explore “Peace among Peoples” (very broad working title) through a Professional Development Day Workshop led by Philip plus an evening public lecture and a Celtic Prayer service.
- **Thursday**—offered by The Episcopal House of Prayer and Westminster Presbyterian Church—will include a daytime contemplative retreat, “Heart Peace” (tentative working title), led by Philip and the coming together of people from all three days for evening worship and Philip’s “Songs for the Earth.”

Complete details and registration information will be included in the next *Thin Places* (out Dec. 1). Until then, questions may be sent to [thinplaces\\_us@msn.com](mailto:thinplaces_us@msn.com).

**Pilgrimage Possibilities:**• **Pilgrimage to Italy**

**November 10-19, 2008**, for information: [cyd.hayne@comcast.net](mailto:cyd.hayne@comcast.net) or 763.494.4440

• **Seeking the Face of Christ in Russia: An Experiential Pilgrimage, January 12-23, 2009**

sponsored by United Theological Seminary  
For information: [akorluk@aol.com](mailto:akorluk@aol.com).

• **“Be thou My Vision”: Celtic Spirituality in Ireland and Iona, March 26-April 7, 2009**

Sponsored by Christos Center  
For information: 952.881.7811 or [groups@gttd.org](mailto:groups@gttd.org).

“Every day go deeply into a few lines  
of the Scriptures,  
to be brought face to face  
with Another,  
with the Risen Lord.  
In silence, let the living word of Christ  
be born in you,  
then put it into practice right away.”

Brother Roger of Taizé

***Psalms for Praying: an Invitation to Wholeness***

by Nan C. Merrill

***The Message: the...Psalms...in Contemporary Language***

by Eugene H. Peterson

***Ancient Songs Sung Anew: the Psalms as Poetry,***

translated by Lynn C. Bauman

**Available in the Lowe Library or on-line.**

**Dietrich Bonhoeffer** calls the *Psalms* the “Prayer Book of the Bible.” **John Calvin** describes them as “An Anatomy of All Parts of the Soul.” **Saint Benedict** felt that they are so central that—in his Rule—he establishes that all 150 *Psalms* are to be chanted through every week, starting afresh each Sunday at Matins. **Athanasius** [4th century] asserts that the *Psalms* fit the spiritual needs of every Christian, **Origen** [3rd century] frequently uses them in his extensive spiritual commentaries, and **Jesus** often quotes from them.

Indeed, for as much as three thousand years in Judaic tradition and for two thousand years in Christian tradition, the *Psalms* have been sung, and prayed, and meditated upon in private daily practice . . . and sung, or read, or preached upon as essential elements in public worship.

This being so, it is also not surprising that modern poets and scholars have sought to capture the sense and the beauty—the power and poetry—of the *Psalms* in contemporary language. Those noted above are only three.

They are alike in their belief that the central lesson of the *Psalms* is that **everything** can be spoken to God, that nothing need be excluded. These three are not alike in what most speaks to them in the *Psalms*, in what they most wish to capture.

Eugene Peterson begins by noting, “Most Christians for most of the Christian centuries have learned to pray by praying the *Psalms*.” Yet, he quickly goes on to say that many of his parishioners now think—inaccurately—that they need to pray in polished language. But:

“Prayer is elemental, not advanced language. It is the means by which our language becomes honest, true, and personal in response to God. It is the means by which we get everything in our lives out in the open before God. . . . The *Psalms* in Hebrew are earthy and rough. They are not genteel. They are not the prayers of nice people, couched in cultured language. . . .”

In her “Preface,” Nan Merrill notes that:

“The *Psalms* have ever been a response to these deep yearnings: cries of the soul . . . songs of surrender . . . paeans of praise. . . . *Psalms for Praying* [seeks to reflect] the reciprocity of Divine Love that opens the heart to forgiveness, reconciliation, and healing.”

And Lynn Bauman begins by observing:

“There is something healing and restorative about poetry. It is medicine to the soul, music to the human spirit. Without it we live thirsty in a desert land. Poetry springs from deep within. It may have been the original form of sacred wisdom. . . . The Hebrew people dared to utter the contents of their hearts in prayer, and the prayer became pure poetry, the language of the heart inspired by both sorrow and joy.”

Probably most of us read the *Psalms* in the familiar language of the Bible we normally use.

“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou has ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” [KJ] or,

“I look up at your heavens, shaped by your fingers, at the moon and the stars you set firm—what are human beings that you spare a thought for them, or the child of Adam that you care for him?” [NJ] and,

“When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?” [NRSV].

Probably the best way for most of us to tap into the *Psalms* is to read them regularly, rather than to seek one out on special occasions. When we do so day by day—as seems to be true with every spiritual practice—they may not always seem to speak to us. But many faithful pilgrims who have journeyed before report that they have been reliable signposts and stopping places along the way, both when the going is tough and when all seems right with the world.

Reading them in familiar words can reconnect us with their power and poetry. But hearing these ancient songs sung anew can speak to us in new and equally vivid ways. And—as is often true with poetry—they can be even better when read aloud.

“Unity is a precious gift,  
a treasure of the heart.  
When the beloved in each one  
seeks the beloved in the other,  
Unity is like a holy oil  
pouring down upon our heads,  
Flowing out across our bodies,  
sinking down into our souls. . . .”

from *Psalms 133* (Ancient Songs . . .)

“Be good to me, God—and now!

I’m running to you for dear life. . . .  
I find myself in a pride of lions  
who are wild for a taste of human flesh;  
Their teeth are lances and arrows,  
their tongues are sharp daggers. . . .  
I’m ready, God, so ready,  
ready from head to toe,  
Ready to sing, ready to raise a tune;  
‘Wake up, my soul!’ . . .”

from *Psalms 57* (The Message)

“With truth on our tongues,  
with gratitude as our friend,  
We are in harmony with the universe,  
as we hold hands with  
all the people.  
The chains of oppression are broken,  
the fetters of injustice unbound.  
The realm of Peace and Love shall reign! . . .”

from *Psalms 149* (Psalms for Praying)

The pain and the promise are both there in the *Psalms*. But when we turn to them regularly, perhaps it is the promise which prevails.

“O God you have come searching for me.  
You know me inside and out.  
You know where I rise up and where I fall.  
Before I think them, my thoughts  
are already clear to you.  
The track of my journey you discern ahead of me.  
All the pathways of my life shall take  
are known to you. . . .  
These things I can hardly grasp, O my God,  
they transport me to heights beyond myself.  
Is it possible, then, to be absent from your presence?  
Is there anywhere I could escape your Spirit?  
Say I traveled to the limits of space—  
or passed beyond this world into death—  
you would already be there ahead of me. . . .”

from *Psalms 139* (Ancient Songs...)

**“Psalms are poetry  
and poetry’s function  
is not to explain  
but to offer images  
and stories that resonate  
with human experiences.”**

(remembered words, author unknown)



Westminster Presbyterian Church  
1200 Marquette Avenue  
Minneapolis, MN 55403-2419

Address Service Requested

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 3280  
Minneapolis, MN

“When it comes, give thanks . . .”  
Pilgrimages and *Psalms* . . .



## AFTERWORDS: “Pilgrimages and *Psalms*”

Since their beginnings in Christian practice, labyrinths were linked with pilgrimages and—particularly—with the longing among medieval Christians to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Labyrinths, like pilgrimages, offer the opportunity for us to be intentional about our journey. And for many of us (there are probably more than one hundred in Minnesota) walking a labyrinth may have become a treasured spiritual experience . . . a practice that we can experience every day, rather than once or twice in a life—time.

Yet—alike as labyrinths and pilgrimages may be in their basic intentionality—reading this issue’s Meditation makes clear their differences. Partly it is their duration. But even more it may be the physicality of the pilgrimage experience, and the emotional and spiritual consequences of hot, dusty roads and long, steep climbs—even though sometimes rewarded with mountaintop experiences—and of the daily necessity for food and water, for strength and rest. And perhaps there is also the uncertainty of a pilgrimage, of not having the “center” in sight, of not knowing what lies ahead. . . .

Different but not better. The experience of El Camino is more—not better, but more—than the experience of the labyrinth (just as the Hermitage experiences is more—not better, but more—than the experience of a silent retreat). Longer, with more “ups” and “downs” . . . probably harder . . . perhaps more intense . . .

Thinking about El Camino somehow also brings the *Psalms* into mind. Partly it may be because of the sometimes almost too intense ups and downs of the psalmists’ cries. Even more it may be that pilgrimages and *Psalms* are both about our deep desire to follow Christ and to be transformed, . . . and about the real and intense struggle this can be, day by day. And this desire and this reality seem intertwined, change seldom seeming to come when all’s right with the world.

**“Pilgrimage is about the discovery that our real pilgrimage is the one we are engaged in each day.”** Ed Sellner, *Pilgrimage*

**“Psalms are poetry and poetry’s function is not to explain but to offer images and stories that resonate with human experiences.”** (remembered words, author unknown)

And perhaps most of all, pilgrimages and *Psalms* may both teach us a lesson of spiritual maturity:  
**when it comes . . . whatever it may be . . . give thanks!**