



# Thin Places

## Angels, voices, and spiritual awakening . . .

by Nan C. Merrill

To share some segments of my Spiritual Awakening and Soul Journey authentically has taken over thirty years. But facing and overcoming a lingering fear of being seen as different, wrestling with possible shadow temptations or ego-illusions, and the welcoming of new Awakenings have become over the years parts of an ever deeper Journey into Love . . . the Journey we all make in our own unique times and ways.

To acknowledge and to accept the extraordinary gifts Jesus bestowed on humanity through his life, words and deeds is to participate in a Love Story. Central to this Story are the many ways in which Jesus balances the dominant masculine energies with the feminine energies so long repressed . . . and so crucial today. And through this Story we learn that we are never alone. For throughout our Journey we are accompanied by the angels. We deprive ourselves of so much guidance and re-creative energy, so much comfort and company when we ignore or deny the angelic presences in our lives.

An extraordinary experience of angelic help came while my sister and I visited Mom and Dad in Florida, knowing it was time for them to move closer to family. A few days before our visit was to end, I took a deep breath and made a “date” to talk with Dad. Then, as Gail and I were returning from an errand, I pulled the car over and—realizing Gail was unaware of our angelic friends—announced that we were about to ask our angels right there and then to have a conference with Dad’s angel, whom he had completely ignored over his lifetime. Although Gail was skeptical, she joined me in silent prayer.

Dad was visibly shaking when we joined him in his den and, immediately, he repeated his old refrain, “We’re not ready to move.” We talked for a few minutes, then I asked, “Dad, what or who is it that’s holding you here? We need you to help us understand. Mom can’t care for you both like she used to. So let’s just close our eyes and figure this out.” And, being comfortable with silence, I closed my eyes.

When I finally felt ready and peeked at Dad, a big tear was rolling down his cheek. “What is it you’ll miss, Dad?” I quietly asked. After a few moments, Dad slapped his knee and in a determined and clear voice answered, “Not a darn thing! Go get Mom. I think it’s just about time for us to move closer to Gail in Las Vegas. And we need to get started now, before you girls leave!” When Mom, who had been praying for this, heard the good news, she burst into tears, hugged Dad, told him she loved him and cried, “I’ve been hoping and praying we could move soon!” And from then on until they were happily settled in their new home, it was angels all the way.

As we more consciously walk and share in each of the roads that Jesus walked, we discover the mystery and wonder of our own lives: some times we travel through the wilderness, other times we meet our neighbor face to face; we learn to move from the cross to resurrection, and we meet the One Who Walks With Us always as we journey on the Emmaus road.

And we must ever be alert for temptations, illusions, distractions so that fear and all of its defenses cannot separate us from experiencing love and peace of mind. I met the demon, Jealousy, while living and working in a Detroit rectory as a lay volunteer. I was taken over by Jealousy one evening when “abandoned” by the staff, who were all going to take part in a celebration. When *“Angels, voices and spiritual awakening”* . . . continues on page 2

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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



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

everyone had left, I fled to my room and locked the door. I informed the Powers That Be that I would remain there for as long as it took until I had dealt with this energy-zapping way of being. This was crucial if I were to remain there. I loved the people, the work and the community, and I was profoundly aware that Jealousy had no place there.

Intuitively, I pulled my chair to the center of the room, faced it toward a painting I had done of Christ's head bearing the crown of thorns. Imagining Jesus asking me if I wanted to be healed, I responded inwardly with an unequivocal, "Yes!" Then, with a Vivaldi tape quietly playing "Gloria" in the background, I sat forcing myself to stay with the feelings of jealousy. Fear and guilt were activated as I analyzed what jealousy does to the body: rapid pulse, clenched teeth, nausea, tense body, throbbing head. That was my prayer, the only prayer I could offer at the moment.

After over two hours of remaining immersed in the painting, offering only a silent Cry, I was startled to hear what I've come to trust as the Voice of Love: "You have always known me as the Christ of Sorrows. Soon you will know me as the Christ of Joy. As you are being healed of your jealousy, know also that someone else in the city will be healed as well."

That's how love and healing work. We are not healed alone. And a great sense of peace and love washed over me; the tears that came were healing tears of great gratitude.

Once we learn that our fears are but illusions of the big lie, the great myth of our "sinfulness" and "guilt," once we recognize that our fear-based defenses have been unconsciously formed from cradle and (regrettably, for many) to crypt, we Awaken-freer to follow the routes of forgiveness, love, and At-one-ment that Jesus so powerfully and faithfully lived and continues to share with us today.

Angels, Voices, Awakenings have been parts of my unique and continuing Journey into Love. And it has helped me to tell you about them. As the Lenten Season approaches, you might want to take some time for silence, time to revisit parts of your own journey, perhaps remembering especially the unique thin place experiences and new Awakenings that may have come to you. And you might wish to journal as you remember, or even—perhaps—to share them with a special friend.

*Nan Merrill is an author, retreat leader, and editor of Friends of Silence. Her Psalms for Praying: An Invitation to Wholeness offers her loving, contemplative translation of the Psalms. In writing about Nan's Lumen Christi . . . Holy Wisdom, Cynthia Bourgeault called her "the Rumi of the Christian faith!" And her Friends of Silence—which encourages readers to reverence Silence, prayer and contemplation with extracts from her wide-ranging reading—has appeared monthly for over twenty-two years. To receive a sample issue or to write to her, Nan may be reached at: 129 Skunk Hollow Road, Jericho VT 05465.*

### **Voices from the Labyrinth:**

#### **". . . the deep, intuitive pattern of ourselves"**

*The Spirit of Veriditas, Voices from the Labyrinth* is the quarterly journal of The Labyrinth Society and an excellent resource. The Winter 2009 issue reviews how modern interest in the labyrinth as a spiritual practice—which got a strong start from the work and writings of Lauren Artress at Grace Cathedral in San Francisco several decades ago—has now truly spread around the world.

It also includes a review of a recently released book, *A Whole New Mind*, by Daniel Pink, which offers his vision of a profound change which he believes is now taking place. As he begins: "This book describes a seismic—though as yet undetected—shift now under way in much of the advanced world. We are moving from an economy and a society built on the logical, linear, computer-like capabilities of the Information Age into an economy and a society built on the inventive, empathetic, big-picture capabilities of what's rising in its place, the Conceptual Age."

Because of this, the author concludes that "today the more appropriate metaphor for our times is the labyrinth. . . . [For, as Lauren] Artress has said, when people walk into a labyrinth they 'shift consciousness from the linear to the non-linear' and bring to the surface 'the deep, intuitive pattern of ourselves.'"

For more on the Labyrinth Society:

[www.labyrinthsociety.org](http://www.labyrinthsociety.org)

For this issue of their Journal:

[www.veriditas.org/newsletters/journal.shtml](http://www.veriditas.org/newsletters/journal.shtml)

And for an opportunity to learn about and to experience the labyrinth:

### **Touching Body and Soul:**

#### **A Grace-Full Labyrinth Experience**

This will be a day of reflection, movement and connection. Using powerful world music, drums and silence, you will be led in gentle yoga-based movement and guided meditation on ancient labyrinth patterns to open your body, quiet your mind, and energize your spirit. In sacred

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.

space we create, we'll connect more deeply with ourselves, with others and with God, accessing inner power, beauty and joy.

No experience in yoga, dance or labyrinths needed. The day will include personal walks on indoor and outdoor labyrinths, guided group experiences on the labyrinths, personal reflection, journal writing, drumming and clay modeling.

**Saturday, February 7, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.**

**Sacred Ground Center for Spirituality**

1890 Randolph Avenue, St. Paul

For information or registration:

www.sacredgroundspirit.org or 651.696.2798 or  
sacredground@sacredgroundspirit.org.

**Taizé Evening Prayer in the Phillips Neighborhood**

Quiet meditation, with singing and Scripture.

**First Wednesday of each month, 6:30 to 7:00 p.m.**

**Our Saviour's Lutheran Church**

2315 Chicago Avenue, Minneapolis

For information: 612.871.2967.

**A Monthly Taizé Prayer**

These services are simple, ecumenical, quiet and contemplative and include a reading from scripture, simple sung chants, candlelight and spaces for silence and prayer.

Perhaps unusual as parts of these services are the three prayer stations that we offer: they're interactive and creative, and usually include lighting a candle to place around the cross and a station for written prayers. They also vary according to the liturgical season and may include healing and anointing with oil, an art activity, or a baptismal station with water, as the season suggests. All are welcome to join us afterward for tea, dessert and fellowship in the parish hall.

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

and

**A Lenten Series**

Led by Dr. Lois Farang, an Egyptian Coptic Nun and Professor of Early Church History at Luther Seminary, this series will explore "Desert Spirituality for 21st Century Christians." Each talk is preceded by a soup supper at 5:15 p.m. (all are welcome and there is no charge).

**Three Sunday Evenings-March 1, 8, & 15**

**6:00-7:30 p.m.**

**St. Matthew's Episcopal Church**

2136 Carter Avenue, St. Paul

For information: 651.645.3058 or  
www.stmatthewsmn.org.

**Taizé Evening Prayer and Noon Worship during Lent**

All are invited to gather around the peacefulness of a candle-lit table in the Great Hall for Taizé Evening Prayer, receiving the Ashes as Lent begins on February 25th, and continuing each Wednesday evening through April 1st. Before each service, beginning at 5:30 p.m., a nice supper (at modest cost) and fellowship are to be found in the Refectory.

For those who live or work in downtown Minneapolis, there is also a Wednesday noon worship service in the Chapel—thirty minutes of music and quiet reflection-following the Lenten theme: "Plain-Speaking: Jesus' Sermon in Luke." Worship is followed by a modest lunch and fellowship in the Meisel Room.

**Wednesdays during Lent, 12:00 to 12:30  
and 6:30-7:00 p.m.**

**Westminster Presbyterian Church**

1200 Marquette Avenue, Minneapolis

For information: 612.332.3421 or www.ewestminster.org.

**Sunday Taizé Evening Prayers during Lent**

Starting Ash Wednesday and continuing every Sunday through the season of Lent, this service of light, simple chant, Scripture, and silence brings us back to what we most wildly cherish: our deep need for God, and most of all, God's deep love for us in Christ.

The Prayers will be led by Dr. Dirk Lange, who in the 1990s was a Brother and a lead liturgist in the Taizé Community in France.

**Sundays during Lent-March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29  
5:00-6:00 p.m.**

**Mercy Seat Lutheran Church**

601 13th Ave. SE, Mpls, 55414

For information: 651.497.8084 or kae@nemercy.org.

### Unlearning . . .

"Love is what we are born with.

Fear is what we have learned here.

The spiritual journey is the unlearning of fear and the acceptance of love back into our hearts."

Marianne Williamson

## MINNESOTA INSTITUTE of CONTEMPLATION and HEALING

Sending news from the north (the “real feel” temperature was minus 68 when the web-site was up-dated in mid-January), MICAH reports good progress on its new Retreat House (designed to have “a net [commercial] energy use of zero”), a Snow Shoe Retreat (February 7), a listing of its summer internship program & its summer retreat schedule, and more.

For full details: [www.micahprays.com](http://www.micahprays.com).

### The Woods Are Lovely . . .

The Hermitage at Clearwater Forest is available and accessible all year around, and during the winter months the surrounding woods are particularly lovely, dark and deep.

It is a cozy, insulated log cabin with a propane fireplace, picture window, comfortable reading chair and large writing table, comforter-covered bed, basic cooking equipment, and a heated outhouse. If that sounds inviting and if you (or others you know) are looking for a unique way to be on a personal retreat, you might consider a stay in the Hermitage.

And the invitation may seem even warmer. Recognizing that church professionals need to be able to take time for personal renewal, the Hermitage is available at NO COST to ordained clergy, religious, and church professionals of any denomination or faith tradition. And the cost is modest for all others.

**For a brochure with full details for yourself or a friend**

Contact: [thinplaces\\_us@msn.com](mailto:thinplaces_us@msn.com)  
or call Clearwater Forest at: 218.678.2325.

Peter, four-years-old,  
eating oatmeal for breakfast,  
in the kitchen.

Pausing, looking up,  
'We are all part of the mind of God.'  
Returning to his oatmeal.

Surprised parent,  
'Did you hear that said somewhere?'

'No. I was looking at the picture  
of the brain in Carl's anatomy book  
and that's what I thought.'  
More oatmeal.

## Christianity's Contemplative Tradition

Perhaps the two organizations who have reached the most people (in the U. S. and around the world) and who have done the most to renew interest in—and to recover the practices of—Christianity's contemplative tradition are Contemplative Outreach (founded in the United States and led by Fr. Thomas Keating) and The World Community for Christian Meditation (founded in Britain by John Main, and now led by Fr. Laurence Freeman).

The “methods” taught by the two organizations differ somewhat, but both make it crystal clear that contemplative prayer is not a method but an experience, is taking time to be quiet, to rest in God's presence.

For more on the World Community for Christian Meditation: [www.wccm.org](http://www.wccm.org).

For more on Contemplative Outreach: [www.contemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org), and one may also subscribe to “Contemplative Outreach News”.

For opportunities to meet and learn from these two:

### **Thomas Keating: “Transforming the Heart of the World: Living as a Contemplative Today”**

As noted in the last issue, Fr. Thomas, co-founder of the Centering Prayer movement, is returning to the Twin Cities. All are invited to this rare opportunity to meet and listen to one of the spiritual giants of our time, hosted by the Benedictine Center of St. Paul's Monastery.

**Friday, February 27, 7:00-9:00 p.m.**

### **Transformation Catholic Church**

6133 15th Street North, Oakdale

For information or registration: 651.777.7251 or [benedictinecenter@stpaulsmonastery.org](mailto:benedictinecenter@stpaulsmonastery.org).

and

### **Laurence Freeman: “Hope and Change: Meditation in Troubled Times”**

We live in troubling times that call for a radical change of mind and a conversion of heart. Can we learn enough wisdom? in time? Meditation radically changes the one who meditates and so-little by little, but deeply-changes the world.

**Friday, May 1, at 6:30 p.m. to Sunday, May 3, at noon  
Dominican Sisters Meeting Room, Houston, TX**

For information or registration: 713.668.1209 or [www.wccmtexas.org](http://www.wccmtexas.org), then “Events”.

**For information on existing Centering Prayer groups** in Minnesota: [www.minnesotacontemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.minnesotacontemplativeoutreach.org), then click on “Centering Prayer groups”.

For an opportunity to learn about and experience Centering Prayer:

### **Introduction to Centering Prayer**

Centering Prayer is a way to become more aware of our relationship with God, a time to be silent with the intention of being open to God's presence and action within us. It is not meant to replace other forms of prayer, but to enrich them. Our introduction to Centering prayer will include,

- the origins of these teachings which come from early Christian writings,
- how to deal with a busy mind when sitting in the silence for twenty minutes
- the method of Centering Prayer, plus two sessions of practice

The day will also provide an opportunity for friendship and time to ask questions.

**Saturday, February 7, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.**

### **Colonial Church of Edina**

6200 Colonial Way, Edina

For information or registration: 952.925.2711 or 952.893.0673.

and

### **Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat**

A silent retreat for those who have been practicing centering prayer for three months or longer. Each day will include periods of centering prayer, time for silence and for journaling or reflection, and perhaps time to walk in the woods. Two half-hour videos (optional) on the spiritual and psychological foundations of Christian contemplative prayer will be shown, with time for questions, reflective comments and discussion following. Participants may join the Community for Morning, Noon and Evening Prayers.

**Friday, March 6, at 7:30 p.m. to Sunday, March 8, at 1:00 p.m.**

### **The Spirituality Center**

#### **Saint Benedict's Monastery, St. Joseph**

For information or registration: 320.363.7116 or dmanuel@csbsju.edu.

### **The Eastern Orthodox Tradition of Icons**

The Westminster Gallery's most ambitious exhibit so far, opening in the Heller Commons, will look back on the Eastern Orthodox practice of using icons as inspiration for meditation, feature old and new icons, tell the story of how icons are written, and show how they are used in worship and prayer.

This Exhibition will be supplemented by a series of

classes, "**Images of Jesus in Cross-Cultural Art**," during the adult education hour each Sunday morning (9:15-10:15) during February.

It will be further enriched through a six-week course, "**The Faces of Jesus**," which will offer participants an opportunity to be guided in writing an icon of their own. (Tuesday Evenings—Feb. 17, 24, Mar. 10, 17, 24, 31—6:30-9:00 p.m.)

### **February & March Sunday Mornings & Tuesday Evenings**

#### **Westminster Presbyterian Church**

1200 Marquette Avenue, Minneapolis

For information about the exhibition and the classes:

rschwartz@wpc-mpls.org or 612.866.8752.

For information or to register for the Icon course:

akorluka@aol.com or 651.439.4850.

### **A Silent Retreat: "Love's Invitations"**

It's all about love . . . God's love and our responsiveness. This ever-present love is challenged from within and without. Come to God in the stillness and be restored. Led by Jeannette Bakke-retreat leader, author (*Holy Invitations*) and teacher.

**Friday, Feb. 20, at 6:00 p.m. to Saturday, Feb. 21, at 3:00 p.m.**

#### **Christos Center for Spiritual Formation, Lino Lakes**

For information or registration: 651.653.8207 or

joycechristoscenter@msn.com.

### **As this New Year Unfolds**

A Blessing, written by Second Century Bishop Ireneaus and appreciated by many Readers since it was first included two years ago,

"Let our clay be moist,  
lest we grow hard  
and lose the imprint of God's fingers."

One Reader responded by remembering words written by Lao-Tzu, the founding figure of Taoism,

"We shape clay into a pot,  
but it is the emptiness inside  
that holds whatever we want."

### The Spirit In The House Festival

Spirit in the House is dedicated to exploring questions of inner life and outward action through theater, film, dance, drumming, music, spoken word, poetry, and storytelling: "It's not just entertainment—it's entertainment plus meaning."

This year's 10-day performing arts festival—celebrating a diverse cross-section of spiritual traditions—will present 15 live shows, 15 films and more.

**Ten Days: February 27 to March 8.**

For full information: [Sealtotal@aol.com](mailto:Sealtotal@aol.com) or [www.spiritinthehouse.org](http://www.spiritinthehouse.org).

### Labyrinth Retreat

This retreat is to enrich those who may have had little experience with the labyrinth as well as those who are very familiar with its many ways. Participants will walk a Lenten path on our Labyrinth and will have an opportunity to learn more about this "deep and intuitive" prayer tool.

**Saturday, March 7, 9:00 a.m.-noon**

**Colonial Church of Edina**

6200 Colonial Way, Edina

For information or registration: 952.925.2711 or 952.893.0673.

This Labyrinth Retreat will be led by Jill Geoffrion whose meditation, "**When it comes, give thanks,**" in last Autumn's *Thin Places*, shared some of her experiences and some of the insights she'd gained while walking El Camino de Santiago with her husband and their two sons. Tim's account of his experiences and growth on that journey—Timothy C. Geoffrion, *One Step at a Time: A Pilgrim's Guide to Spirit-Led Living*—has just been published by The Alban Institute, inviting us all to be life-long pilgrims, whether we leave home or not. To learn more: [www.spirit-ledleader.com](http://www.spirit-ledleader.com), then click on "Books".

### Praying with Icons

"Icons . . . have imprinted themselves so deeply upon my life that they appear every time I need comfort and consolation. There are many times when I cannot pray, when I am too tired to read the Gospels, too restless to have spiritual thoughts, too depressed to have words for God, or too exhausted to do anything. But I can still look at these images so intimately connected with the experience of love. . . ."

*Behold the Beauty of the Lord*, Henri Nouwen

### "Learning to Love the Psalms"

Members of the St. Olaf Centering Prayer group—which meets every Saturday, beginning at 9:00 a.m. in Cowley Hall—are offering a four-part instructional and enjoyable Lenten series, "Learning to Love the Psalms: Psalms for Praying/Psalms for Singing," to follow their centering sitting. Meet in the Gathering Room at 10:00 for coffee; move to the Chapel for the program at 10:15. Please join us for centering prayer, the program, or both.

**Four Saturdays—March 14, 21, 28, April 4-9:00-10:00 & 10:15-11:30 a.m.**

**St. Olaf Catholic Church**

215 South 8th Street, Minneapolis

For information: 612.332.7471 or [sr.joan.tuberty@juno.com](mailto:sr.joan.tuberty@juno.com).

### Richard Rohr, "The Emerging Church: Conversations, Convergences and Action"

Richard Rohr, Brian McLaren, Phyllis Tickle and others will lead this first large gathering of Roman Catholic, Mainline Protestant, Evangelical, and other Christians seeking to explore "a new vision of Christianity that is happening across denominational lines today."

In what is "emerging," Fr. Richard has identified ten historical developments in the global church that are propelling this movement. Among them:

- "A broad awareness that Jesus was clearly teaching non-violence, simplicity of lifestyle, peacemaking, love of creation, and ego stripping for both individuals and groups . . . ,
- "A common-sense and growing recognition that Jesus was clearly concerned about the specific healing and transformation of real persons and human society on earth as it is to be in heaven, and not just intellectual belief in doctrines and moral stances, which ask almost nothing of us in terms of real change . . . ,
- "The recovery of the older and essential contemplative tradition, starting with Thomas Merton in the 1950's and now spreading to all denominations like a "treasure hidden in the field" (Matt. 13:44) . . . ,
- "The [recognition] that experiential Christianity is actually possible and even desirable, and this also leads us to a more Trinitarian theology-opening up the mystical and the prayer levels of Christianity. . . ."

The vision offered is not of a new "church" but of an energy-building movement within the Church Universal. And the conference is intentionally about Conversations and Convergences, deliberately seeking "to expand the emergent conversation across the widest possible array of Christian life." All are invited.

**Friday, March 20, through Sunday, March 22**  
**Hotel Albuquerque in Old Town, Albuquerque, NM**

For information or registration: [www.cacradicalgrace.org](http://www.cacradicalgrace.org), then “Programs”, then “Conferences”.

**The Welcoming Prayer,  
 a Contemplative Prayer Practice**

The Welcoming Prayer is a simple and practical prayer that allows the deepening experience of the “letting go” process in our daily life, which allows us to experience God more intimately. We’ll learn about the origins of this prayer and have an opportunity to experience it through practice and small group interaction.

**Tuesday, March 24, 7:00-9:00 p.m.**

**Christos Center for Spiritual Formation, Lino Lakes**

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

**J. Philip Newell, “Spirit with You:  
 Celtic Way of Peace”**

**Tuesday through Thursday, May 19-21, 2009**

**Tuesday, May 19:**

•At “A Morning with Philip Newell” Philip will lead us through his latest book, *Christ of the Celts: the Healing of Creation*, emphasizing what it means to be creations of the Holy, as he offers us the gift of Celtic spirituality for our time.

**Hennepin Avenue UMC, 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.**

•At “An Evening Concert,” Philip will be joined by Marty Haugen, nationally known composer and lyricist, for an evening of spoken word and music dedicated to peace and eco-theology.

**Mayflower Church, 7:30-9:00 p.m.**

**Wednesday, May 20:**

•A professional development event: “Sacred Conversations—Longing for Healing and Wholeness.” Central to Philip’s writing is that love is at the heart of our transformation and healing of the world. What do we do when our heart is captured by love? Come for a rich experience of Celtic Spirituality.

**Wisdom Ways/Sacred Ground, 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.**

•“A Celtic Evening Prayer,” with traditional Celtic instruments and a homily by Philip.

**Pilgrim Lutheran Church, 6:51-9:00 p.m.**

**Thursday, May 21:**

•“A Contemplative Retreat with Philip Newell” will be a contemplative experienced focused on the scriptural injunction to “Let Christ’s peace reign in your hearts. . .” Philip will offer reflections from the Celtic spiritual treas-

ury, along with guided “heart meditations” led by Ward Bauman. Sponsored by the Episcopal House of Prayer and the Wesley Center for Spirituality.

**Westminster Presbyterian, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.**

•The culminating event of the three days will be the world premier of Philip’s “Songs for the Earth: A Celtic Mass for Peace,” with music by Sam Guarnaccia.

**Westminster Presbyterian, 7:00-9:00 p.m.**

As soon as registration details are finalized, more information will be available at [www.ewestminster.org](http://www.ewestminster.org). If you would like to be informed directly when that information is available, please send your name and mailing or e-mail address to: [thinplaces\\_us@msn.com](mailto:thinplaces_us@msn.com).

The online magazine, *ReadTheSpirit*, recently named Philip as one of ten “**Spiritual Sages to Watch in 2009.**” For an interview with Philip, for comments on his *Christ of the Celts*, and for information on the other nine, go to: [www.readthespirit.com](http://www.readthespirit.com) and click on “10 Spiritual Sages to Watch.”

*Afterwords*, continued from page 8

And Thomas Merton—in *The Collected Poems*—  
 recording and rejoicing in a thin place he’d just experi-  
 enced, there in his hermitage, in the woods at  
 Gethsemane:

**“ . . . the Spirit sings; the bottom drops out of  
 my soul.**

**And from the center of my cellar, Love,  
 Louder than thunder,  
 Opens a heaven of naked air.”**

A sense of At-one-ment . . .  
 Love, Louder than thunder . . .

**“Love and compassion  
 are necessities-  
 not luxuries;  
 without them-  
 humanity cannot survive.”**  
**The Dalai Lama**

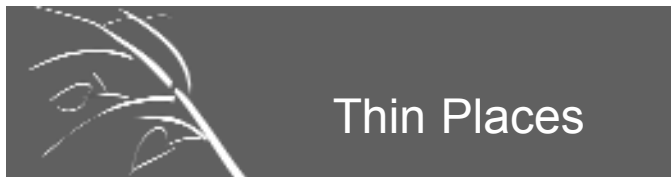


Westminster Presbyterian Church  
1200 Marquette Avenue  
Minneapolis, MN 55403-2419

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**“Angels, voices, and spiritual awakening . . .”  
A sense of At-one-ment . . .  
Love, Louder than thunder . . .**



Thin Places

AFTERWORDS: A sense of At-one-ment . . . Love, Louder than thunder

5:30 a.m. on a mid-January morning. Stepping outside to greet and give thanks for the gift of this new day. No wind, bright stars overhead, all is quiet and calm, air temperature far below zero. Feeling it, breathing in and breathing out, exhilarating. Senses fully awake, it seems surprisingly easy to stay in the present, to just be . . . feeling a connectedness to all creation, a sense of At-one-ment.

If the mind tries to jump ahead to the doings of the day, the next breath—of sharp, hard air—snaps back into focus a deep understanding that the only moment in which we can live, in which we can make choices, in which we can give thanks, in which we can be loving . . . is the present moment. And this whole-body understanding (of what may have been intellectually accepted) feels like a gift and a blessing. A thin place.

Coming back inside for morning prayers. Remembering then and feeling connected to those who have gone before—Thomas Merton’s blessing for a winter morning in *Dancing in the Water of Life*:

**“The blessing of Prime under the tall pines,  
in the cold of early morning, behind the hermitage . . .  
The blessing of sawing wood, cleaning house, washing dishes.  
The blessing of a quiet, alert, concentrated, fully ‘present’ meditation.  
The blessing of God’s presence and guidance . . .”**

Henri Nouwen in *Bread for the Journey* describing the experience of what he calls “the fullness of time”:

**“That is when it seems that time stands still, that past, present, and future  
become one; that everything is present where we are; and that God, we, and all  
that is have come together in total unity. This is the experience of God’s time.”**

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