



# Thin Places

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page 3  
*Ongoing Opportunities*

page 4  
*One-Time Opportunities*

page 8  
*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



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PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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## **Six Decades of Journaling: Being Attentive to Life . . .** by the Rev. John H. Sinclair

The root meaning of “journal” is “a day’s work from rising to setting sun.” In journaling we try to put down in writing the experiences of an important day in life’s journey. We may not write for several days, but then something happens in our life—a new friend we make, a book we read, or a personal crisis—and we stop to record our feelings, as an “a-ha” or as a prayer of “thank you.”

It was in my second year at seminary that my friend, Paul Seto, told me how much journaling had meant to him. Paul was a Canadian of Japanese descent who had come to Princeton with his Anglo-Texan bride and found a spiritual home. His words touched something in me, opening me to something new, encouraging me to seek to be more attentive to “the work of the day.”

Across the years, I’ve filled three large notebooks with thoughts, questions, and prayers. Put down—importantly—as they were happening. Now, looking back through these hundreds of pages, I am very grateful to Paul for his friendship and also for his suggestion that I keep a journal. It is not a surprise that one of our sons bears his name!

I’ve learned, over the years, that one must record as soon as possible the experience while it is fresh in your mind, and that you must not go back later to revise or correct. The journal entry then will serve as a milestone marker on your spiritual journey. Here are a few milestones, as I now look back:

**“October 1, 1946, Princeton, New Jersey.** When I was in college my taken-for-granted beliefs were thrown into a mill of liberal thinking. I went for every idea—hook, line and sinker! I would accept an idea one day and the next day replace it with another. Now that I have been in seminary for two years and see things more completely and as a whole, I have started to ‘put it all together’ and committed myself to a body of Truth as a gift from God.”

**“May 14, 1947.** As I prepare to graduate at the age of twenty-three, I look back and thank God for all the spiritual forces which have shaped my life. A Christian home with caring parents who emphasized service as the goal in life; a Christian congregation which engendered a warm fellowship; a Christian college in which religion was related to the whole body of knowledge. Now my three years in seminary have taught me the essentials of my Biblical heritage, with a sense of its urgency and relevance to all of life. Above all I have been blessed with a wonderful wife who loves and understands me completely and is helping me to be more human!”

**“October 20, 1948, Medellin, Colombia, South America.** Learning a second language and adjusting to life in a new culture. I am sitting here in the early morning looking

*“Six Decades of Journaling” . . . continues on page 2*

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

out on a great Latin American city with dozens of churches calling the faithful to worship, each church with a different sounding bell. How lost we will feel if we fail to master this lovely language!

As to this new culture which surrounds me, we are told that we should think of the problems here as being much like those Jesus faced twenty centuries ago—poverty, intolerance, and corruption—yet also there is beauty, love, and friendship waiting to be found if we are only patient! A teacher said this week that Jesus would feel very much ‘at home’ here. Can I modify my Anglo-Saxon formation to make room for another way of thinking and doing?”

**“May 30, 1960, San Fernando, Chile.** I am back home. It has been a hectic ten days since the earthquake hit. I had spent the night before at the hospital with a member of the church family, a young woman of twenty-three, who died in childbirth before dawn. Since her burial had to take place within twenty-four hours, we hastily arranged for the funeral service to be held later that morning. Then, as we were leaving the sanctuary, the ground began to shake and the church walls began to sway. For a moment, strange as it now seems, I thought that I was just groggy because of lack of sleep but then realized that it was a major after-shock.

The next morning I received a cable from the World Council of Churches asking me to lead a relief delegation to the devastated area, six hours south of here. The destruction there is almost beyond describing. They say that it was between 8.5 and 9.5 on the Richter scale. Whole villages were swept into the sea, but some survived by climbing trees. Over two thousand deaths have been reported. I will have to write more later.

**“July 26, 1962, New York City.** This is my 38th birthday. It is great to feel more at home after two years in administrative work at the mission board. On the surface it may be just ‘paper shuffling’ as a colleague once told me, but it may also be God’s work in which I am called to help others ‘at the front’ carry out their mission. Maxine gave me some tennis shorts today—waist 38 for a 38 year old! She also sent to my office a philodendron vine ‘to green up my ivory tower’ from which I look out on the Hudson River to the west and the Columbia University campus to the east.”

**“July 26, 1973.** A ‘present’ on my 49th birthday. I have been very challenged by the changes proposed for the position on the mission board which I have occupied for the last thirteen years. Life has been very rewarding in terms of personal satisfaction in my ‘missionary calling.’ However, the five regional offices will be staffed in the future by racial/ethnic persons from each region, and I

will be replaced. Even though I support this change, it is with deep regret and a sense of loss that I have submitted my resignation.

Therefore, as I approach my 50th year, I will seek another place of service. I consider myself now as ‘a 49er,’ looking West (my place of birth) to continue my ministry. I am looking for ‘a new frontier’ where I will be challenged to make new friends and build new relationships. My wife, our three sons and my 86-year-old mother are very supportive. May God grant me the humility to serve where God may call here in the world until God calls me to serve in God’s very presence.”

Many more pages and many more mile-markers:

**“August 10, 2009,** Roseville, Minnesota. ‘Stop, look and listen’ is the sign on the old railroad crossings of my youth. That old sign has a ‘spiritual meaning’ for me today at age eight-five. I need to slow down and STOP to consider that I am in the final stretch of my earthly race. I have had a wonderful life and have much for which to be thankful. I must also LOOK around and LOOK inside to see the areas of personal growth which are still calling. Above all I need to LISTEN—the hardest for me!—not just to my brain, but to my heart. I still have much to learn from others. The words of the old railroad crossing sign can help me on the final stretch of ‘the race.’”

Etty Hillesum’s diary, *An Interrupted Life*, is a book to which I have returned again and again. In one of the scores of passages that resonate with me, she quietly recognizes, “And sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths, or the turning inward in prayer for five short minutes.”

For me, turning to my journal has often been like both of these. May the gift Paul Seto gave to me so many years ago, the encouragement to be attentive to the work of the day, be to you what it has been to me. . . .

*John H. Sinclair is an “honorably retired” Presbyterian minister, a former overseas missionary and church agency executive, who remains remarkably active and engaged. In the last two years he has served as Adjunct Professor at seminaries in both Cuba and Mexico. And he is journaling still. On February 27, 2010, he wrote,*

*“At six o’clock I was awakened by a call from our son in Florida telling us that there had been an 8.8 earthquake in Chile. Within thirty minutes I reached our youngest son, John Mark, who lives north of the worst-hit area, and learned that his family was well, with only a few broken dishes—the violent high waves from the tsunami didn’t reach their house. I admit that I had flashbacks of fifty years ago!”*

*John may be reached at: [jhsinclair@comcast.net](mailto:jhsinclair@comcast.net).*



**The Benedictine Retreat Center of St. Paul's Monastery** . . . draws on its monastic heritage to welcome people at all stages of life into quiet and renewal . . . and to support them as they renew the world.

Over the centuries, women and men from all denominations have looked to monasteries as places to regain their bearings. The Sisters of St. Paul's Monastery continue that long tradition of welcome, inviting all guests to be received and appreciated, to participate in the rhythm of daily prayer, and to explore topics in the spiritual life with teachers and spiritual directors. A private retreat lasting from a few hours to a few days is one good way to experience this rich environment.

Much happens in these moments of quiet, but the lasting impact relates to the experience of Benedictine community. Guests connect personally with Sisters who are themselves living into a Christian way of life. These relationships combine with the beauty and comfort of the newly constructed monastery, helping the fruits of retreat linger with one's soul and drawing one back into quiet when the time is right. Benedictines share the enduring journey with you.

You might wish to consider experiencing St. Paul's Monastery through a day of prayer:

8 a.m. Arrive and be warmly welcomed by a Sister who will help you settle into your private room, answer questions, and show you the chapel, refreshments, library and art exhibits.

- 9 a.m. Option for one-on-one conversation
- 11:45 a.m. Mid-day prayer
- 12 p.m. Lunch in silence or with others
- 4 p.m. Depart

In the spirit of St. Benedict, all guests are welcomed as Christ. Come, enter the monastery's peacefulness, let the drum of daily life fall into silence, and hear God's gentle invitation to you.

For more information about personal retreats, group retreats and workshops, spiritual direction, and other Opportunities for prayer and learning: call 651.777.7251

**Do you know someone who might like to read *Thin Places?* (It's sent free to all who request it.)**

**Do you know of an up-coming "Opportunity" that might be of interest to others?**

**If 'yes' to either, please contact Kathy Fisher at: [kfisher@wpc-mpls.org](mailto:kfisher@wpc-mpls.org) or 612.332.3421**

or visit [www.stpaulsmonastery.org](http://www.stpaulsmonastery.org) and follow the Benedictine Center links.

### Monthly Taizé Retreat

Taizé prayer uses simple chants based on the Scriptures and periods of silence to create an environment for encountering the mystery of God. In April, this overnight retreat will use the experience of Taizé prayer to help you explore "how beauty illuminates daily life," one of the values of Benedict leading to a more peaceful life. In May, "service at the heart of Leadership," another Benedictine teaching.

**Friday, April 16, at 6:30 p.m. to**

**Saturday, April 17, at 10:00 a.m.**

**Friday, May 21, at 6:30 p.m. to**

**Saturday, May 22, at 10:00 a.m.**

The Benedictine Center at Saint Paul's Monastery  
2675 Benet Road, St. Paul

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

### Nan C. Merrill:

#### "Is there enough Silence for the Word to be heard?"

On Saturday, 23 January 2010, Nan Merrill ended her earthly journey. For over twenty-two years, her monthly Friends of Silence and her many books—perhaps especially her *Psalms for Praying*—have accompanied and aided many on their spiritual journeys. Nan shared some of her

#### "Awakening . . ."

. . . is an ongoing journey. To begin to really see our lives and to seek to turn them around are only the first steps. The journey humbles us and give us strength to repent, to ask forgiveness, to simplify and discard all that is not Life-giving, to abandon ourselves into Love's hands. . . ."

Nan Merrill, *Journey into Love*

#### "To choose Life . . ."

"I remembered Mechtild of Magdeburg saying, 'The day of my spiritual awakening was the day I saw-and knew I saw—all things in God and God in all things.' And everything else suddenly fell into perspective for me, in the light of this awareness.

In time, I was to discover that once Life had found me, once Love had taken me by the hand, there was no way I could stop the inner pilgrimage. There was no turning back. To choose Life and Love . . . is one of the greatest gifts we can give to ourselves, our families, our global neighbors and the planet itself."

Nan Merrill, *Journey into Love*

favorite quotations with *Thin Places* and wrote the meditation, “**Angels, Voices, and Spiritual Awakening**,” for the February/March issue last year. Her last two books, *Journey into Love* and *Walking with Wisdom*, were completed during her final illness and are available at many bookstores and online.

*Friends of Silence* will continue in Nan’s footsteps under the care of her long-time friend and associate, Anne Strader. If you would like to be added to the ongoing mailing list, contact Anne at: [annestrad@sbcglobal.net](mailto:annestrad@sbcglobal.net) or Friends of Silence, 11 Cardiff Lane, Hannibal, MO 63401.

### Come Away My Beloved and Rest Awhile

After a busy week Jesus invited his disciples to come away and rest awhile. This informal contemplative gathering is a one-hour pause to focus on God in quiet and reflection, simple song in the style of Taizé and prayer. An opportunity to “sit” and “be” and let the Spirit move among us.

#### Every other Monday:

**April 5, 19; May 3, 17 . . . -6:45-8:00 p.m.**

Christ the King Lutheran Church  
1900 NW 7th Street, New Brighton  
For information: 651.633.7547 or  
[joannenesser@msn.com](mailto:joannenesser@msn.com).

### Taizé Prayer, in Rochester

All are invited to this time of quiet and prayer, joining together in sung prayers from Taizé and in readings from Scripture and silence.

#### Second Friday each month, 7:00-7:45 p.m.

Christ United Methodist Church, in the Chapel  
400 5th Avenue SW, Rochester  
For information: 507.289.4019 or  
[www.cumethodist.com](http://www.cumethodist.com).

### “Something I have been wanting . . .

. . . to write down for days, perhaps for weeks, but which a sort of shyness—or perhaps shame?—has prevented me from putting into words. A desire to kneel down sometimes pulses through my body—or rather, it is as if my body had been meant and made for the act of kneeling.

Sometimes, in moments of deep gratitude, kneeling down becomes an overwhelming urge, head deeply bowed, hands before my face. . . .”

Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*

[It will be remembered that Etty Hillesum was a Jew in her late twenties who—like Ann Frank in her teens—kept a journal until her death in a WWII concentration camp.]

### “Called by the Spirit,” Thursday, May 13,

#### 7th Annual Thin Places Ecumenical Worship Service

Each of you is invited to be a part of this coming together of *Thin Places* readers.

We will gather for worship in the Sanctuary (around the altar with its candles and greenery and the Taizé Cross) for sung prayers and litanies of spoken prayer, listening to Scripture and the music of ancient Celtic instruments, being together in silence, with worship leaders from many denominations.

Following worship we shall move in procession to The Agape Table. All who come are invited to

#### bring a gift of food for the Food Shelf

or a flower or a poem or whatever seems appropriate for a “love feast,” to place on the Table to be Blessed.

After placing the Blessing, we’ll gather in the Heller Commons for Scottish Scones and Tea and fellowship.

As the evening ends—following the three-fold example in *Luke 6:12-19*, where Jesus first came to God **in prayer**, then gathered his disciples together **in community**, and then went out **to do ministry**—we shall be sent back out into the world, to serve as each of us is called:

#### Thursday, May 13, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Westminster Presbyterian Church, in the Sanctuary  
1200 Marquette Avenue, Minneapolis  
Information: 612.332.3421 or [kfisher@wpc-mpls.org](mailto:kfisher@wpc-mpls.org).

### The Dead Sea Scrolls:

#### “Words that Changed the World”

Experience this rare opportunity to see one of the greatest archaeological finds of the twentieth century—The Dead Sea Scrolls, which include the earliest known manuscripts of many Old Testament passages: e.g., from **Psalm 8**,

*“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...?”*

See also artifacts that give a glimpse into life in Israel during the Second Temple Period, plus the most recent scientific interpretations of these remarkable documents from scholars around the world.

At the end of the exhibit you’ll find displayed original pages from The Saint John’s Bible. Here—in the same place—selections from the world’s oldest and newest hand-crafted Bibles:

#### Opens Friday, March 12 to October 24

The Science Museum of Minnesota  
120 West Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul

For information: [www.smm.org](http://www.smm.org) or 651/800.221.9444.  
also:

**Desire and Deliverance: Drama in the Old Testament**

Designed to coincide with the Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit, this is a selection of Biblical prints and drawings.

Since the Renaissance, artists have found inspiration in the Christian Old Testament/Hebrew Bible, which provided action-packed narratives teeming with heroism, seduction, compassion, and murder. Artists depicted and explored the stories of Noah, Moses, Abraham, David, Esther, Jonah, and more:

**Opens Saturday, March 6 to September 12**

Minneapolis Institute of Art

2400 Third Avenue South, Minneapolis

For information: [www.artsmia.org](http://www.artsmia.org) or 612.870.3131 or 800.642.2787.

**Holy Saturday Quiet Worship**

Holy Saturday is a quiet day, a day of waiting. Maundy Thursday and Good Friday are past. It is not a dark day for us—as it must have been on that first Saturday—for we know the rest of the story, that Easter morning will come. For us it can be a day of quiet but joyful anticipation.

This Prayer is a time to be quiet and to be present to God's love—in the stillness and the beauty of the Chapel—as we wait in anticipation:

**Saturday, April 3, 9:00-10:00 a.m.**

also:

**Brian McLaren: "A New Kind of Christianity"**

The **Westminster Town Hall Forum** presents Brian McLaren, an author, preacher, and a leading voice in the emergent church movement.

He is the founding pastor at Cedar Ridge Community Church, a nondenominational church in Spencerville, MD. His books include *A New Kind of Christian*, *Generous Orthodoxy*, *Everything Must Change*, and his latest, *A New Kind of Christianity*. Reception afterwards:

**Thursday, April 15, 12:00-1:00 p.m.**

Westminster Presbyterian Church, in the Sanctuary

1200 Marquette Avenue, Minneapolis

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

**A Weekend Retreat: "Open to the Mystery"**

Christos' founder, Joann Nesser, will lead a directed, silent retreat on moving beyond images of God and Jesus that may no longer fit our prayerful experience—so that we can embrace a fuller understanding of the mystery of God.

**Friday evening, April 30 to Sun., May 2, at 1:00 p.m.**

Sponsored by Christos Center, held at:

the new St. John's Abbey Guesthouse, Collegetown

For information or registration for both Opportunities:

651-653-8207 or [www.christoscenter.org](http://www.christoscenter.org).

**Praying with the Mystics****Sponsored by the Shalem Institute for Spiritual**

**Formation**, this series offers the opportunity to immerse ourselves in the stories of ordinary men and women who led extraordinary, God-gifted lives. Learn what they have to teach us today and how their lives can still inspire and influence us:

- April 6, **Mary Oliver**, an American poet known for her poignant observances of the natural world and her affinity for solitude

- May 4, **Ignatius of Loyola**, the founder of the Society of Jesus and known for his spiritual exercise and work on discernment

- June 1, **Thérèse of Lisieux**, a young Carmelite sister known for practicing a simple life

**1st Tuesdays of each month, 7:30-9:00 p.m.**

Gatherings are at various churches in the Greater Washington, D.C., area. For monthly locations and additional details: [chris@shalem.org](mailto:chris@shalem.org) or [www.shalem.org](http://www.shalem.org) and click on "Short Programs."

also:

**Open Page Writing Series: Standing at the Threshold**

Wisdom Ways invites you to explore the thresholds of your life—as places of great vitality and exchange, where new greets old, where outside meets inside, where stranger crosses over to become friend.

Open Page writing sessions are invitations to the creative spirit, opportunities to correspond with "the still, small voice within." No writing experience is required; only an empty page and an open heart and mind.

Prompted by poetry, stories, teachings from world religions, visual images and physical objects, participants will reflect on the meaning of your own lives and the story of

**"... one more piece ..."**

"The misery here is quite terrible; and, yet, late at night when the day has slunk away into the depths behind me, I often walk with a spring in my step along the barbed wire.

And then time and again, a feeling soars straight from my heart—(I can't help it, that's just the way it is)—like some elementary force—the feeling that life is glorious and magnificent, and that one day we shall be building a whole new world.

Against every new outrage and every fresh horror, we shall put up one more piece of love and goodness, drawing strength from within ourselves. We may suffer, but we must not succumb . . ."

Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*

your longings, discoveries and personal experiences:

**Thursdays, April 13, 20, 27, May 4, 6:30-9:00 p.m.**

also:

**Elder Spirituality Legacies:  
the footprints we leave behind**

Wisdom Ways also invites you to experience Legacy Writing, crafting some of the footprints we leave behind.

Creating what some call a "spiritual or ethical will," you will begin crafting your legacy in a "legacy writing circle," connecting to your roots and to your life's purpose, while transmitting your life's-lessons to future generations.

Concrete legacy writing tools will help you discover and reclaim the legacies of your ancestors, clarify your identity and values, tell your stories, and translate your hard-earned wisdom into blessings for those you love.

No previous writing experience necessary:

**Thursday-Saturday, April 15-17, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.**

Wisdom Ways Center for Spirituality

Carondelet Center, 1890 Randolph Avenue, Saint Paul

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

**“From Success to Significance to Surrender:**

**Steps on the Journey to Intimacy with God”**

This series is for anyone in transition with work, relationships, or lifestyle. It is for those who may feel disoriented, disillusioned, or disengaged. It is for those who desire-

- Movement beyond traditional **success** as a way to define themselves
- **Significance**, in which their skills, resources and relationships can be used to serve others
- **Surrender**, allowing God to surprise them with a life of

**"We can move beyond words in meditative journaling by becoming attentive to the Silence beneath our words, both as we write and as we read back to ourselves what we have written.**

**Where we feel our writing taking us into Silence, we simply go there, allowing ourselves to be in the Silence.**

**When we become aware of something stirring in the Silence, we record it, letting the Silence speak to the words."**

Francis Dorff, *Simply Soul Stirring*

meaning and purpose, that flows out of their own weakness, smallness, and limitations:

**Three Tuesdays, April 13, 20, May 4, 7:00-9:00 p.m. plus Saturday, May 15, 9:00-noon**

Loyola Spirituality Center, 389 North Oxford, St. Paul  
also:

**Contemplative Nature Retreat**

This week-end retreat provides ample time to rest and reconnect with nature, as well as time to reflect on how your relationship to the Divine is deepened through relationship to the natural world.

Participants will receive a Nature Retreat Workbook, will come together for morning and evening prayer services, for prayer yoga each morning, group discussions, and (optional) spiritual direction:

**Friday, May 21, after supper to**

**Sunday, May 23, after brunch,**

Offered by the Loyola Spirituality Center, held at: Villa Maria Center, Frontenac, MN

For information or registration: 651.641.0008 or [davidroth64@yahoo.com](mailto:davidroth64@yahoo.com).

**Centering Prayer and *Lectio Divina* Retreat**

Be guided on a journey inward toward a deeper relationship with God, using two ancient spiritual practices:

Centering Prayer and *Lectio Divina*, a way to read Scripture with the heart as well as the mind. Experience a rhythm of Centering Prayer, *Lectio Divina*, and prayer with the monastic community:

**Fri., Apr. 16, at 7:00 p.m.—Sun., Apr. 18, at 1:00 p.m.**

The Benedictine Center, St. Paul's Monastery, St. Paul

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

**“Finding Beauty in a Broken World”**

Terry Tempest Williams, will help us see ourselves anew as humans embedded in sacred community—a community in need of healing, restoration and transformation. She will explore the theme of “Finding Beauty in a Broken World,” which is also the title of her most recent book.

For Terry, “one wild word”—mosaic—set her off on a pilgrimage. First to the studios of restorative artists in Ravenna, Italy; then to a field season with researchers in a Utah prairie dog community. And ultimately, to Rugerero, Rwanda, working as a “barefoot artist” with survivors to create a genocide memorial.

Along the way, Williams came to believe that “**The gift of an attentive life** is the ability to recognize patterns and find our way toward a unity built on empathy,” and that “**Finding beauty** in a broken world becomes more than the art of assemblage. . . . It is the

work of a daring contemplation that inspires action”:

**Tuesday, April 20, 7:30-9:00 p.m.**

Sponsored by Hamline University’s Wesley Center for Spirituality, Service, and Social Justice, held at:

Hamline United Methodist Church  
1514 Englewood Avenue, Saint Paul

For information: 651.523.2878 or  
www.hamline.edu/wesleycenter.

### **Benedictine Spirituality for Everyday Life**

Discover why men and women through the centuries find the spirituality of The Rule of St. Benedict a source of support and strength in everyday life:

**Wednesday, April 21, 7:00-9:00 p.m.**

also:

### **Still Full of Sap, Still Green! The Spirituality of Aging**

Explore ways in which our relationship with a loving God can grow deeper, richer and more fruitful as we advance in age and wisdom:

**Wednesday, April 28, 6:30-8:30 p.m.**

Saint Benedict’s Monastery, in the Spirituality Center  
104 Chapel Lane, St. Joseph

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

### **Touching Body & Soul:**

#### **a Grace-Full Labyrinth Experience**

Using powerful world music, drums and silence, we 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:

**Friday-Saturday, April 23-24, 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.**

Sponsored by Sacred Ground, held at:

St. Edward the Confessor Church  
865 Ferndale Road North, Wayzata

For information or registration: 651.696.2798 or  
www.sacredgroundspirit.org.

### **Meditation & Visionary Seeing in the Christian Tradition, with the Rev. Dr. Cynthia Bourgeault**

*What are the core concepts of Christian mystical heritage?*

*How can you develop a contemplative practice?*

Cynthia Bourgeault's teachings draw from Scripture, old texts, tradition and great teachers from past and present.

Deeply committed to the Christian contemplative path, she will lead us in an exploration of the core concepts of our Christian mystical heritage and of their relevance for contemplative spiritual practice today.

She will help us understand Jesus as a world teacher who belongs to the collective spiritual heritage of humanity. And she will provide practical tools that engage the

seeker in learning "how to seek," not "what to seek":

**Friday, April 23, 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.:**

"Thomas Merton & the Christian Contemplative Tradition"

**Saturday, April 24, 9:00 a.m. to noon:**

"Jesus as Visionary"

**Saturday, 1:30 to 3:00 p.m.:**

"Practicing Centering Prayer"

**Sunday, 10:00 to 11:00 a.m.:**

Morning Worship, the Rev. Dr. Bourgeault preaching

**Sunday, 11:15 a.m. to noon:**

"Christian Contemplatives as Visionaries and Prophets"

Also, in preparation for Cynthia's visit:

**Three Wednesdays, April 7, 14, 21, 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.:**

"A book study of Dr. Bourgeault's *The Wisdom of Jesus*, led by Sister Virginia Matter."

The House of Hope Presbyterian Church  
797 Summit Avenue, St. Paul

For information: www.hohchurch.org or 651.227.6311.

### **Soul Café (version 2.0)**

Many will remember with warm appreciation, "*Soul Café, A Meeting of Jazz, Poetry and Spirit*," which met for a number of years in the Art Gallery at Hennepin Avenue Methodist, on Third Sunday evenings.

Now, they're back as **Soul Café (version 2.0)**.

Think: more musicians. Think: original music. Think: poetry written expressly for us by local poets. Still jazz. Still poetry. Still spirit:

**Sunday, April 25, 7:00-8:00 p.m.**

Hennepin Avenue United Methodist Church,  
in the Art Gallery

511 Groveland Avenue, Minneapolis

For information: bodysoul@earthlink.net.

### **Holy Island in Minneapolis**

. . . which meets on 2nd and 4th Tuesdays (April 13, 27, May 11, 25) will host this year's Retreat/Conference of the **Community of Aidan and Hilda**, with Russ Parker, author of *Healing Wounded History* and *Forgiveness is Healthy*.

The Community seeks "to cradle a 21st Century way of faith by following the examples of the Celtic saints . . . who were "some of the original evangelical, catholic, incarnational, charismatic, ecological, prayer-filled, poor-biased, social-justice Christians—just as so many of us now aspire to be":

Friday, June 4, to Sunday, June 6

Location and schedule are in process

For full details: 507.302.9160 or paul@aidantrust.org.



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**“Being Attentive to Life . . .”**



## Thin Places

### AFTERWORDS

The mother of the guest house hostess on Iona was nearing the end of her life and was terrified by the thought that she would soon be held accountable "for all of her sins." It seemed that as they heard this, all of those gathered around the breakfast table could feel their hearts silently going out to her.

It also seemed that none of those listening, at least consciously, carried this burden of having been taught repeatedly since childhood that God is a severe and judging God. And yet, in the conversation that followed, most felt that people they knew (and sometimes even themselves) were often reluctant to acknowledge (unlike this woman) that they were sinners.

One man said quite forcefully that we were wrong to think that way . . . that being a sinner didn't mean that we were "bad," . . . and that—theologically speaking—Jesus wouldn't have needed to come if people weren't sinners.

This produced silence.

And then one woman said more gently, "I don't know about that, but I understand Paul completely, and my heart goes out to him when he confesses, 'I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.' Too often, that's me. And it seems like it is almost always after-the-fact that I wake up and recognize that I have done what I ought not to have done . . . or failed to do what I could have done. . . ." her voice trailing off.

John Sinclair, in the meditation on Page 1 above, gratefully remembers and thanks his friend for having first encouraged him to seek to become more attentive to "the work of the day."

Perhaps, as we are able to do this—as we become more aware of what's happening around us, and within us—we will find that we can sometimes begin to get *before*-the-fact. And this may be one of the true blessings of trying to be more attentive, that we can sometimes notice when we start to go astray . . . or when there is an opportunity for us to become more loving. . . .