



Franciscan  
Spirituality Center

Dedicated to anyone seeking God, meaning and wholeness.

VOLUME 33 • NUMBER 2

SUMMER 2025

# *At the Center*

## IN THIS ISSUE:

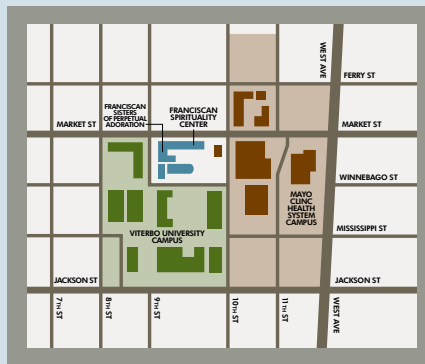
- Stories From the Southern Border
- The Sound of Bowls at Sunset
- From Shame to Grace: A 12-Step Retreat
- Photography Retreat
- The Sacred Path of the Elder and the Role of Longevity

Veterans and active duty service members receive a 15% discount off programs and retreats every day. Use code **MILITARY** when registering.



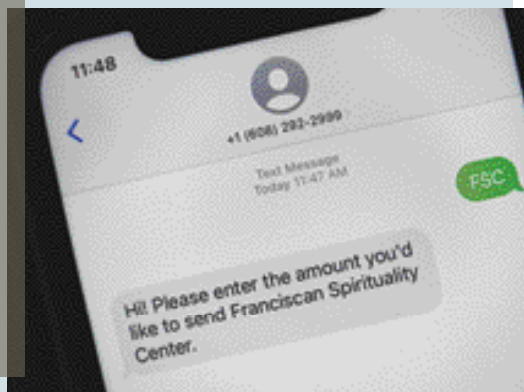
We welcome all who seek spiritual renewal, personal and professional growth, healing, community and connection.

The Franciscan Spirituality Center is located in the heart of scenic La Crosse, Wisconsin, sharing space with St. Rose Convent and next to Mayo Clinic Health System and Viterbo University. Guests may choose to stay in one of our 32 private bedrooms or three woodland hermitages. Other amenities include eight meeting rooms, a bookstore, a small library and accessible parking. The FSC is within walking distance of the Mississippi River, hiking trails and a vibrant downtown.



Your generous financial support helps sustain our mission. Here are ways to give:

- Drop off or mail a check to:  
Franciscan Spirituality Center,  
920 Market St., La Crosse, WI 54601
- Make a secure, online donation at  
[www.FSCenter.org/donate](http://www.FSCenter.org/donate)
- Text FSC to 608-292-2999 to make a gift through your mobile phone.
- Become a *Spirited Friends* monthly donor; call 608-791-5295 to learn more.



The Franciscan Spirituality Center respectfully acknowledges that our building occupies the unceded ancestral and traditional land of the Ho-Chunk people. As our staff works to better understand the impact of colonialism on Indigenous people, we seek opportunities for relationship-building, growth and healing.

*At the Center* newsletter is published four times a year on earth-friendly paper with a higher recycled content.

### Franciscan Spirituality Center

920 Market St., La Crosse, WI 54601  
608-791-5295  
[www.FSCenter.org](http://www.FSCenter.org) | [FSCenter@fspa.org](mailto:FSCenter@fspa.org)

### Identity

The Franciscan Spirituality Center is a sacred place that welcomes everyone. We are rooted in the Gospels and sponsored by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration.

### Mission

The Franciscan Spirituality Center is dedicated to supporting anyone in their search for God, meaning and wholeness.

We live this mission because we believe:

In each of us lives the Sacred.

We need each other to recognize and honor that part of ourselves.

Responding to spiritual hunger is necessary for growth, healing and peace.

As we grow in wholeness, we contribute to the healing of all creation.

### Core Values

In keeping with the tradition of our Franciscan founders, we hold these core values:

**Sacredness:** Believe that in every person and all creation lives the Sacred.

**Respect:** Acknowledge the dignity, diversity and worth of each person as a unique image of God.

**Community:** Through prayer, empathy and sharing, create a safe, peaceful place.

**Hospitality:** Welcome all with compassion, acceptance and celebration.

**Professionalism:** Commit to competence, quality, trust and personal spiritual development.

### What We Do

The Franciscan Spirituality Center guides and directs processes for prayer and offers personal presence to anyone on their sacred journey as co-creators of a just and peaceful world. The FSC offers individual and group spiritual direction, guided and preached retreats, daylong programs and events. Staff is available for off-site workshops, presentations and programs.

[facebook.com/FSCenterLaCrosse](https://facebook.com/FSCenterLaCrosse)

[instagram.com/franciscanspiritualitycenter](https://instagram.com/franciscanspiritualitycenter)

[twitter.com/fs\\_center](https://twitter.com/fs_center)

[youtube.com/@franciscanspiritualitycenter](https://youtube.com/@franciscanspiritualitycenter)

[atthecenterreflections.blogspot.com](https://atthecenterreflections.blogspot.com)





# New connections help us expand our community

One of the FSC's core values is *Community: Through prayer, empathy and sharing, we create a safe, peaceful place.* You'll see this value reflected in our welcome and hospitality; in our board members, staff and volunteers; and also in so many of our program and retreat offerings.

This summer, we are thrilled to welcome to our team an intern who will help us build on this core value. Leah will help us focus on the connection between mind, body and spirit, and work with FSC staff members to create new program ideas and opportunities.

Leah comes to us through the Wisconsin Area Health Education Centers' Community Health Internship Program (AHEC CHIP). We're grateful to partner with this organization, as well as the many other organizations that we continually collaborate with, dream with and where, together, we are able respond to the needs of the time. "Community" is very much alive and active here. Welcome, Leah, and we look forward to learning from you!

Peace and all good,

*Jean Pagliaro*

Jean Pagliaro, FSC Director



**My name is Leah Hawbaker, and I am excited to join the FSC as an intern this summer!** I grew up in Washburn, Wisconsin, and currently attend UW-La Crosse, studying biology and neuroscience with future plans of physician assistant school. With a passion for supporting others, I look forward to helping plan meaningful retreats, reaching out to the community and learning about different practices at the FSC. In my free time, I enjoy hiking, painting and spending time with my friends and family. I am excited to work with and learn from the FSC team for my first summer in La Crosse!



FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY  
CENTER STAFF



Steve Spilde  
Associate Director &  
Spiritual Director



Sarah Hennessey, FSPA  
Spiritual Director



Cathie Boerboom, RGS  
Spiritual Director



Karna Marks  
Spiritual Director



Hope Clements  
Director of Community  
Engagement



Laurie Swan  
Office Manager



Julie Helgerson  
Program & Retreat  
Coordinator



Stacey Kalas  
Communications &  
Marketing Coordinator



Kathy Holman  
Administrative Assistant  
& Receptionist



Marcia Bentley  
SDPP Associate



Barb Kruse  
Partner Spiritual Director



Chelle Belland  
Partner Spiritual Director



Alison Hendley  
Partner Spiritual Director



Katherine Krage  
Partner Spiritual Director

## FRANCISCAN SPIRITUALITY CENTER

# Board of Directors



**Joyce Heil** | Chairperson | Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration – Aging in Place

**Teresa Clark** | Vice Chairperson | Kwik Trip, Inc.

**Kristy Walz** | Secretary/Treasurer | Confluence Consulting

**Marlene De La Cruz-Guzmán** | Viterbo University

**Helen Elsbernd, FSPA** | Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

**Wade Hackbarth** | Western Technical College

**Catherine Kolkmeier** | La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium

**Jeffrey Lokken** | Mercer Advisors

**Karen Lueck, FSPA** | Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration

**Janie Morgan** | University of Wisconsin-La Crosse (retired)

**The Rev. Israel Mutema** | Emplify Health

**Brooke Newberry** | La Crosse Public Library

**The Rev. Nate Oldenkamp** | Mayo Clinic Health System

**Mark Thorn** | Altra Financial Advisors

**Bridget Todd-Robbins** | La Crosse County Human Services/School District of La Crosse

SAVE THE DATE: SEPTEMBER 22

# Celebrating 40 years!

We're so excited to invite you to our 40th Anniversary Celebration on Monday, September 22! Whether you've been with us from the start or just recently found our special space, we'd love for you to join us. This date was chosen to honor the dedication of the Franciscan Spirituality Center back in 1985 by Bishop John Paul. It was a moment that marked the beginning of an organization that continues to have a meaningful impact and presence in our community and beyond.

This year, we're thrilled that Bishop Emeritus William Patrick Callahan, OFM Conv., will visit us again for this milestone event. Our open house begins at 4:30 p.m. as we gather to celebrate and reflect on the amazing journey we've shared.

Registration for the event will open August 4, so be sure to save the date and keep an eye out for more details at [www.FSCenter.org](http://www.FSCenter.org).



*We can't wait to celebrate with you!*

## #ThrowbackThursday

Each week as we count down to the 40th Anniversary Celebration, we share a photo from our archives on our Facebook and Instagram pages. We'd love for you to follow along and comment with your memories.

 [www.facebook.com/FSCenterLaCrosse](http://www.facebook.com/FSCenterLaCrosse)

 [www.instagram.com/](http://www.instagram.com/)



## Bishop John Paul Dedicates Spirituality Center

### DEDICATION PROCLAMATION

I hereby proclaim that on the 22nd day of September 1985, this Franciscan Spirituality Center be dedicated to the Glory of God.

Let the word go forth that these halls shall henceforth reverberate with the peace and joy of St. Francis.

That these meeting rooms shall henceforth resound with a Christian concern for the poor in spirit who search for inner wholeness and peace.

That these adjacent chapels shall bestow strength, light and hope upon all who reflect within their sacred walls.

Let all the people of La Crosse and the surrounding area know that the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration invite them to join hands in peace and love in this hallowed place.

On this dedication day let us join St. Francis of Assisi in praising God for the beauty and loveliness of this Spirituality Center.

"O Lord Most High,  
May we give you all praise, all glory, all thanks,  
all honor, all blessings  
and all good things

So be it  
So be it  
Amen."

September 22, 1985



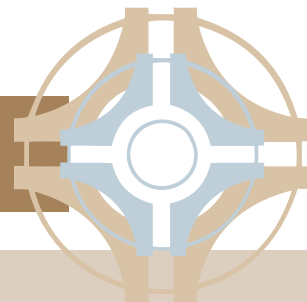
Bishop John Paul

## COMMUNITY QUILT PROJECT

There's still time to pick up a blank quilt square and embellish it for a community quilt that Sharon Berger, FSPA, is making to commemorate our anniversary. We've enjoyed seeing everyone's creativity so far. Stop in between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. You can work on your square here at the FSC or take it home and bring it back by June 1.







**A NOTE ABOUT ONLINE REGISTRATION AND PARTICIPATION: We offer a mix of in-person and virtual programs.**

If you register online, you will receive a confirmation email and receipt. If you do not receive this, please check your spam/junk folder or a secondary email address that you may have used. If it's not there, please call 608-791-5295 to verify that your registration was successfully completed.

**Before the program, you will receive a courtesy email with instructions and, if it's a virtual gathering, the Zoom link. If you have not received this link** within 24 hours of the program start, please call our office at 608-791-5295 or email [fscenar@fspa.org](mailto:fscenar@fspa.org). Our office closes at 5 p.m. Monday through Friday and typically is not staffed on weekends, so it is especially important to make sure you have your Zoom link prior to evening and weekend programs.

## WEEKLY GROUPS

### DEPRESSED ANONYMOUS (IN-PERSON)

**EVERY MONDAY • 5:30-6:30 p.m.**

**Investment:** Freewill offering

Registration is not required. Attend any or all sessions as your schedule permits.

This is a 12-step group for those dealing with depression to generate positive energies, form friendships and find support. If you are interested in participating, please call Gayle at 608-406-7990.



### OPEN ART SPACE (IN-PERSON)

**EVERY TUESDAY • 5-7 p.m.**

**Investment:** Freewill offering

Registration is not required. Attend any or all sessions as your schedule permits.

Have you struggled to dedicate time for creative expression? Ready to break open your new art or crafting supplies, or finally finish that project you started a while ago? We invite you to work on your art in a community setting. Be connected and inspired by the support of others, or simply use the space to work quietly on your own. You may wish to share supplies and ideas. This is a safe, nonjudgmental environment; all skill levels and mediums are welcome. **We'll periodically add themed sessions and instructional workshops during this time. Keep an eye on our Facebook page for updates.**



## MENTAL HEALTH WELLNESS, CONNECTION AND HOPE SUPPORT GROUP (IN-PERSON)



**EVERY THURSDAY • 4-5:30 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Therese Ann Roellich

**Investment:** Free

Registration is not required. Attend any or all sessions as your schedule permits.

For more information, please call Therese at 608-386-2965 or email [therese.recovery.resources@gmail.com](mailto:therese.recovery.resources@gmail.com).

This group is for anyone seeking mental health wellness, connection and hope. We gather weekly to listen to, and learn from, each other. We'll also share educational information about mental health. This group is based on the premise that it is a safe space, where what is shared is considered confidential. No one is required to speak or share their story. You can simply choose to listen if that feels best.

**Therese Ann Roellich** is the facilitator of the group, along with other support people. Therese is trained as a Peer Support Specialist with the state of Wisconsin. She has personal lived experience, being in recovery with both mental health conditions and substance-use addiction. Therese has spent many years advocating for those living with addictions or mental health conditions, and experiencing homelessness.



### CANTICLE OF THE CREATURES

We have planned several programs throughout the year in conjunction with FSPA's celebration of the 800th anniversary of St. Francis' "Canticale of the Creatures."

We've highlighted them with this logo. Find more events at [fspa.org/centenary](http://fspa.org/centenary).



# 2025 Programs and Retreats *continued.*

## MONTHLY PROGRAMS

### OPEN WRITING CIRCLE (IN-PERSON)

**JUNE 2, JULY 7, AUGUST 4** • First Monday of the month, 6-8 p.m.

**Investment:** Freewill offering

Registration is not required. Attend any or all sessions.

Do you love to write? All are welcome to meet with others who enjoy writing in an atmosphere of respect and acceptance. Based on Natalie Goldberg's basic principles of writing practice, we will write and listen. No critiques, no judgment. Sharing what you write is always optional. This is not a class and not about learning "how to write." The goal is to set free the writer within you through simply practicing writing. No experience is necessary; simply bring an open mind, a fast-writing pen and a plain spiral notebook. Feel free to bring your own snack and/or beverage.



### COMMUNITY FOR CHRISTIAN MEDITATION (IN-PERSON)



**JUNE 4, 18; JULY 2, 16; AUGUST 6, 20**

First and third Wednesday of the month, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

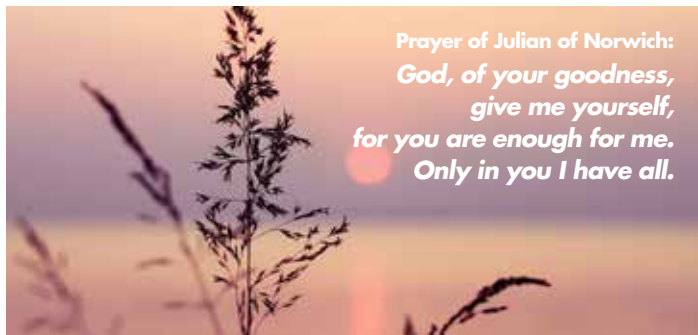
**Facilitator:** Robert Lynn

**Investment:** Suggested donation of \$3 benefits the FSC

Registration is not necessary; drop-ins are welcome.

Christianity has a deep tradition of silent prayer in the form of contemplation or meditation. This community setting will practice Christian meditation in the tradition of John Main, OSB, learning to quiet the mind and open one's heart to divine presence. If you are new to meditation, this is a gentle place to start. If you have an established meditation practice, deepen your practice by sharing it in community. We honor the variety of traditions and streams of meditation practice that you might use. Followers of Thomas Merton will find a home here.

**Robert Lynn** is a graduate of Wartburg Seminary with additional studies at Nashotah House. He is a lay-ordainee of Ryumonji Monastery and longtime meditation student of Santikaro Upasaka. Robert is a postulant in the Benedictine Oblates and serves as guest homilist at various regional churches. He has been practicing meditation individually and in a variety of group settings for several years.



*Prayer of Julian of Norwich:  
God, of your goodness,  
give me yourself,  
for you are enough for me.  
Only in you I have all.*



Join us for an in-person session at the La Crosse Public Library, Monday, May 19, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

### MEDITATION FOR EMOTIONAL HEALTH (ZOOM)



**JUNE 5, JULY 3, AUGUST 7**

First Thursday of the month, 6:30-7:30 p.m.

**Facilitator:** Sarah Hennessey, FSPA

**Investment:** Freewill offering (payable online)

**Registration deadline:** June 4/July 2/August 6

Meditation is proven to reduce stress and promote relaxation. All are welcome to join us for a time of rejuvenation. We'll start with a guided meditation that includes relaxed breathing, a body scan and a visualization. Afterward, we will have a brief discussion. Gatherings are on the first Thursday of the month through videoconferencing; you are invited to attend any or all sessions as your schedule permits.

**Sarah Hennessey, FSPA**, is a spiritual director on staff at the FSC.

### LISTENING TOGETHER:

#### A MONTHLY GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP (IN-PERSON)

**JUNE 9, JULY 14, AUGUST 11**

Second Monday of the month, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

**Facilitators:** Laurie Swan and Julie Helgerson

**Investment:** Free

Registration is not required. Attend any or all sessions.

This group provides a safe place for those who are experiencing grief and the loss of a loved one to share their stories. Grieving comes with a variety of emotions that may arise with the immediate loss of a loved one or can even surface years later. You'll have an opportunity to process your unique experience while receiving the comfort and compassion of others who understand.

**Laurie Swan** has journeyed through her own grief experiences and is passionate about providing space for others to come together in their own grief process. She is the FSC's office manager.

**Julie Connelly** is a Certified Grief Educator through David Kessler and a graduate of the FSC's Spiritual Direction Preparation Program. She is the FSC's program and retreat coordinator.



**ART AS PRAYER (IN-PERSON AND ZOOM)**



**JUNE 16, JULY 21, AUGUST 18**

Third Monday of the month, 6-7:30 p.m.

**Instructor:** Mary Thompson

**Investment:** \$15 per session

**Registration deadline:** June 13/  
July 18/August 15

Artistic expression offers the opportunity for spiritual growth, transformation and healing. This monthly open watercolor studio is a chance to play and learn new techniques without worrying about perfection or finished product. Meet new friends and practice listening to your heart as you paint.

You are invited to attend any or all sessions. Participants ages 8-16 may attend for free with a paid adult.

*"I pray to the birds because I believe they will carry the messages of my heart upward. I pray to them because I believe in their existence, the way their songs begin and end each day—the invocations and benedictions of the Earth. I pray to the birds because they remind me of what I love rather than what I fear. And at the end of my prayers, they teach me how to listen."*

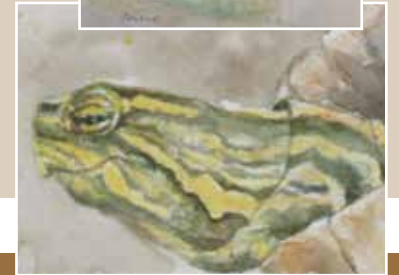
— Terry Tempest Williams

Sun-soaked summer squash; rosy, red strawberries and radiant peonies; the cool green hues of the Earth. And birds. Lovely, colorful friends of the sky. With reverence for nature and the opportunity to explore through our senses, our spiritual practice this summer will involve creating a personal art journal. Devoting time to a ritual of drawing, painting and journaling awakens the creative spirit and nourishes the relationship with our Divine Companion. In class, we will be working from life. Some objects will be provided (old birds' nests, feathers, flowers, etc.), but feel free to gather your own. Those joining us on Zoom will need to. For working outside, consider using an old backpack or canvas bag to store your materials. You'll be able to grab it and go when the spirit calls you. Be open to exploring mixed mediums.

**NOTE:** You'll need a multimedia art book, such as Canson XL Mix Media Art Book (spiral-bound, 7-by-10 or 9-by-12 inches) or Canson Mixed Media Artist Series (spiral-bound, 5.5-by-8.5 inches)

**ADDITIONAL SUPPLIES:** pencils, drawing pens, colored pencils, pastels, brushes, watercolor paint, water bucket or container with lid, rags or paper towels. (Supplies are provided for in-person participants.)

**Mary Thompson** has a degree in fine arts and a master's degree in education, having delighted in the creative arts since her first box of crayons. Besides teaching art to all ages, Mary has supported the healing of women in recovery through the practice of art therapy. She also has been an affiliate of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration for more than a decade.



**PROGRAMS AND RETREATS**

**BLESSED: CREATIVE EXPRESSION AND REFLECTION WITH ZENTANGLE (IN-PERSON AND ZOOM)**



**JUNE 7 • Saturday, 9 a.m.-noon**

**Presenter:** Christine Isham

**Investment:** \$40, with option to buy supplies upon arrival for additional \$8



Using simple and repetitive strokes, The Zentangle Method is a creative and enjoyable way to focus, calm the mind and cultivate compassion for oneself and others while creating beautiful abstract art. Many people have found that creating art has a positive impact on their mental health. A regular practice of creating art relieves stress, increases confidence and supports general mental well-being. During this workshop, we will embellish the word "BLESSED" and tangle ribbons with Zentangle patterns. In his "Canticle of the Creatures," St. Francis writes: "Blessed are those who endure in peace." Spend a peaceful morning discovering your inner artist—no previous art experience is necessary.

**A NOTE ABOUT SUPPLIES:**

**IN-PERSON:** Upon arrival, you may purchase pre-printed mixed media paper, three Sakura Micron pens, graphite pencil, tortillon/smudger at the FSC for an additional \$8. Colored pencils will be available during class but not included in purchased supplies.

**ZOOM:** On your own, you will need to purchase mixed media paper (1 8.5-by-11-inch piece), 01 Black Sakura Micron pen, 01 Sepia Sakura Micron pen, 05 Dk Grey Sakura Micron pen, graphite pencil, tortillon/smudger. PDF for printing outline will be provided prior to class. Optional: colored pencils.







## 2025 Programs and Retreats *continued.*

### STORIES FROM THE SOUTHERN BORDER (ZOOM)



**JUNE 12 • Thursday, 5:30-7 p.m.**

**Presenters:** Kennedy Cortes and Julie Helgerson

**Investment:** Freewill donations appreciated; a portion will go to Kino Border Initiative

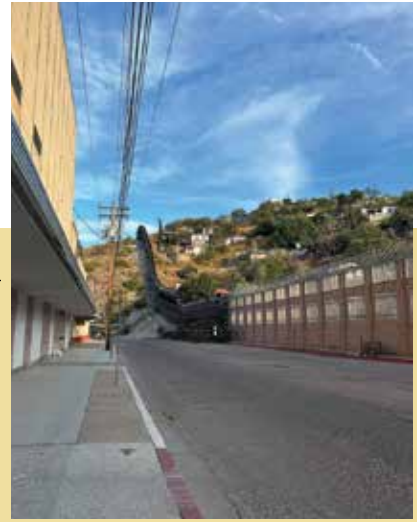
**Registration deadline:** June 9

Do you feel called to learn more about the experiences of our immigrant brothers and sisters? Kennedy Cortes, FSPA communications associate; Julie Helgerson, FSC program and retreat coordinator; and four women spiritually and professionally connected to Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration spent nine days at the U.S.-Mexico border to better understand the experiences of families seeking asylum and others migrating into the United States. They spoke with migrants, aid workers, Border Patrol agents, ranchers and environmentalists—all with different and very nuanced views on immigration. Kennedy and Julie will share their immigration immersion experience and share ways you can become an advocate for people on the move.

**Kennedy Cortes** is a

communications associate with Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and a 2023 graduate of the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Throughout her time with FSPA, Kennedy has been involved in initiatives related to immigration, using storytelling and communication to highlight the experiences of families seeking a better future. She is passionate about raising awareness and connecting with others through her work.

**Julie Helgerson** is the program and retreat coordinator at the Franciscan Spirituality Center, a graduate of the Spiritual Direction Preparation Program and a Certified Grief Educator. More recently, Julie had an opportunity to participate in and share initiatives related to immigration. Julie is deeply committed to advocating for peace and justice, especially for those seeking a safer and more just world.



### NATURE IMMERSION IN LOVE'S CREATION (IN-PERSON)



**JUNE 14 • Saturday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.**

**Presenter:** Shannon Gorres

**Investment:** \$95, includes lunch

**Registration deadline:** June 2

**Note:** This retreat will begin at the Franciscan Spirituality Center at 9 a.m., and we then will travel as a group to the FSC-managed hermitages at St. Joseph Ridge.



Creation is an outpouring of divine love. A foundational source of our healing and wholeness, nature immersion is a fundamental way we can experience Emmanuel: God with us. We will expand our embodied awareness of our spirituality and sacred interbeing with the practices of forest therapy, breathwork and gentle body movement. These include guided meditations, individual quiet time, song and group reflections. This retreat is nonjudgmental, inclusive and trauma informed; you can adjust each activity to your needs. This daylong retreat is ideal for anyone who needs to de-stress and re-center. Our bodies house both stifling stress and a deep knowing of the path forward. By placing our collective bodies back in the heart of creation, we invite the blessing of the Comforter, the ground of I Am. This gathering of nature-loving souls will steep our hearts in the container of holy peace.

**Shannon Gorres, MDiv, MA**, is a spiritual director, meditative yoga instructor and nature therapy guide on Kanza lands (Kansas). Along with her spouse and child, she shares sacred life with 20 acres of plants and animals. Her childhood religious roots are deeply Catholic. At 33, she was ordained by the United Church of Christ and is now ordained in the Sufi Ruhaniat International. She companions diverse people through pain and disconnection into an integrative and loving relationship with themselves and the Divine. She engages embodied spiritual practices, nervous system science, trauma-healing techniques, imaginal and nature elements. Learn more at [www.DivineNatureTherapy.com](http://www.DivineNatureTherapy.com).

### RICHARD ROHR BOOK DISCUSSION (ZOOM)



**JUNE 19 • Thursday, 6-7:30 p.m.**

**Facilitator:** Karna Marks

**Investment:** \$10

**Registration deadline:** June 9

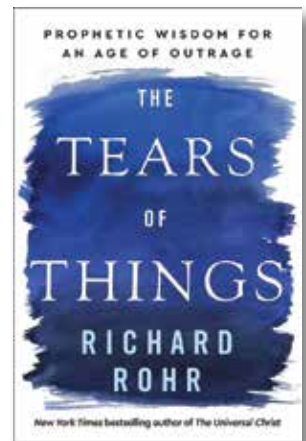
**NOTE:** Please read the book in advance of the program.

You can purchase a copy from our Sophia Bookstore.

Join us for an inspiring discussion about Richard Rohr's new book, "The Tears of Things: Prophetic Wisdom for an Age of Outrage." Rohr is a globally recognized Franciscan friar, ecumenical teacher, author and founder of the Center for Action and Contemplation, an educational nonprofit based in New Mexico.

From [thetearsofthings.com](http://thetearsofthings.com): "For more than 50 years, Franciscan Friar Richard Rohr has illuminated the spiritual path with his teachings on incarnational mysticism, nondual consciousness and contemplation—always with a deep commitment to transforming the world through love and justice. In his first major work since 'The Universal Christ,' he offers a wholehearted and hope-filled model for the world today, grounded in the timeless wisdom of the Hebrew prophets. Drawing from his own journey through anger, sadness and into love, Rohr offers a deeply personal and universal message. Seamlessly weaving ancient wisdom with modern insight, this book invites readers to integrate action and contemplation in a vibrant and compassionate tradition of contemplative Christianity."

**Karna Marks** is a spiritual director on staff at the FSC.





## WOMEN'S SUMMER SOLSTICE RETREAT (IN-PERSON)

**JUNE 19-22** • Thursday, 3-9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, 9 a.m.-noon

**Presenter:** Heather Henry



### Investment:

- **OVERNIGHT:** \$375, includes private bedroom and all meals
- **COMMUTER:** \$225, includes dinner on Thursday, lunch on Friday and Saturday

We are able to offer discounted rates of \$263 (overnight) and \$179 (commuter) to anyone who would like financial help to attend. Please enter the code SOLSTICE30 when you register online or call 608-791-5295.

**Registration deadline:** June 9



This retreat from our busy, daily routines is an opportunity to stop and smell the roses, meeting life where it is at this moment. We'll celebrate the season of light and honor the seasonal shift by recognizing and receiving summer's abundant gifts with gratitude. Spend precious time with the wise woman inside of you. This is the time to check in with yourself and one another to make sure we are practicing, in the light, what was mined from the dark. We will listen compassionately to our body's language and communication, responding tenderly. Through gentle movement and postures, breath, meditation and sacred sound—with Ayurvedic wisdom woven

throughout—we will create a healing opportunity for ourselves and our world. Return home effervescent, with a renewed, compassionate relationship with your body, yourself and your life.

**Heather Henry** is dedicated to sharing grace, joy and wisdom through yoga and Ayurveda, and has been teaching heart-led yoga for more than 25 years. She looks toward nature, as Divine expression, to connect to the rhythms that bring balance to our lives. Honoring each person's unique path and body, she encourages deep internal communication to be expressed and attended to. She supports women inhabiting their whole body while taking responsibility for and designing their lives.

## GROUPS THAT MEET AT THE FSC (IN-PERSON)

**Saturday Morning Men's Group** meets to discuss a current book related to spirituality from 9-11 a.m. on the third Saturday of the month. For more information, please call Joe Bodnar at 608-461-1836.

**Conversations That Matter** is a men's group that provides the opportunity to dialogue with other men on issues that matter in their lives. This group meets from 7-9 p.m. on the first and third Thursday of the month and 6-8 p.m. on the second and fourth Tuesday of the month. For more information, please call 608-791-5295.



## SUMMER SOLSTICE LABYRINTH WALK (IN-PERSON)

**JUNE 20** • Friday, open between 4 and 7 p.m.

**Facilitators:** FSC staff

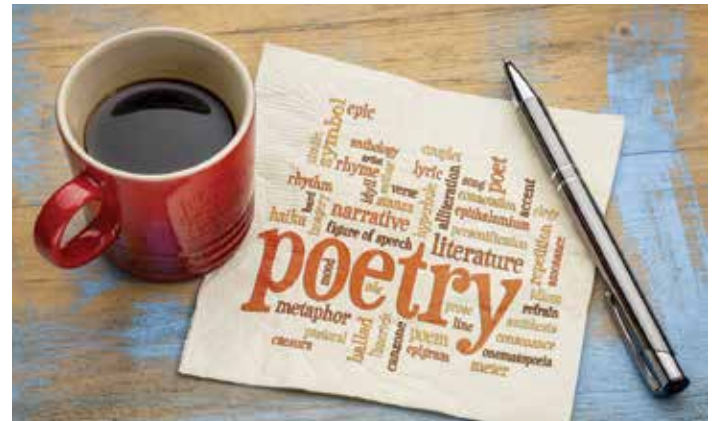
**Investment:** Freewill offering

Registration is not required but appreciated.



The summer solstice marks the official start of astronomical summer and is the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere. On this day of abundance, light and renewal, we invite you to walk our indoor labyrinth. People of all faith traditions and spiritual backgrounds (or none) are welcome. A labyrinth is a single path that has been used as a walking meditation for prayer and reflection since ancient times. For many, it is symbolic of a pilgrimage and can help bring about clarity, peace and healing. Our canvas labyrinth is designed in the pattern of the cathedral labyrinth in Chartres, France, which dates back to the 1200s. This is a silent, self-guided practice suitable for older teens and adults.

**NOTE:** If you would like to bring younger children to experience the labyrinth, we ask that you visit between 6:30 and 7 p.m. A brief instruction is available for those new to the labyrinth.



## POETRY CAFE (ZOOM)

**JUNE 23** • Monday, 6:30-8 p.m.

**Facilitator:** Sarah Hennessey, FSPA

**Investment:** \$5

**Registration deadline:** June 20

Bring your favorite poetry, either an original composition or a poem from another author, for a time of sharing and reflection. After a time of introductions and setting the scene, we each will share the poem we have chosen. After some silence, the rest of the group will identify words that they really liked in the poem and other observations. All poetry lovers are invited to gather for this virtual evening of words and community.

**Sarah Hennessey, FSPA**, is a spiritual director on staff at the FSC.



Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for more information about these upcoming programs and events.



## 2025 Programs and Retreats *continued.*

### THE SOUND OF BOWLS AT SUNSET (IN-PERSON)

**JUNE 26** • Thursday, 7-8 p.m.

**Presenter:** Joan Filla

**Investment:** Suggested donation of \$10 (payable upon arrival)

**Registration deadline:** June 24

**Location note:** This event takes place outdoors, near the FSC's hermitages at St. Joseph Ridge, about 11 miles east of La Crosse (W2658 State Hwy. 33 Trunk, La Crosse, WI 54601). Please note, pets are not allowed on the property.



The beauty and deeply relaxing sounds of Tibetan singing bowls are especially enjoyable outdoors! Those familiar with the FSC will remember Tom Roberts starting this tradition; now Joan Filla continues it.

All are invited to this special evening at St. Joseph Ridge to listen to the singing bowls as

the sun sets. Bring a chair or a blanket, and prepare to be opened to deep relaxation and meditation in the presence of ageless bell sounds.

**Joan Filla, M.D.**, is a local physician who was introduced to Tibetan singing bowls while recovering from the trauma of her past. Singing bowls and meditation became an integral part of her healing journey, and she hopes to share these powerful tools with others.

### SINGING BOWLS MEDITATION (IN-PERSON)

**JULY 1** • Tuesday, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

**Presenter:** Joan Filla

**Investment:** Suggested donation of \$10 (payable at the door or online)

Registration is appreciated; drop-ins are welcome.

Tibetan singing bowls produce sounds that invite deep states of relaxation, enhancing the ability to meditate and enter expanded states of consciousness. The sounds and vibrations can create a sense of grounding that facilitates a connection to the deepest parts

of our being. Join us for an evening of exploration and renewal in the presence of ageless bell sounds. You are invited to wear comfortable clothes, as you will be able to sit or lie on the floor as you prefer. Questions and hands-on experience with the bowls will be offered at the end of the session.

**Joan Filla, M.D.**, is a local physician who was introduced to Tibetan singing bowls while recovering from the trauma of her past. Singing bowls and meditation became an integral part of her healing journey, and she hopes to share these powerful tools with others.



### JOURNEY INTO THE WOODS WITH CELTIC WISDOM (IN-PERSON)

**JUNE 28** • Saturday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**Presenter:** Char Peterson

**Investment:** \$95 includes lunch and supplies.

*Add a night at the Franciscan Spirituality Center before or after the program for an additional \$75!*

**Registration deadline:** June 23

**Location note:** The retreat takes place at DragonFly Connection: Respite-Renewal-Retreat (4 miles south of Stoddard).

Limited to 10 participants.

Join us for a journey of exploration and connection to the earth. This nature-immersion retreat will draw on the wisdom found within the natural world and within Celtic spirituality. DragonFly Connections is home to a seven-circuit Labyrinth of Connection and offers many acres to wander, sit under a tree or watch the river flow. The day will include a forest bathing walk, guided meditations, creative expression and time to share and hear the wisdom of others. This nature-immersion experience will take place rain or shine.

**NOTE:** For those who have attended a Journey Into the Woods retreat in the past, this one will follow a similar structure, but the content and individual experience will be different.

**Char Peterson** is a lifelong learner of a variety of healing modalities that encourage the recovery of our sense of the sacred in all of creation. She is a retired hospice chaplain and has a master's degree in theology and a master's level Certificate of Pastoral Ministry from St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minnesota.





**FROM SHAME TO GRACE: A 12-STEP RETREAT (IN-PERSON)**



**JULY 18-20** • Friday, 6 p.m.–Sunday, noon

**Presenter:** Brian Singer-Towns



**Investment:** This retreat would typically cost \$235, but thanks to the Norman L. Gillette Sr. Scholarship Fund, we can offer it for just \$75 per person.

**Registration deadline:** July 7

How do we apply the 12 Steps to our lives during a time when the entire world seems upside down? As recovering people, we are on a spiritual journey. Our programs have been our lifeline in difficult times, helping us move from the shame of addiction to the graced lives we live in recovery. Join with fellow travelers as we share our experience, strength and hope as well as practical strategies for maintaining our recovery. This retreat is for adults who are members of a 12-Step Fellowship and active in their recovery.

If cost is a barrier to attending, please call 608-791-5295 and ask to speak to our office manager about further confidential assistance.

**Brian Singer-Towns** is a retired ecclesial minister, author and presenter, and certified spiritual director with 20 years of 12-Step recovery. He lives with his wife in Winona, Minnesota.

**HOW TO REGISTER**

**HOW TO REGISTER:** Go online to [www.FSCenter.org](http://www.FSCenter.org). Payment for most events is due at the time of registration. To pay a portion now and the balance two weeks prior to the event, please register by phone at 608-791-5295.

**DEPOSITS:** If indicated, the deposit is due at the time of registration and will be applied to the total fee. The balance is due two weeks before the start of the event.

**REFUND POLICY:** If you cancel at least 48 hours before the start time of the event, we will refund your payment. Deposits are not refundable.

**FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE:** If you would like to attend a program but cannot manage the entire investment, please call Laurie Swan, FSC office manager, at 608-791-5279. We are committed to serving all on their spiritual journey and will hold your request in confidence.

**ABUNDANCE AND GRACE FOR ALL SEASONS: A YEARLONG COURAGE & RENEWAL® SERIES (IN-PERSON)**

**THEME:** *Exploring the grace within holding the ordinary paradoxes in our lives.*

**AUGUST 1-2** • Friday, 7-9 p.m. and Saturday, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

**Presenters:** Mary Louise Peters and Amy Christianson



**Investment**

(per weekend retreat):

- **OVERNIGHT:** \$190, includes private bedroom, breakfast and lunch on Saturday
- **COMMUTER:** \$110, includes lunch on Saturday

**Registration deadline:** July 18

Register for one, several or all of the weekend retreats in this series.

**ALSO OFFERED:**

**NOVEMBER 7-8:** Exploring finding and moving toward grace in our lives.

**FEBRUARY 6-7 (2026):** Exploring the grace of second chances, wonder and awe in our lives.

Personal renewal allows us to live with self-acceptance, gratitude, compassion and the acceptance of grace. The possibilities are in every moment, with each thought, in every action. Through individual written reflection and group interaction, you will have opportunities and time to recognize the grace that is always abundantly available. Our time together will include silence, guided discussion and experiences with poetry, wisdom tradition essays and art. Claim time for your own personal renewal while strengthening a sense of community with those present.

**There will be opportunities to experience the practices of the Courage & Renewal® approach to:**

- Revitalize your commitment to the core values that give meaning to your life and work.
- Learn reflective practices to become more self-aware and intentional.
- Discover a process for discernment to reach clarity around deeper questions of identity and integrity.
- Expand your capacity to build trustworthy and authentic relationships.
- Improve your ability to listen openly and be present.
- Continue to find truth and healing in your own life and in your relationships.



**Mary Louise Peters** is a Courage & Renewal®

Facilitator, providing retreats and renewal experiences since 2010. She has worked as an educator and consultant at local, state and national levels to improve early childhood and special education for children and families, teaching practices and conditions for staff, and state educational systems.

**Amy Christianson** is enrolled in the Courage & Renewal Practicum Program. Amy has been a participant in a number of seasonal and Circle of Trust® retreats, and actively embraces the Courage & Renewal approach in her life and work. Her background includes educational leadership, organizational change and working with diverse populations. Her career in education includes early childhood, K-12 and higher-education settings.





# 2025 Programs and Retreats *continued.*



## PHOTOGRAPHY RETREAT (IN-PERSON)

**AUGUST 1-2** • Friday, 6:30-9 p.m. and Saturday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.



**Presenter:** Kristina Stone Kaiser

**Investment:**

- **OVERNIGHT:** \$190, includes private bedroom, breakfast and lunch on Saturday
- **COMMUTER:** \$110, includes lunch on Saturday

**Registration deadline:** July 21

Spend time with images as a way of opening your awareness to Divine Presence. No photography experience is necessary. Rather than talking about the finer points of setting up the perfect shot, we'll explore questions such as: *What are you noticing? What is calling to you? What is speaking to you? What is piquing your curiosity, awe and wonder?*

The weekend will be a balanced blend of time for individual exploration and group discussion. Join us as we engage with photography as a spiritual practice, allowing ourselves to be drawn in and spoken to by the world around us. Participants are invited to use their cellphone cameras or any camera of their choosing. Journals, colored pencils and the like are also welcome.

**Kristina Stone Kaiser** is a certified spiritual guide and supervisor with a Doctor of Ministry in interfaith/interspiritual guidance. She is also an ordained pastor and the author of "Abundant Joy: A 90-Day Journey towards Sustainable, Authentic, Life-Changing Joy." Her lifelong passion has been creating spaces for others to discover their own sense of meaning and purpose. Learn more at her website: [www.tendingme.com](http://www.tendingme.com).

## ICONOGRAPHY WORKSHOP (IN-PERSON)

**AUGUST 4-9** • Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and Saturday, 9-10 a.m.

**Instructor:** Phil Zimmerman

**Investment:**

- **OVERNIGHT:** \$700, includes private bedroom Sunday through Friday nights, all meals and all supplies
- **COMMUTER:** \$575, includes lunch and dinner Monday through Friday and all supplies



Overnight guests may check in Sunday between 5 and 7 p.m.

**Registration deadline:** July 21

Limited to 30 participants.

**NOTE:** Icon to be determined. Class may extend into the evening hours on Friday for varnishing.

Both a meaningful prayer practice and a technical art form, iconography traces its history to the beginning of Christianity. Icons are often referred to as "windows into heaven" and continue to be venerated by Orthodox Christians and others. Noted American iconographer Phil Zimmerman will guide participants step-by-step through the process of "writing" or painting an icon in the Byzantine style, following ancient guidelines and techniques while using modern artist's materials (acrylic paints, gessoed board, gold leaf). All materials and supplies are included. By the end of the week, each student will have a beautifully completed icon varnished and ready to display.

Beginners and advanced students are welcome. While previous iconography experience is not necessary, it is helpful to have a basic understanding of painting and color mixing.

**Phil Zimmerman** is the owner of St. John of Damascus Icon Studio in Pennsylvania, having studied iconography with Richard Osacky (the late Bishop Job, OCA Diocese of Chicago and the Midwest). Phil has created hundreds of religious icons for churches and private collectors throughout the world and has taught more than 2,000 students, some of whom have become noted iconographers themselves. Phil has offered retreats at the Franciscan Spirituality Center since 2001.



## THE SACRED PATH OF THE ELDER AND THE ROLE OF LONGEVITY (IN-PERSON)

**AUGUST 9** • Saturday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

**Presenter:** Carol Kanjin Abrahamson, Zen Buddhist Priest

**Investment:** \$75, includes lunch

**Registration deadline:** July 28



This transformative retreat explores the subtle art of embracing change as we grow older. Often, change arrives suddenly, bringing great loss. We can be unprepared and overwhelmed with suffering. Learning to respond to change from a place of awareness can bring fewer

disappointments and more satisfying results. We'll explore how a quiet mind and open heart can shape our ordinary daily lives in extraordinary ways as we navigate the challenges and tribulations of aging. As an interactive group, we'll learn everyday spiritual practices that enable us to reflect, explore and share our personal stories about aging.

We offer ourselves the gifts of awareness as we practice deep listening, guided mindfulness, silence and joyful perseverance. We'll define and consider how we might embrace the Sacred Path of the Elder.

**Carol Kanjin Abrahamson** is a Zen Buddhist Priest, ordained in 2007 by Sensei Koan Janka, with whom she co-founded the Santa Ynez Zen Sangha. Carol is a recent La Crosse resident, having moved from Santa Barbara, California. She brings a lifetime of study, training and teaching in the tradition of Zen Buddhism, meditation and mindfulness.



**NAVIGATING TOGETHER: A GRIEF RETREAT (IN-PERSON)**

**AUGUST 22-23** • Friday, 6 p.m.–Saturday, 4 p.m.

**Presenters:** Karna Marks and Jean Pagliaro

**Investment:**

- **OVERNIGHT:** \$190, includes private bedroom, breakfast and lunch on Saturday
- **COMMUTER:** \$110, includes lunch on Saturday

We are able to offer discounted rates of \$114 (overnight) and \$66 (commuter) to anyone who would like financial help to attend. Please enter the code GRIEF40 when you register online or call 608-791-5295.

**Registration deadline:** August 15

Limited to 14 participants.



Grieving the death of a loved one involves many difficult challenges. Often, we feel overwhelmed with tasks and emotions. You're invited to spend a day in community with other people who are experiencing grief. Through discussion, time for reflection and creative expression opportunities, there will be space for you to both express your grief and consider new paths that might be part of your healing.

*Support for this program is provided by the Mary Kathryn Fogarty, FSPA, Scholarship Fund.*



**SILENT DIRECTED RETREATS (IN PERSON)**

A silent directed retreat is an invitation to deepen your connection to the Sacred and to yourself through solitude and silence within a community of prayer. You will have a private, comfortable bedroom, delicious meals and sessions with a spiritual director who will listen to you and your unfolding story. Your days will be open for time in quiet spaces for reflection, with options for attending liturgy, praying in the chapel and creating art. You are welcome to add overnight stays before or after your retreat for \$75 per night.

**NOTE:** These retreats begin with a gathering of all participants.

**CHOOSE FROM ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS:**

**JUNE 13-15**

Friday, 2 p.m.–Sunday, 1 p.m.

**Facilitator:** Chelle Belland

**Registration deadline:** June 2

Limited to 3 participants.

**JULY 7-9**

Monday, 2 p.m.–Wednesday, 2 p.m.

**Facilitator:** Chelle Belland

**Registration deadline:** June 23

Limited to 3 participants.

**JUNE 27-29**

Friday, 2 p.m.–Sunday, 1 p.m.

**Facilitators:** Sarah Hennessey, FSPA, and Chelle Belland

**Registration deadline:** June 16

Limited to 6 participants.

**AUGUST 26-28**

Tuesday, 2 p.m.–Thursday, 3 p.m.

**Facilitator:** Karna Marks

**Registration deadline:** August 15

Limited to 3 participants.



**Chelle Belland** is a trained spiritual director with a mental-health therapy background.



**Sarah Hennessey, FSPA,** is a spiritual director on staff at the FSC.

**Karna Marks** is a spiritual director on staff at the FSC.

**Investment per retreat:** \$375, includes two nights' stay, all meals and three spiritual direction sessions

We are able to offer a discounted rate of \$225 to anyone who would like financial help to attend. Please enter the code SILENT40 when you register online or call 608-791-5295.

You are always welcome to schedule a custom retreat around your unique needs and schedule. Call us to learn more.

**HERMITAGE SILENT DIRECTED RETREAT (IN-PERSON)**

**JUNE 6-8** •

Friday 3 p.m.–Sunday, 1 p.m.

**Facilitator:** Steve Spilde

**Investment:** \$375, includes two nights' stay and spiritual direction

**Registration deadline:** May 26

Limited to 2 participants.



The FSC maintains three hermitages in a woodland setting east of La Crosse (St. Joseph Ridge). You are invited to stay in one of these cozy cottages (which feature indoor plumbing and modern conveniences) during your silent retreat. Enjoy time in nature as you deepen your connection to the Sacred and to yourself through solitude and contemplation. You'll have daily meeting with a spiritual director who will listen to you and your unfolding story.

**NOTE:** The spiritual direction sessions happen at the FSC (920 Market St.), NOT at the hermitage. You will stay the hermitage and sleep at the hermitage, but you will need to drive to the FSC (15-minute drive) for your spiritual direction sessions. Towels and bed linens are provided. Guests are asked to bring their own toiletries and food. The hermitages have a kitchenette, where you can prepare your own meals at your convenience.



## BODY | MOVEMENT CLASSES



### GOLDEN YOGA (IN-PERSON AND ZOOM)

**SESSION 1: JUNE 24; JULY 1, 8**

**SESSION 2: AUGUST 5, 12, 19**

Tuesday, 11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

**Instructor:** Amber Moesch

**Investment:** \$30 for each three-week session

**Registration deadline:** June 23/August 4



Golden Yoga provides a safe approach to improved strength, balance and flexibility. Each class includes a gentle flow of seated stretches, standing poses and balance exercises. You will need a chair to offer modifications and balance support. The last 15 minutes of each class will include stretching exercises.

**Amber Moesch** loves sharing the movement and poses of yoga as a way to practice mindfulness. By helping her students link movements and breath with awareness, she creates classes that wake up the body and quiet the mind. Amber draws on her many years of experience and training in yoga and restorative exercise to create classes that are tailored to the students who show up.



### SLOW FLOW YOGA (IN-PERSON AND ZOOM)

**SESSION 1: JUNE 25; JULY 2, 9**

**SESSION 2: AUGUST 6, 13, 20**

Wednesday, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

**Instructor:** Bernice Olson-Pollack

**Investment:** \$30 for each three-week session or \$12 to drop in to a single class

**Registration deadline:** June 24/August 5

A simple definition of the word “yoga” means “to yoke or unite.” An intentional and consistent yoga practice promotes a healthier connection between the body, mind and spirit. This union brings forth a greater sense of physical and emotional balance. Slow Flow Yoga is designed to guide the participant steadily from one aligned posture (asana) into another. It is an accessible style of fluid movements that encourages you to calmly focus on your body, to breathe consciously



### QIGONG (IN-PERSON AND ZOOM)

**SESSION 1: JUNE 24; JULY 1, 8**

**SESSION 2: AUGUST 5, 12, 19**

Tuesday, 5:30-6:30 p.m.

**Instructor:** Pennie Pries

**Investment:** \$30 for each three-week session

**Registration deadline:** June 23/August 4

The fundamental principle of qigong (pronounced CHEE-gung) is that everything in the universe is a form of energy, including every cell in our bodies. “Qi” means “energy” and “gong” means “to work with”—so, the mind-body practice of qigong translates to “working with the body’s energy.” Through the use of simple movements, breathing and meditation, you can experience improved health and wellness. Qigong sustains and improves the health of the immune system, nervous system and internal organs. Stress reduction occurs through the combination of breathing, movement and internal focus.

**Pennie Pries** is a certified qigong instructor and certified Arthritis Foundation Exercise Program instructor based in Rochester, Minnesota. She has a bachelor’s degree from Luther College, having studied physical education, health and biology. Her own life challenges over the years have broadened her expertise in healthy lifestyle choices and healing opportunities for better overall health.

**Note:** Whether you attend this class at the FSC or virtually, Pennie will teach by Zoom (other than a first day in-person introduction).



and to remain in the present moment. Meditation at the end of a yoga session can improve mental clarity and concentration, relax the mind and develop a sustainable feeling of calm.

**Bernice Olson-Pollack** has a Master in Science in Community Counseling and is a 200-hour YogaFit-trained instructor and American Council on Exercise certified personal trainer. She provides a slow and steadily moving style of teaching that offers a comfortable yet quietly challenging yoga practice for her participants.







## EIGHT-MONTH SERIES

### HOLD STEADY: SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR COURAGEOUS ACTION

One of our greatest callings as humans is to care for others. Often, this requires both compassion and courage as we address the many injustices in our world today. As we engage in this crucial work, how do we take courageous action and, at the same time, care for our own spirit? During each monthly session, we will present spiritual resources from teachers such as Brian McLaren; Richard Rohr, OFM; Brené Brown; Bishop Mariann Budde; Thomas Keating, O.C.S.O.; and Julian of Norwich.

#### PARTICIPANTS WILL:

- Explore practices that help us stay spiritually grounded.
- Learn ways to call forth our courage for action.
- Connect with participants in a cohort group to share wisdom, encouragement and challenges as we engage in this work.

#### SCHEDULE:

Sessions are a mix of in-person (9 a.m.-4 p.m.) and Zoom (9 a.m.-noon) gatherings.

**Presenters include** Jean Pagliaro, Steve Spilde, Julie Helgerson, Karna Marks, Marcia Bentley, Barb and Joe Kruse, Kennedy Cortes; Sarah Hennessey, FSPA; Jolynn Brehm, FSPA

#### 2025

**OCTOBER 4 • Spiritual Practices for Courageous Action** (in-person)

**NOVEMBER 15 • Nonviolent Communication: Listening with Courage** (Zoom)

**DECEMBER 20 • Finding Your Voice: The Power of Words** (Zoom)

#### 2026

**JANUARY 17 • Creating Moments of Joy for Inner Strength** (Zoom)

**FEBRUARY 21 • Finding Strength in Community and Connection** (Zoom)

**MARCH 14 • Centering Practices for Purposeful Action** (Zoom)

**APRIL 18 • Embracing Gratitude to Create Meaningful Change** (Zoom)

**MAY 2 • A Look Back to Unleash Courage Ahead** (in-person)

#### INVESTMENT:

**Tier A: \$700** • Covers full program costs plus offsets facility expenses and support staff. This tier helps to support the long-range sustainability of the program and the FSC.

**Tier B: \$600** • Covers basic program expenses including presenter fees and a portion of staff time. This is the break-even point for the FSC to offer this program. Tier B can be paid in monthly installments of \$75 per month.

**Tier C: \$400** • Thanks to funding from our generous donors, we can offer a subsidized payment amount for those who need additional support. Tier C can be paid in monthly installments of \$50 per month.

If paying in monthly installments, please call 608-791-5295 to make arrangements.

## STARTING THIS FALL

### NINE-MONTH SERIES

#### COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY (ZOOM)

Meets 6-8 p.m. on the following Mondays:

**2025** SEPTEMBER 8 • OCTOBER 13  
NOVEMBER 10 • DECEMBER 8

**2026** JANUARY 12 • FEBRUARY 9 • MARCH 9  
APRIL 13 • MAY 11

**Presenters:** Julie Helgerson and Vicki Lopez-Kaley

**Investment:** \$300 for entire series

**Registration deadline:** September 2

Limited to 8 participants.

All who seek spiritual growth and community are invited to embark on this transformative group spiritual direction experience. Each monthly session will be a time of deep, personal sharing in an atmosphere of trust and confidentiality. We'll begin each virtual gathering with a poem for reflection and questions to bring us to a deeper level of application for our spiritual journeys. We will hold a space for individual sharing, group reflection and contemplative space. A commitment to the entire series is part of building community. Together, we will be companions on the journey.

**Julie Helgerson** is the program and retreat coordinator at the Franciscan Spirituality Center and a graduate of the FSC's Spiritual Direction Preparation Program.



**Vicki Lopez-Kaley** is a graduate of the FSC's Spiritual Direction Preparation Program and has participated in group spiritual direction. She brings her presence, compassionate listening and experience in education, parish ministry and spiritual care with elders.



Follow us on Facebook and Instagram for more information about these upcoming programs and events.

# Sabbatical guests find home away from home at FSC

Most visitors to the Franciscan Spirituality Center come for spiritual direction, weekend retreats and evening programs. Throughout the year, we also welcome guests for five-day or even 30-day silent directed retreats.

But we are open to longer experiences and sabbaticals, and were recently blessed by the arrival of two wonderful new friends who chose the FSC for their sabbaticals. Brother Dominic Michael Hart, fbp, came from the Twin Cities to stay with us from October through January, and Sister Christiana Ajagu, MSHR, traveled from Ireland and stayed with us January 9 through April 8.

Though they are both members of religious orders, anyone who is interested in taking extended time for personal growth, spiritual study or discernment is welcome to make a sabbatical or individual retreat; call 608-791-5295 or email [fscenter@fspa.org](mailto:fscenter@fspa.org) to learn more.

We've truly enjoyed getting to know Brother Dominic and Sister Christiana, and hearing what their sabbatical experience was like, and thought you would, too!

## Brother Dominic Michael Hart ■ Franciscan Brothers of Peace

Brother Dominic knew from an early age that he was called to religious life. Born in New Jersey to an Irish-Italian family, he grew up in a traditional Catholic neighborhood and was just 5 years old when he had his first encounter with a friar.

"I literally pointed at him and said, 'I'm going to be just like you when I grow up,'" he said. "People said I'd grow out of it, but the more they said that, the more determined I was to enter [a religious order]."

In 1979, at age 17, he did enter a Franciscan community of brothers in Iowa, transferring a decade later to the Franciscan Brothers of Peace in Minneapolis to answer a call to ministry working with the poor and people on the streets.

The Franciscan Brothers of Peace is a small order of nine friars who strive to "rebuild people's dignity where it is threatened."

Brother Dominic served as director of Samaritan House in Minneapolis for seven years (1993-2000), which started as a house for men who had AIDS to come and die with dignity.

It was there that Brother Dominic met Linda Mershon, who was in formation to become a Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration and was participating in a summer immersion program at Samaritan House. Brother Dominic had also befriended Sue Ernster, FSPA, at a Franciscan connection retreat in Rochester, Minnesota, when she was a candidate for religious life. As he maintained friendships with both FSPAs over the years, La Crosse was a natural destination when he was looking for a place to stay while working through a period of discernment about future ministry.

Brother Dominic quickly endeared himself to our staff. He jumped right into volunteering at our front desk and also took on prayer hours at St. Rose Convent's Perpetual Adoration Chapel. While on sabbatical, he also decided to become an affiliate of FSPA.

"Being here connected to the Adoration Chapel was a great source for my rejuvenation," he said. "I really appreciated renewing relations with several of the sisters and developing new relationships with the staff here [at the FSC]."

He described being on sabbatical as "a time to rejuvenate and be renewed." Much of his time was spent in personal prayer and study. Although he didn't come here to participate in programs, he said he appreciates the diversity of programs and the new friendships he made.

"If God wants you to be involved in certain programs, you'll find them here. There's something for everyone," he said.



"One of my great passions is to make rosaries," Brother Dominic said. "It's very contemplative."



Brother Dominic volunteers at the FSC front desk at least once a week. He's pictured with receptionist Kathy Holman and program and retreat coordinator Julie Helgerson.



“There are so many doors in the building—literally,” he laughed. “But also a lot of opportunities for connection.”

Brother Dominic plans to be in La Crosse for at least another 18 months. He has moved out of his room on our third floor into his own place but continues to volunteer at our front desk—he especially enjoys greeting people who come to our Depressed Anonymous group on Monday evenings—and is open to helping sisters at St. Rose Convent.

One of his favorite experiences was volunteering with the *Fighting Racism Through Sisterhood* weekend retreat. “I was blown away by the energy of the women who walked through the door,” he said. “We all form each other through our time together.”

### Sister Christiana Ajagu ■ Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary

When Sister Christiana decided to make a sabbatical, she prayed for a good place and searched the Internet until she landed on the FSC.

“Nobody ever told me about this place, and I have never heard the name,” she said. “I feel very happy and grateful that God revealed this beautiful, serene environment to me. It is really a wonderful place, and I have started telling other people about this nice place that I have discovered,” she said.

Sister Christiana is a Nigerian-born Irish religious sister, now in her 21st year of religious profession. Her order, Missionary Sisters of the Holy Rosary, was founded in 1924 in Killeshandra, Ireland, by the Irish missionary Bishop Joseph Shanahan, CSSP. The sisters serve in 13 countries in various ministries focused on education, health care, development, pastoral and community services.

“We are dedicated to bringing God’s love to people in need and those who are marginalized; for instance, women, children and people who are physically challenged,” she said.

Sister Christiana lives in the Missionary Sisters’ convent in Cavan Town, County Cavan, Ireland, and has been in charge of its publicity office since 2017. She was privileged to be part of two big events last year: the centenary of her order’s foundation and its general chapter in Ireland. “Having been very busy, especially last year, I decided to take some time off, get some rest and be renewed for my well-being and for better service in the ministry,” she said.

“I have been enriched, inspired, renewed and refreshed during these three months,” she continued. “The [Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration] and [FSC] staff are very nice people, and I have been blessed through their presence and support. I attended different programs here both in-person and Zoom. I have been part of the liturgy/prayer in the magnificent Mary of the Angels Chapel. There were times for rest; other times, I went for a walk or just shopping. The Perpetual Adoration Chapel is a great place of intercession for the whole world, and I am happy that it was part of my routine. It was also easy for me to take some courses online from another institution during my time here.”

Some of her favorite places to visit while in La Crosse were Grandad Bluff, Riverside Park, St. Joseph Ridge and the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. She also visited Assisi Heights in Rochester, Minnesota—home to the Sisters of St. Francis.



Sister Christiana traveled from Ireland to stay at the FSC for her three-month sabbatical, having found us through an Internet search. We sent her home with a reminder of her time here.



Sister Christiana had the opportunity to attend several programs while staying at the FSC. Here she is at the *Warm Hearts on a Winter Day* tinsmithing retreat.

Just before leaving to return home to Ireland, she shared this note: “Congratulations to the Franciscan Spirituality Center on the 40th anniversary of your foundation! I thank the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration and their collaborators for the gift of this great place of encounter, where many people find meaning and wholeness. You are really a blessing to this community of La Crosse, Wisconsin, the country and all creation. I remain very grateful to all the sisters and staff for their help and for making my stay a memorable experience. May you continue to give life to many people through your special prayer, your services and programs. I pray that God will continue to strengthen you and grant abundant blessing to your ministries. Thank you very much and God bless.”





**FRANCIS ROOM** ■ Recently remodeled, carpeting, seats up to 50, lower level.



**JACOBA CONFERENCE ROOM** ■ Recently remodeled, carpeting, seats up to 16, lower level.



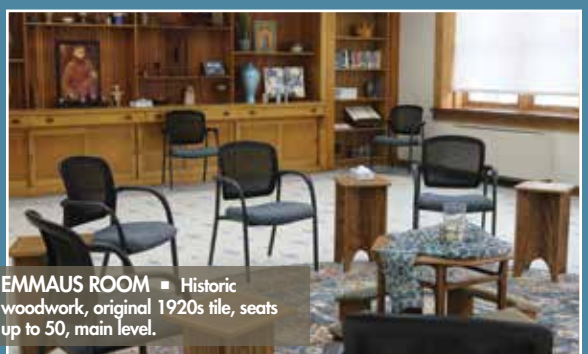
**GRACE HALL** ■ Historic woodwork, carpeting, seats up to 36, main level. Doors open to adjoining room to seat up to 75.



**CLARE ROOM** ■ Recently remodeled, carpeting, seats up to 40, art sink and supplies, lower level.



**SAN DAMIANO** ■ Assisi artwork, historic woodwork, carpeting, seats up to 56, main level.



**EMMAUS ROOM** ■ Historic woodwork, original 1920s tile, seats up to 50, main level.



**ASSISI ROOM** ■ Near the dining hall, carpeting, seats up to 90, lower level.



**THEA CONFERENCE ROOM** ■ Recently remodeled, carpeting, seats up to 6, lower level.



**ST. ROSE DINING HALL** ■ Can be reserved for conferences and large groups, seats up to 130, lower level.

# Experience Franciscan hospitality at its best

Looking for a peaceful space to have your next team meeting, training session, book club or group retreat? We have eight distinctive meeting rooms available to rent. The St. Rose Convent dining hall also can be reserved for larger events.

Each room has its own charm and state-of-the-art technology, including large screens, WiFi, microphones and assistive listening devices. Our building is ADA-compliant, secure and private, and we maintain our own parking lot. Tables and chairs can be configured to suits your needs. Coffee, tea, water and on-site catering is available. You won't find a better deal in town.

Visit [www.FSCenter.org](http://www.FSCenter.org) for details or call 608-791-5295 and ask about convenient two-hour, half-day or full-day rates plus discounts for nonprofits and multiple bookings.



BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:  
BRIDGET TODD-ROBBINS

# Why I Serve



When I was first approached to serve on the board of the Franciscan Spirituality Center, I admit I was unaware of the existence of this incredible community treasure. When I looked at the website and saw the words “Community, Connection and Compassionate Listening,” I immediately knew that serving on this board not only matched my own personal core values, but I also saw the potential for building connections and support for some of our most marginalized populations. As someone who is a strong racial and social advocate for youth in this community, I was struggling with how to meet the spiritual needs of those I serve, as well as finding safe spaces for individuals to come together for growth and healing.

I have truly been inspired by serving on this board. The other board members and every single one of the FSC staff are some of the most compassionate people I have ever had the pleasure to work with. It has been a great privilege to observe how the passion and commitment of this very special group of people has resulted in so many amazing programs and relationships centered around connection, joy and healing. The Franciscan Spirituality Center is truly a sacred place of peace, hospitality and transformation. I will be forever grateful for this opportunity and have committed to giving back to this very special place for many years to come.

## Looking to unplug in a woodland setting?



We invite you to make a private or directed retreat in one of our three hermitages at St. Joseph Ridge, just a short scenic drive from our main center. Here you can enter into silence and contemplation, while connecting to nature and God.

Hermitages are one-room cottages that feature modern conveniences. We’ve named ours Chiara, Sophia and Thea. Each one has electricity, indoor bathroom and a kitchenette. During your stay, you can relax, pray, journal, knit, read or hike one of the many trails on site.

Towels and bed linens are provided. Please bring your own food and toiletries.

The hermitages are single occupancy and meant to be used for spiritual retreats only.

Cost is \$80 per night (spiritual direction is an extra fee). Please call 608-791-5295 for more information.



## New creative partnership with La Crosse Public Library

While the La Crosse Public Library’s Creation Space undergoes renovations starting in May 2025, the Franciscan Spirituality Center will open the doors of its Clare Art Room to all community members for creative projects and drop-in making.

Please join us at the FSC for a **Creation Space Launch Event** on Tuesday, June 3. All ages are invited to attend!

- Open house: 3-5:30 p.m.
- Creative session with instruction: 5:30-7 p.m.

**Weekly Creation Space hours in FSC Clare Art Room** (starting June 4):

- Monday: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Tuesday: 9 a.m.-7 p.m.  
(First Tuesday of the month features a guided craft project.)
- Wednesday: 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
- Thursday and Friday: 9 a.m.-noon

The Franciscan Spirituality Center is a sacred place of peace and hospitality for those seeking spiritual renewal, personal and professional growth, healing, transformation and deeper self-awareness. Paired with the La Crosse Public Library’s mission to “Discover, create, connect,” this is an exciting collaboration that aligns with community needs and offers space that will allow continued creative expression.

The FSC has free parking and is wheelchair accessible. If you need accommodation for any reason, please call the library at 608-789-7100 or email [info@lacrosselibrary.org](mailto:info@lacrosselibrary.org).





# Franciscan Spirituality Center

FSPA • 912 Market Street  
La Crosse, WI 54601

## A day of laughter, tears, grit and grace



Our annual women's conference, *Overcoming Challenges With Grit and Grace*, was an overwhelming success. Thank you to Patty Wetterling, Rebecca Kaldunski, Stacey Lantange and Mia Davis for generously and courageously trusting us with their stories, and to Bernice Olson-Pollack for leading us in gentle body movement and meditation.

**SAVE THE DATE FOR NEXT YEAR'S EVENT: MARCH 28, 2026**

**Keynote speaker Sara Alvarado** believes the way to handle life challenges is to show up authentic, bold, vulnerable and always ready for fun. After years of alcohol, drug abuse and sexual violence, Sara committed to a healing journey, moved to Mexico, and openly shares her unexpected story of surrender, love and resiliency.

Sara is a writer, entrepreneur and fierce advocate for racial justice in real estate. Her memoir, "Dreaming in Spanish: An Unexpected Love Story in Puerto Vallarta," was published in 2023. She is the co-founder and director of Own It: Building Black Wealth, a groundbreaking initiative to increase generational wealth in Black and brown communities through homeownership

*We look forward to hearing her story of grit and grace!*



### COMING THIS FALL



**CONNECTING WITH MOTHER EARTH:  
FOREST BATHING AND SOUND HEALING RETREAT**  
SEPTEMBER 13 • Char Peterson, Joan Filla and Laurie Cafe

**ICONOGRAPHY WORKSHOP**  
SEPTEMBER 22-27 • Phil Zimmerman

**MASK MAKING RETREAT**  
OCTOBER 17-18 • Elizabeth Lewis

**INTRODUCTION TO THE ENNEAGRAM FOUR-WEEK SERIES  
STARTS OCTOBER 21** • Audrey Lucier and Steve Spilde

**CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS**  
OCTOBER 24-25 • Diane M. Millis

**HEALING THROUGH CREATIVE GRIEVING**  
NOVEMBER 8 • Julie Helgerson and Char Peterson

**THE ART OF SACRED WORDS:  
WRITING AS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE**  
NOVEMBER 21-22 • Debie Thomas

Follow us on :     