

Coming Home: Centering in Self and Community, December 1st – 3rd
Light on the Hill Retreat Center, Van Etten, NY

Friday, December 1st		
3:00pm – 4:00pm	Arrive, Register, Settle, Rest	Main Foyer Entrance
4:00pm – 6:00pm	Session 1: Opening the Circle Session 2: Getting Re-Aquainted with You	Central Meeting Space
6:00pm – 7:00pm	Dinner	Dining Room
7:00pm – 8:30pm	Session 3: Forming the Shapes of Ourselves (Clay Sculpture)	Central Meeting Space

Saturday, December 2nd		
7:30am – 8:00am	Optional morning meditation or yoga, TBD	Central Meeting Space
8:00am – 9:00am	Breakfast	Dining Room
9:00am - 12:30pm	Session 4: A Tree of Life + Guided Labyrinth Walk	Central Meeting Space
12:30pm - 1:30pm	Lunch	Dining Room
1:30pm – 2:30pm	Rest & Renewal. Optional Yoga Session led by Christian Aponte	Lodge, Labyrinth, Stillpoint Sanctuary, 236 Acre Grounds
2:30pm - 3:30pm	Session 5: Pulling Back the Curtain	Central Meeting Space
3:45pm – 5:00pm	Session 6: Creating Spaces for the True Self to Show Up	Central Meeting Space
5:00pm – 6:00pm	Rest & Renewal	Lodge, Labyrinth, Stillpoint Sanctuary, 236 Acre Grounds
6:00pm – 7:00pm	Dinner	Dining Room
7:00pm – 8:30pm	Session 7: Mosaics of our Lives: From Broken to Beautiful OR Outdoor Camp fire	Dining Room Fire Pit

Sunday, December 3rd		
7:30am – 8:00am	Optional morning meditation or yoga, TBD	Central Meeting Room
8:00am – 9:00am	Breakfast	Dining Room
9:00am – 11:00am	Session 8: Bringing it All Home	Central Meeting Room
11:00am - 11:20am	Pack Belongings, strip beds, put away towels etc. according to LOTH requests	See Housekeeping Requests in Packets
11:20am – Noon	Closing Circle & Group Photos	Central Meeting Room
Noon – 1:00pm	Lunch & Depart	Dining Room

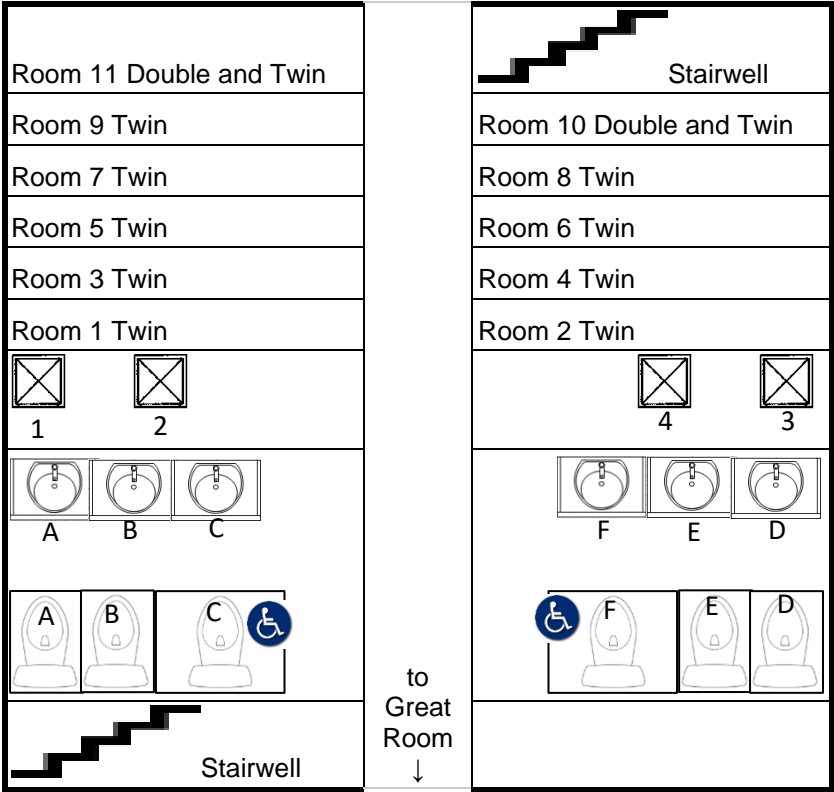
Upper Level

Inner Light Lodge

West Exit

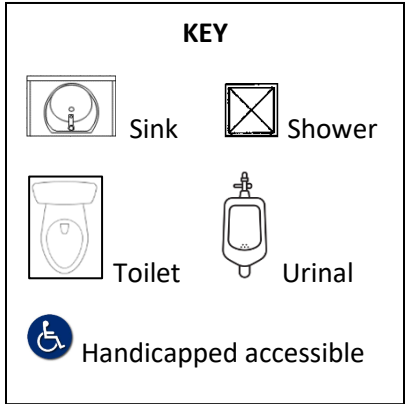


MEADOW

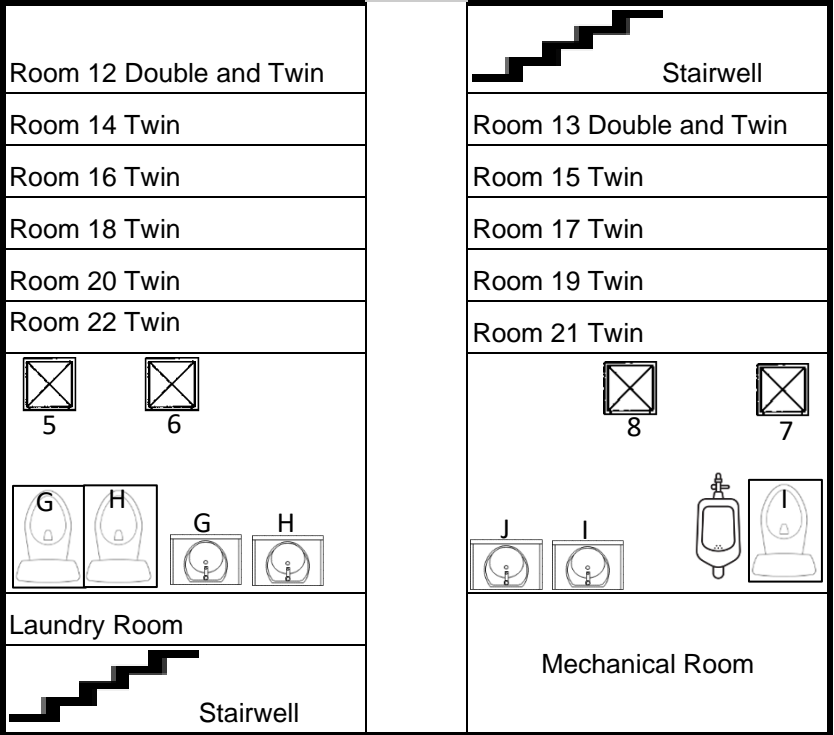


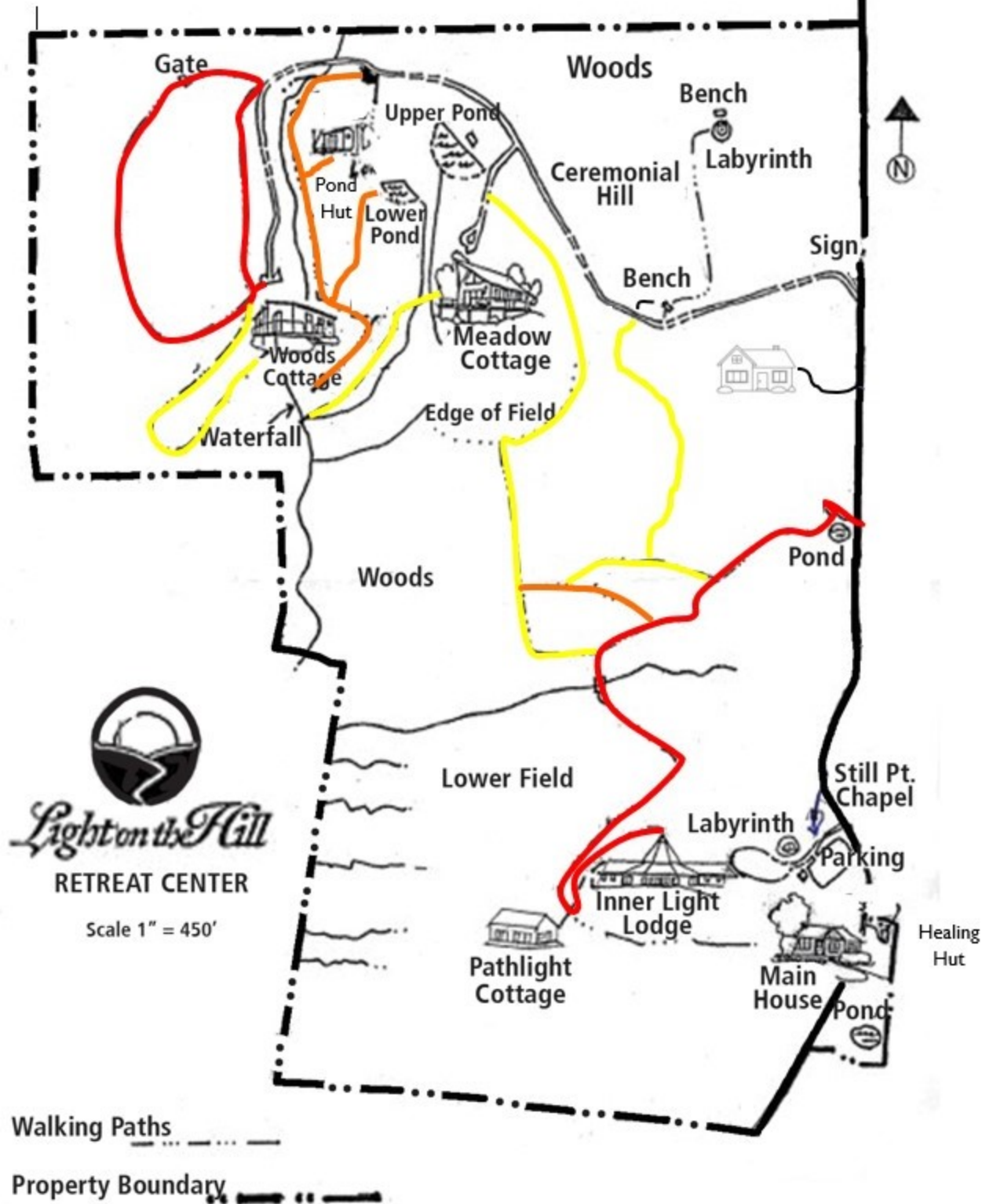
Lower Level

West Exit



MEADOW





Light on the Hill Housekeeping Instructions

The guiding principles for Light on the Hill are love, harmony, and beauty. We ask all our guests to **be respectful of the property and the buildings**, and to leave each area in the same condition in which they found it.

What to Know About Your Room & the Lodge

Outdoor shoes are not permitted in the Lodge beyond the entranceway. We encourage guests to bring slippers or cozy socks to wear inside the Lodge.

Outside towels are available in the downstairs laundry room. Please do not take interior blankets, towels or bedding outside.

Please be careful about **locking yourself out of your rooms**. The locks flip easily and because of new code regulations, the door handles still move even when the door is locked. Thus, it is easy to not realize one has locked one's door. Ask a facilitator for help if you do get locked out.

Most of the **shades** work on a loop system. Just pull one of the strings to get desired height. Be gentle! They are delicate.

Please do not open any of the windows all the way and, if there is a wind, close them most of the way. Open windows hit by wind strip the crank mechanism, which then must be replaced. To close the windows, use the crank to move the window to ½" from the frame. Use the lever to close the window the rest of the way.

No candles or incense can be lit/burned in the individual rooms (it will set off the fire alarm).

The **laundry rooms are for staff use only**. Please do not use the machines for personal laundry.

The **restrooms** are marked: 2 female (one upstairs, one downstairs), 1 male (downstairs), 1 gender neutral (upstairs). In the gender-neutral restroom, one toilet stall and one sink are reserved for female staff.

It is important to **flush the toilets** after each use, otherwise the septic system gets blocked. The toilets are low water use and there is also plenty of water on the property. Kindly do not flush feminine hygiene products. Use the receptacle next to the toilet for tampons and pads.

Food/Drink/Meals

The **beverage station** is available to you at any time for water or tea.

Food and beverages are not allowed outside the dining room. People are free to put your food on the dining room table closest to the meeting space, or in the small refrigerator. **Only water** is permitted in the building beyond the dining room.

There is a **small refrigerator** in the dining room. You are welcome to put any food you bring in this refrigerator. You'll find OJ, grapefruit juice, dairy milk, plant milk, and ½ and ½ there.

We ask guests to **bus your dishes**. All food we serve is compostable. Please scrape uneaten food into the compost bin. Place napkins, paper towels, and foil wrapping into the trash bin.

We **recycle** CLEAN plastic and metal containers, as well as paper. Check the recycling sign above the bin if you are unsure whether something is recyclable. If your container is recyclable but dirty, please place it in the bins with the dirty dishes.

Check Out & Departure

On the day of departure please **strip your bed and bring your towels and sheets to the appropriate bins in the laundry room** (1 on each floor). There are laundry rooms on each floor. Guests do not need to strip the quilts, comforters, blankets, or mattress covers, just sheets and pillowcases. We also request that you close the **windows**, turn off **the ceiling fan** and set the **thermostat** to its lowest setting.

Enjoying the Grounds:

People are free to **wander the property**, walk the labyrinths, and visit the chapel. Maps are provided. Please do not drive or walk near any of the cottages or huts in order to ensure the privacy of the retreatants staying there.

You may walk the labyrinth or meditate/pray in **Stillpoint Sanctuary** at any time. We for silence in the sanctuary. When you leave, be sure to fully latch the door (so the wind doesn't blow it open).

LOH on-call phone—607.592.4450 (call or text)

The Practice of Asking Open & Honest Questions

Adapted from the work of Parker Palmer, John Morefield, Marcy Jackson and Susan Kaplan.
Inspired by the work of Parker J. Palmer and Center for Courage & Renewal
(www.couragerenewal.org)

Open & Honest Questions are a thoughtful pathway for inquiry and discernment, moving us beyond our normal patterns of communication. Often our questions are laden with advice, problem solving, or meeting our needs to be a “competent leader or engaged Helping Professional.” Open & Honest Questions serve to invite a more spacious, authentic conversation.

This practice enables us to:

- Create a more authentic and deeper exploration of a problem or question for both the person talking and the one listening;
- Step away from our tendency to jump to solutions, assign blame, or otherwise approach our exchanges attached to a specific end (teaching with a specific goal in mind, defend what we know, problem solve, or respond as a “good educator” would);
- Invite a person to call upon their own wisdom and knowledge of self. This builds capacity for their own leadership from within by exploring their own assets, truth, questions, and answers, inviting a discovery of their own “hidden wholeness.” A person accesses their inner teacher by thinking about the situation in new ways, applying past learning and experience to now, while listening to both feelings and thoughts.
- Support a deeper inner conversation within oneself;
- Slow down the pace of our conversation and develop a deeper mutual engagement;
- Expand and deepen an exploration rather than narrow or restrict possibilities;
- Explore and “hold” important questions or complicated issues. This practice recognizes significant value in listening without judgment with a view for understanding instead of reacting with a quick, simple or incomplete answer for an immediate direction (that may make things worse in the long run);
- Use meaningful metaphors to reframe or help “step out” of the situation;
- Invite more authentic responses rather than second guessing the “right answer”;
- Changes the dynamic of our tendency to want to fix, “save”, change or give advice. In these responses, we see the person as “broken” or with deficits. Our new role is to create a safe and meaningful process in which we help the person access their own “hidden wholeness”.

Framing Open & Honest Questions

1. The best single hallmark of an open, honest question is that the questioner could not possibly anticipate the answer to it. *What surprises you? What moves or touches you about this? What inspires you? What was easy? What was hard?*
2. Ask questions that aim at helping the person rather than satisfying your curiosity. Ask questions directed to the person as well as to the problem – about feelings as well as facts. *Have you ever had an experience that felt like your current issue? Did you learn anything from that prior experience that feels useful to you now? How do you feel about the experience you just described?*
3. Stay with the person's language --use words the person is using not what you think they might or should be feeling. *You said this was an impossible situation -could you say more about what this means to you? What do you mean when you said you felt frustrated? as opposed to Don't you ever feel angry?*
4. Formulate questions that are brief and to the point rather than larding them with background considerations and rationale. *What are your expectations or hopes for your project?*
5. Trust your own intuition, even if your instincts seem off the wall. Listen deeply to the story and allow questions to come from your heart rather than your head.
6. Avoid long storytelling or speech making that may draw attention to yourself.
7. Consider waiting to ask a question if you're not sure what type of question it is. If it keeps coming back to you, see if you can re-frame it into an open-ended question.
8. The best questions are simple. *How does this work for you? What questions do you have? What is the hardest aspect of this situation? What is the easiest aspect of this situation?*
9. Avoid questions with right/wrong answers. Consider re-framing *Don't you think you should do this project instead?* to *What interests you about the other approach?*
10. Use images or metaphors that the person might relate to, to open things up in ways that more direct questions do not. *If you were writing a book about this experience, how would you name this chapter? If you were using a roadmap to navigate this issue, what would be on your map – the rest stops, the destinations, the detours?*
11. Know when to use Open & Honest Questions. These questions are not appropriate for all situations. There is a time to give information, to make a decision and to share your own opinion and experience.

Give and receive welcome.

People learn best in hospitable spaces. In this circle we support each other's learning by giving and receiving hospitality.

Be present as fully as possible.

Be here with your doubts, fears and failings as well as your convictions, joys and successes, your listening as well as your speaking.

What is offered in the circle is by invitation, not demand.

This is not a "share or die" event! Do whatever your soul calls for, and know that you do it with our support. Your soul knows your needs better than we do.

Speak your truth in ways that respect other people's truth.

Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one's truth in a circle of trust does not mean interpreting, correcting or debating what others say. Speak from your center to the center of the circle, using "I" statements, trusting people to do their own sifting and winnowing.

No fixing, saving, advising or correcting each other.

This is one of the hardest guidelines for those of us who like to "help." But it is vital to welcoming the soul, to making space for the inner teacher.

Learn to respond to others with honest open questions.

Do not respond with counsel or corrections. Using honest, open questions helps us "hear each other into deeper speech."



When the going gets rough, turn to wonder.

Turn from reaction and judgment to wonder and compassionate inquiry. Ask yourself, "I wonder why they feel/think this way?" or "I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?" Set aside judgment to listen to others—and to yourself—more deeply.

Attend to your own inner teacher

We learn from others, of course. But as we explore poems, stories, questions and silence in a circle of trust, we have a special opportunity to learn from within. So pay close attention to your own reactions and responses, to your most important teacher.

Trust and learn from the silence

Silence is a gift in our noisy world, and a way of knowing in itself. Treat silence as a member of the group. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words.

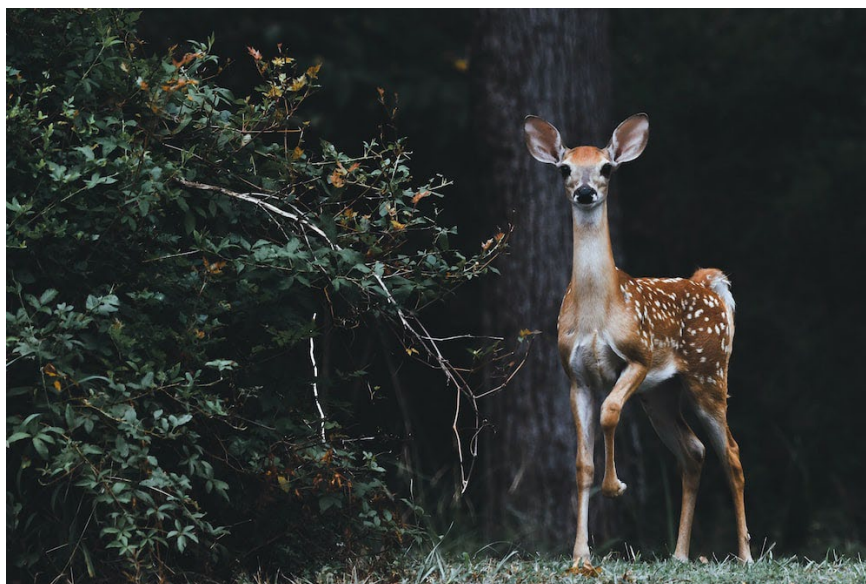
Observe deep confidentiality

Safety is built when we can trust that our words and stories will remain with the people with whom we choose to share, and are not repeated to others without our permission.

Know that it's possible...

to leave the circle with whatever it was that you needed when you arrived, and that the seeds planted here can keep growing in the days ahead.





Right Here

Stop moving. Stand in
one place – this place.
Breathe slowly; in, then out. Repeat.

Repeat again. Let your
shoulders sink and relax. Unclench
your jaw; slowly close your eyes.

Listen for your heartbeat; really
listen. Feel it pulse in
your fingertips.

Lessen expectations. Under-do all your
efforts. Requisition the time
for your soul

to catch up. Lean
into the wind; feel it
like a tree and test the ground.

Learn to trust the resilience.
It would be treason
to move quickly – left or right –

from this place. It is alright to be exactly
what you are, who you are, where you are.
Right here, right now.

- Dane Anthony

Still Learning

Tonight when I see a photo
of myself from almost thirty years ago,
I stare at the woman in white lace
the way a butterfly might stare
at that strange nibbling larva—
curious. It doesn't occur to me
to tell her about what will happen.
I flit by as she stays on the wall.
She'll learn soon enough. I breathe
into my wings. She'll learn.

- Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

Questions For Reflection

- ❖ What impressions come to you, as you self-witness?
- ❖ What are the ways in which you've changed from this time that you welcome? What are some changes that have been more difficult?
- ❖ What is the "gold" – how have you grown and changed in ways you couldn't have imagined?
- ❖ What questions do you bring to this experience regarding the journey of coming home to you?

Initiation Song from the Finders Lodge

Please bring strange things.
Please come bringing new things.
Let very old things come into your hands.
Let what you do not know come into your eyes.
Let desert sand harden your feet.
Let the arch of your feet be the mountains.
Let the paths of your fingertips be your maps
and the ways you go be the lines on your palms.
Let there be deep snow in your inbreathing
and your outbreath be the shining of ice.
May your mouth contain the shapes of strange
words.
May you smell food cooking you have not eaten.
May the spring of a foreign river be your navel.
May your soul be at home where there are no
houses.
Walk carefully, well-loved one,
walk mindfully, well-loved one,
walk fearlessly, well-loved one.
Return with us, return to us,
be always coming home.



"Initiation Song from the Finders Lodge" by Ursula Le Guin, from *Always Coming Home*. © University of California Press, 1985.

Rebus

You work with what you are given,
the red clay of grief,
the black clay of stubbornness going on after.
Clay that tastes of care or carelessness,
clay that smells of the bottoms of rivers or dust.

Each thought is a life you have lived or failed to live,
each word is a dish you have eaten or left on the table.
There are honeys so bitter
no one would willingly choose to take them.
The clay takes them: honey of weariness, honey of vanity,
honey of cruelty, fear.

This rebus—slip and stubbornness,
bottom of river, my own consumed life—
when will I learn to read it
plainly, slowly, uncolored by hope or desire?
Not to understand it, only to see.

As water given sugar sweetens, given salt grows salty,
we become our choices.
Each yes, each no continues,
this one a ladder, that one an anvil or cup.

The ladder leans into its darkness.
The anvil leans into its silence.
The cup sits empty.

How can I enter this question the clay has asked?

- Jane Hirshfield (*Given Sugar, Given Salt*)



Forming the Shapes of Ourselves

Questions for Reflection:

- ❖ Which lines of Rebus speak to you?
- ❖ As a part of your “homecoming,” how might you work creatively with what you are given at this time in your life and work?
- ❖ What “shape” is a metaphor for where you are now? For where you are headed? Allow your hands to show you...

To Come Home to Yourself

May all that is unforgiven in you
Be released.

May your fears yield
Their deepest tranquilities.

May all that is unlived in you
Blossom into a future
Graced with love.

—John O'Donohue, *To Bless the Space Between Us*



Vincent van Gogh, *Rain*, 1889

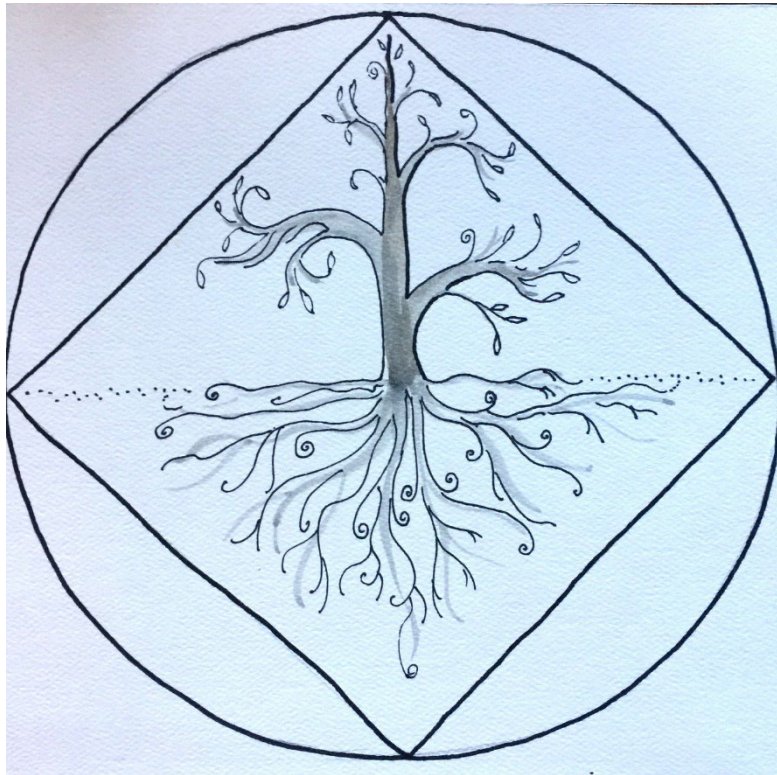
The Rainmaker: You Could Be the Water...

By the scent of water alone,
the withered vine comes back to life,
and thus... wherever the land is dry and
hard,
you could be the water;
or you could be the iron blade
disking the earth open;
or you could be the acequia,
the mother ditch, carrying the water
from the river to the fields
to grow the flowers for the farmers;
or you could be the honest engineer
mapping the dams that must be taken
down,
and those dams which could remain to
serve
the venerable all, instead of only the very
few.

You could be the battered vessel
for carrying the water by hand;
or you could be the one
who stores the water.
You could be the one who
protects the water,
or the one who blesses it,
or the one who pours it.
Or you could be the tired ground
that receives it;
or you could be the scorched seed
that drinks it;
or you could be the vine,
green-growing overland,
in all your wild audacity ...

Clarissa Pinkola Esté

Tree Mandala Reflection



Roots - Reflect on what you draw from to stand and grow. What are the qualities you are rooted in – or hope to develop? What are the conditions that might help bring you into deeper relationship with those qualities?

Ground - From where do you draw your strength, what holds you up, what nourishes you? In the process of “who you are becoming,” what is the steady ground?

Trunk - Who or what supports your growth as you consider being a “guide on the side” for others?”

Branches and new growth - What are you reaching toward? When you stretch, what seems possible to you? What learning edges are calling to you? What do you hope to develop to be all that you want to be?

Fruits – What has been fruitful? What, if any, lack of producing has caused you some frustration or sadness?

Seeds - What are the gifts you would like to pass on to others? What seeds do you hope to release so that you no longer need to be the planter?

Fallen leaves (in the outer circle) - What needs to be pruned from your branches to enable deep growth? What can you identify that needs to be tossed aside? What do you carry that no longer serves its purpose, extra baggage that can be laid down?

Clearing

Do not try to serve
the whole world
or do anything grandiose.
Instead, create
a clearing
in the dense forest
of your life
and wait there
patiently,
until the song
that is yours alone to sing
falls into your open cupped hands
and you recognize and greet it.
Only then will you know
how to give yourself
to the world
so worthy of rescue.

- Martha Postlethwaite



Self portrait / K. Murphy

Fire

What makes a fire burn
is space between the logs,
a breathing space.
Too much of a good thing,
too many logs packed in too tight
can squelch a fire,
can douse the flames
almost as surely
as a pail of water can.

So building fires
requires tending in a special way,
attention to the wood
as well as to the spaces in between,
so fire can catch, can grow, can breathe,
can build its energy and warmth
which we so need in order
to survive the cold.

We need to practice building open spaces
just as clearly as we learn
to pile on the logs.
It's fuel, and absence of the fuel
together, that make fire possible,
let it develop in the way that's
possible when we lay logs in just the
way the fire wants to go.

Then we can watch it as it leaps and plays,
burns down and then flames up in unexpected ways.
Then we need only lay a log on it from time to time.
Then it has life all of its own,
a beauty that emerges
not where logs are
but where spaces can invite the flames
to burn, to form exquisite
patterns of their own,
their beauty possible
simply because the space is there,
an opening in which flame
that knows just how it wants
to burn can find its way.



- *Judy Brown, from Leading from Within:
Poetry that Sustains the Courage to Lead*

Questions for Reflection:

- ❖ As you reflect on this season of your life, how do the lines ‘too much of a good thing,’ ‘piling on the logs,’ and ‘taking away breathing spaces’ speak to you? What are they saying?
- ❖ When have you enjoyed ‘building open spaces’ that allow the fire of your energy to leap and play? Who/what fostered this?
- ❖ As you consider what is vital for trustworthy settings, how might you balance your own ‘logs and spaces’ as you reflect on holding this kind of space for others? What inner work do you believe is necessary for you to continue so that you are able to bring yourself fully into this?

Your Part in All of This

As we stand
in strange
uncertain times,

Or perhaps as
we fall to
our knees
under the sheer weight
of not knowing,

We may dream
of a return
to easier days.

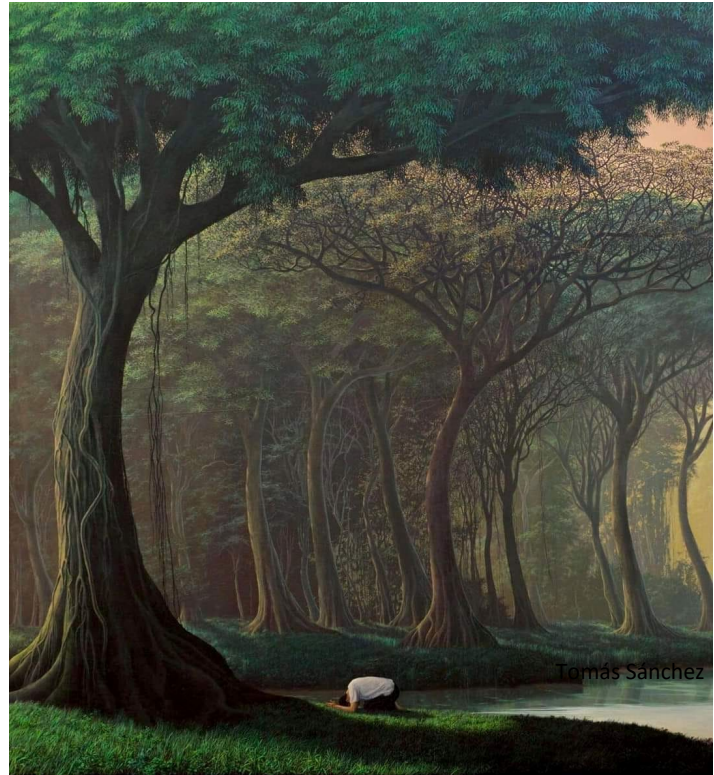
But did we hear
what it is
that this age
is asking of us?

Did our part
become clear?

Did your part become clear?

Nic Askew

<https://nicaskew.com/>

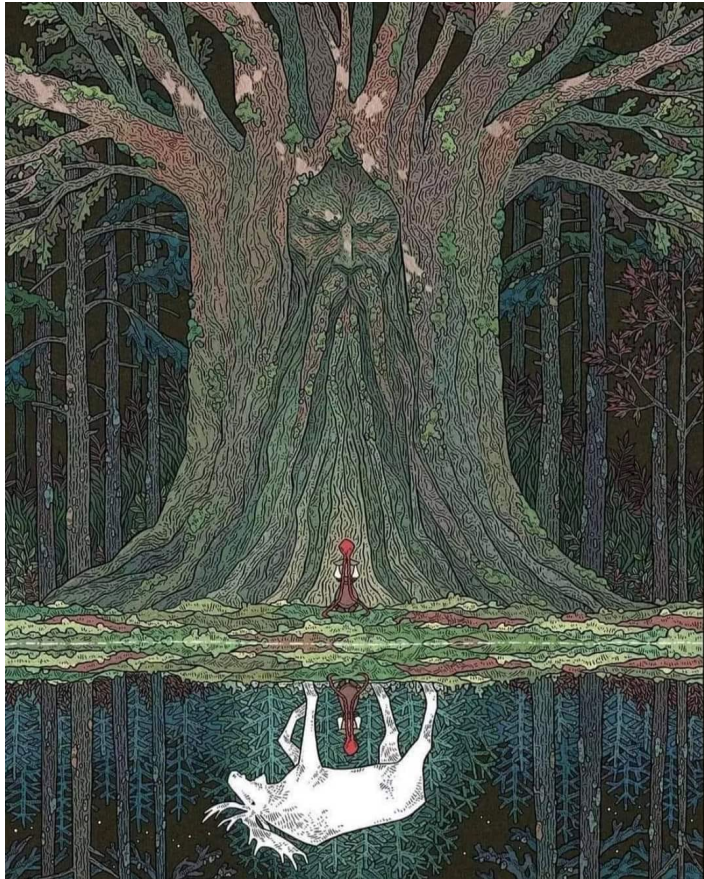


Tomás Sánchez

Bringing it All Home

Reflective Questions:

- ❖ What is a gift or insight I'm taking with me from this retreat?
- ❖ What am I discovering about myself in my own homecoming?
- ❖ What inner work do I need to continue to do to hold this kind of space for others?
- ❖ Where in my life are there natural openings to offer an experience to others? What might be the "low hanging fruit," that is, places to gather that are naturally supportive spaces in which I feel a level of trust and confidence?



Julia Tar

Home

Even after all these years
of wandering this twisting path of self,
how is it I am still surprised
to find a new home inside the rush of river,
as if I haven't been here
in this song of melting many times before?
How is it I sometimes forget to arrive
exactly where I am, especially in
these days
when forgiveness arrives like the cranes

on great wings that charge the air.
These days when love comes crashing in
like western wind, breaking branches
and rearranging the yard, as if to say
it is here to change everything.
Sometimes I forget the world will find me
wherever I am and insist in the language
of willow and trunk and hawk and noon,
home, home, you are home.

- Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer