

## Reconnecting with Purpose Retreat, October 26<sup>th</sup> – October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Light on the Hill Retreat Center, Van Etten, NY

### Arc of Program

<b>Wednesday, October 26<sup>th</sup></b>		
11:00am – Noon	Arrive, Register, Check-in	Main Entrance Foyer See Housekeeping Guidelines in Packet
Noon – 1:00pm	Lunch	Dining Hall
1:00pm – 3:00pm	Session 1: Welcome, Touchstones, Introductions Attentive Listening and the Practice of Open, Honest Questions	Main Meeting Room
3:00pm – 3:30pm	Rest, Walk, Relax, Explore	See Property Map in Packet
3:30pm – 5:00pm	Session 2: Those Rocks We're Pushing	Main Meeting Room
5:00pm - 6:00pm	Rest, Walk, Relax, Explore	See Property Map in Packet
6:00pm – 7:00pm	Dinner	Dining Hall
7:00pm – 8:00pm	Community Campfire   Smores Nature Craft Session Self-organized games, Conversation	Fire Circle Dining Hall Community Seating Areas

<b>Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup></b>		
8:00am – 9:00am	Breakfast	Dining Hall
9:00am – 10:45am	Session 3: The Art of Facing Things	Main Meeting Room
10:45am - 11:15am	Break & Snack	Dining Hall
11:15am - 12:45pm	Session 4: Watering the Seeds of True Self	Main Meeting Room
12:45pm – 1:45pm	Lunch	Dining Hall
1:45pm - 2:15pm	Rest, Walk, Relax, Explore	See Property Map in Packet
2:15pm – 5:00pm	Session 5: Discernment Circles	Main Meeting Room and Grounds
5:00pm - 6:00pm	Rest, Walk, Relax, Explore	See Property Map in Packet
6:00pm – 7:00pm	Dinner	Dining Hall
7:00pm – 8:00pm	Candlelight Song Circle Self-organized games & activities	Main Meeting Room Dining Hall, Community Seating Areas

<b>Friday, October 28<sup>th</sup></b>		
8:00am – 9:00am	Breakfast	Dining Hall
9:00am – 11:00am	Session 6: Reflection on My Work	Main Meeting Room
11:00am - 11:15am	Break	
11:15am - Noon	Closing Circle & Next Steps	Main Meeting Room
Noon – 1:00pm	Lunch & Depart	Dining Hall

## **Community Activities**

**Please note:** The activities below are provided for those seeking community and connection during late afternoon and early evenings. You may be seeking solitude and rest during these stretches. Please spend your free time in whatever way serves you best.

**Wednesday, October 26th, 7pm - 8pm**

### **Campfire and Smores at the Fire Circle – Self-organized**

Participants are invited to self-organize this campfire, weather permitting. Bench seating, fire-making supplies and smore ingredients will be provided.

**Wednesday, October 26th, 7pm - 8pm**

### **Nature Craft Session in the Dining Hall**

Join Anu Rangarajan for a relaxing craft session incorporating nature objects found around the property.

**Thursday, October 27th, 5pm - 6pm**

### **Guided Nature Walk: Learn about Wildflower, Herb and mushroom ID**

Join MaryJo Lane for a gentle walk on the property trails, weather permitting. Learn to identify wildflowers, herbs and mushrooms. MaryJo recently certified as a Community Mushroom Educator and welcomes others to join in with their knowledge and curiosity of fungi and herbs.

**Thursday, October 27th, 7pm - 8pm**

### **Candlelight Song Circle in the Main Meeting Room**

Kahlil Gibran said “Music is the language of the spirit” Throughout our Retreat, we’ve practiced giving voice to our inner teacher. Song is yet another avenue to hear ourselves into speech, experience a supportive resonance and witness the meeting of our collective voices. Our song leader, Andrea Brown, will bring us together in simple call and response songs from cultures around the world grounded in the themes of our program. No sheet music, musical talent, or previous experience needed. Andrea will extend an invitation to reflect/share/process the experience between songs.

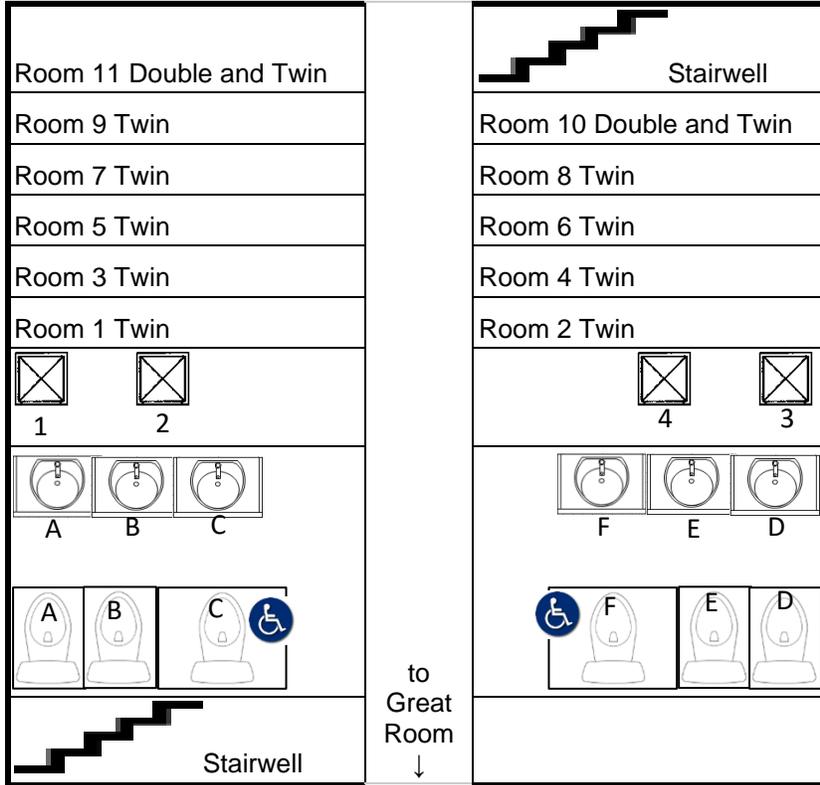
# Upper Level

# Inner Light Lodge

West Exit



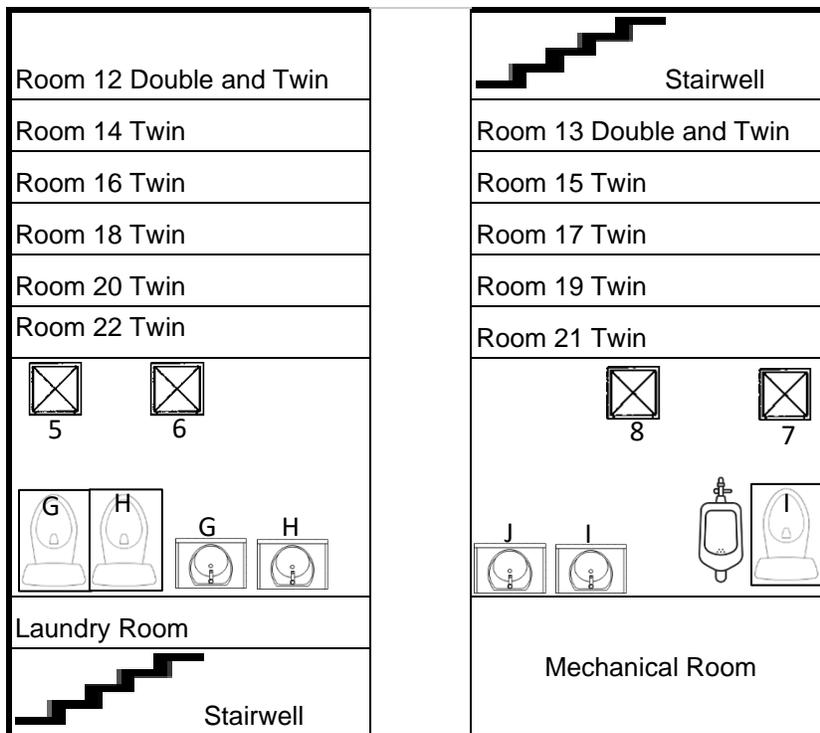
MEADOW

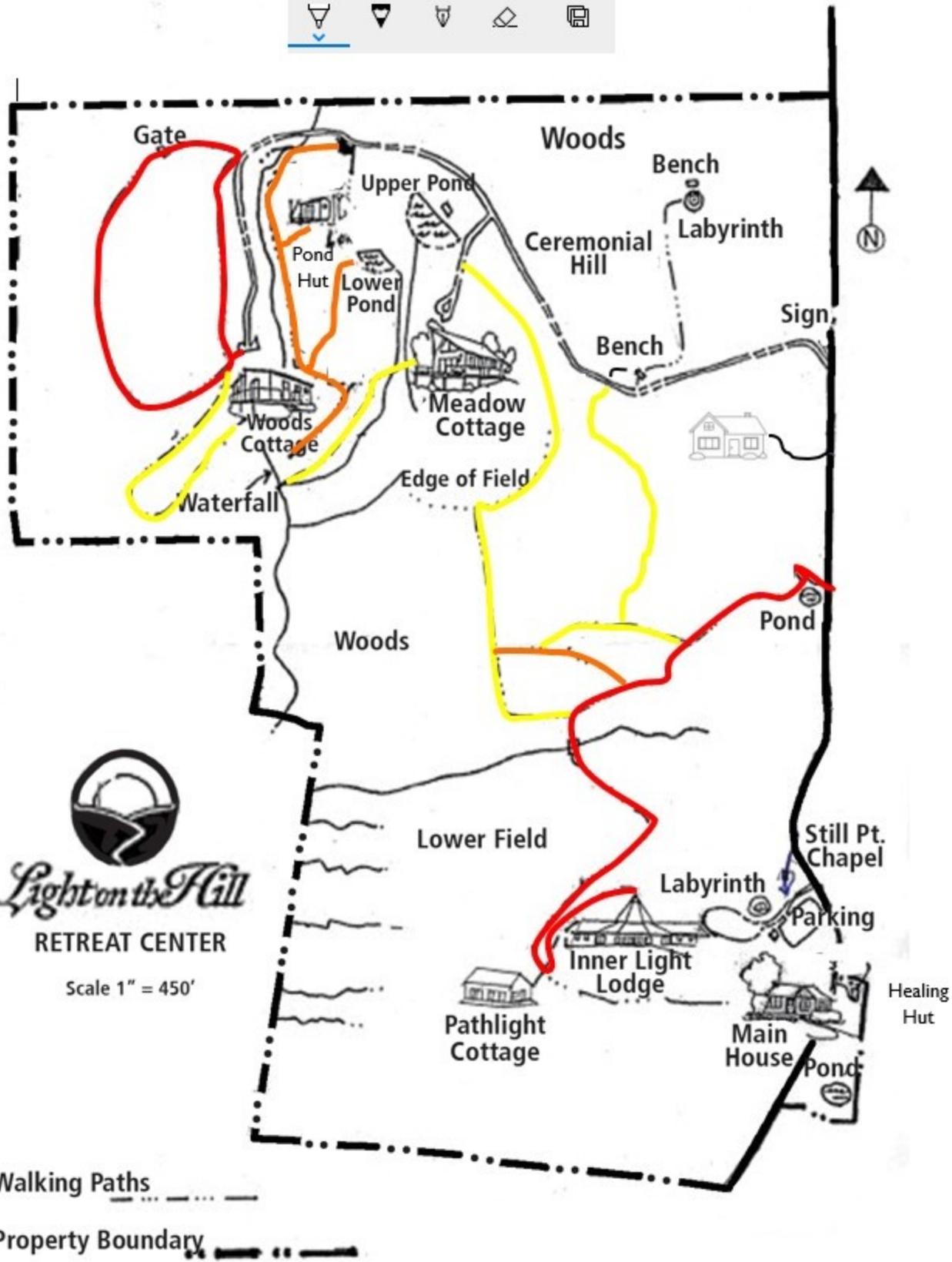


# Lower Level

West Exit

MEADOW





*Light on the Hill*

RETREAT CENTER

Scale 1" = 450'

Walking Paths

Property Boundary

## 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](http://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.



“To move slowly and deliberately through the world, attending to one thing at a time, strikes us as radically subversive, even un-American. We cringe from the idea of relinquishing, in any moment, all but one of the infinite possibilities offered us by our culture. Plagued by a highly diffused attention, we give ourselves to everything lightly. That is our poverty. In saying yes to everything, we attend to nothing. One only can love what one stops to observe.”

*Belden C. Lane, from The Solace of Fierce Landscapes*

**CARD 1:** Any preoccupations or concerns you want to note and then set aside for the moment in order to be more present here. *Please tuck that away.*

**CARD 2:** A personal hope, question or intention you are carrying for yourself as we begin this experience. Alternatively, What *don't* you want to lay down and instead bring more fully with you into this time?



### *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.





## Practice Guide: Asking Open & Honest Questions

*Scenario offered by Anu Rangarajan*

Years ago, I met a colleague in another department who was interested in doing some collaborative work to support small farms. We submitted a grant together, but were unsuccessful. That was about 10 years ago, and we really haven't interacted much since. Now, he has pivoted his work towards renewable energy. Recently he reached out again. He wanted to submit a proposal to create a decision-making tool for farmers related to installing solar panels. He had been checking out our program website and saw how our work aims to center equity and increase the diversity of farmers in NY. He reached out and invited me to collaborate on the grant. What he really needed from me was a DEI plan and statement for the grant, in a week. This left me feeling very conflicted. The timeline did not allow for me to actually engage with communities and ask if they were interested. Yet, if the funding was received, these farmers might have opportunities to create and mold renewable energy programs for their benefit.

On top of that, I have been feeling weary with the seeming unending asks to 'represent.' By saying yes, am I getting in the way of him actually leaning in to engage with these farmers? If I say yes, am I advocating for the farmers who have not been previously engaged? Or am I doing harm by representing their interests without their engagement?

**Look over the questions below and discuss among your group: Which seem closed, "cloaked," (that is, veiled in an agenda), and open/honest?**

- Have you read the book *Don't Overthink It: Make Easier Decisions and Bring More Joy to Your Life*? I think it might be helpful to you.
- Imagine that you've committed to collaboration on the terms provided. What feelings arise in your body?
- Does the fact that you are considering this opportunity mean that you enjoy DEI work?
- What might a colleague say to you as you figure out what to do?
- You mentioned feeling weary. What aspects of your current work are you finding energizing?

After you've finished discussing the questions, work together to generate a few open and honest questions of your own.



## Perhaps It Would Eventually Erode, But ...

That rock that we  
have been pushing up  
the hill—that one  
that keeps rolling back down  
and we keep pushing  
back up—what if  
we stopped? We are not  
Sisyphus. This rock  
is not a punishment.  
It's something we've chosen  
to push. Who knows why.  
I look at all the names  
we once carved into  
its sedimentary sides.  
How important  
I thought they were,  
those names. How  
I've clung to labels,  
who's right, who's wrong,  
how I've cared about  
who's pushed harder  
and who's been slack.  
Now all I want  
is to let the rock  
roll back to where it belongs,  
which is wherever it lands,  
and you and I could,  
imagine!, walk unencumbered,  
all the way to the top and  
walk and walk and never stop  
except to discover what  
our hands might do  
if for once they were no longer  
pushing.



*Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer*

*From the poet's blog, entitled A Hundred  
Falling Veil*

## **Session 2: Those Rocks We're Pushing: Questions for Reflection**

What rock are you pushing hard during this season of your life or work? What of your current work feels like Sisyphus?

To what extent have you chosen to push the rock? What internal conditioning or societal forces fuel the pushing?

What would happen if you stopped? What might emerge? How does the thought of stopping feel?

## The Art of Facing Things

Salmon have much to teach us about the art of facing things. In swimming up waterfalls, these remarkable creatures seem to defy gravity. It is an amazing thing to behold. A closer look reveals a wisdom for all beings who want to thrive.



What the salmon somehow know is how to turn their underside—from center to tail— into the powerful current coming at them, which hits them squarely and the impact then launches them out and further up the waterfall; to which their reaction is, again, to turn their underside back into the powerful current that, of course, hits again squarely; and this successive impact launches them further out and up the waterfall. Their leaning into what they face bounces them further and further along their unlikely journey.

From a distance, it seems magical, as if these mighty fish are flying, conquering their element. In actuality, they are deeply at one with their element, vibrantly and thoroughly engaged in a compelling dance of turning-toward-and-being-hit-squarely that moves them through water and air to the very source of their nature.

In terms useful to the life of the spirit, the salmon are constantly faithful in exposing their underside to the current coming at them. Mysteriously, it is the physics of this courage that enables them to move through life as they know it so directly. We can learn from this very active paradox; for we, too, must be as faithful to living in the open if we are to stay real in the face of our daily experience. In order not to be swept away by what the days bring, we, too, must find a way to lean into the forces that hit us so squarely.

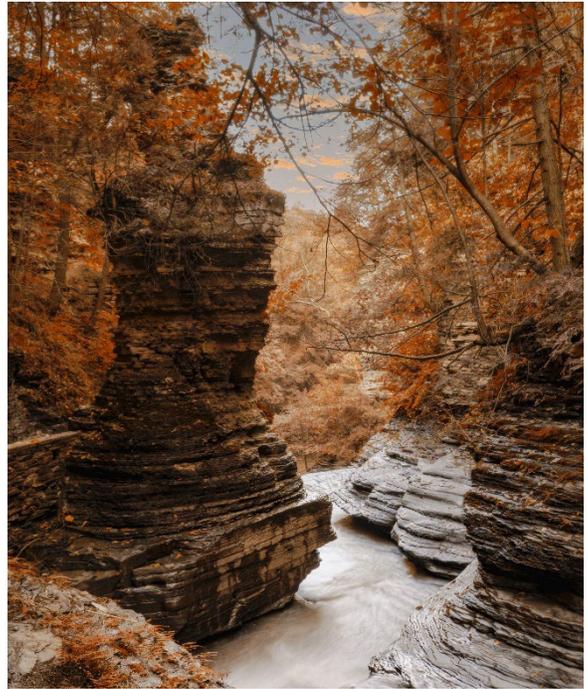
The salmon offer us a way to face truth without shutting down. They show us how leaning into our experience, though we don't like the hit, moves us on. Time and again, though we'd rather turn away, it is the impact of being revealed, through our willingness to be vulnerable, that enables us to experience both the mystery and grace.

*From Mark Nepo (2000). The Book of Awakening: Having the Life You Want by Being Present to the Life You Have. Berkeley: Conari Press. P. 357-358*



### Session 3: Questions for Reflection

As we look into the under currents of our lives, we invite you to explore the kinds of experiences and discoveries that represent significant moments in your life that have brought you here, particularly those events in which your identity and integrity were encouraged, tested, or established. It's important to note that these are not only things that relate to the positive and productive events in our lives. Times of change, difficulty or deep questioning are important currents to explore. They often help us look below the surface to discover our own resources; they can signal the need for movement or transition in our lives.



*Treman State Park, Ithaca NY*

1. Take a few minutes to “sit” with your life and reflect on the significant choices, events and life experiences that have led you to where you are currently. What are the places and times in your life that you were hit squarely by powerful currents? Let significant people come to mind as well as ideas, insights or discoveries that have been essential to your own self-understanding. See what rises to the top and don't worry about making a coherent narrative.
2. Choose two or three that feel most significant and note them. Remember, this isn't so much a chronology as it is like taking a “snapshot” of what shows up with reflection.
3. Write a couple of sentences about each one that captures it and also says something about its significance.
4. Now, step back and notice if there are any threads or themes running through them (e.g. how changes have happened in your life; the kinds of strengths, qualities or values that these may have fostered; the kinds of things you care most about).
5. Finally, from this exercise what have you discovered or learned about where you are currently? Can you put that into a sentence or two?



## Everyone has a Gift

Each person is born with a gift. Our call is to find it and care for it. The ultimate purpose of the gift is to exercise the heart into inhabiting its aliveness. For the covenant of life is not just to stay alive, but to stay in our aliveness. And staying in aliveness depends on opening the heart and keeping it open.

Our dreams, goals, and ambitions are all kindling, fuel for the heart to exercise its aliveness, to bring our gift into the world, to discover what matters. Like a match, our light is revealed as our gift strikes against the needs of the world. When my sincerity strikes against yours, our gifts can give off their light.

We drift in and out of knowing our aliveness. Pain, worry, fear, and loss can muffle and confuse us. But finding our gift and working it will bring us back alive. It doesn't matter if we're skillful or clumsy, if we play our gift well or awkwardly, or if we make great strides or fail. Aliveness is not a judge in a talent show. Aliveness shows itself in response to wholeheartedness, when we can say yes to life, and work with what we're given, and stay in relationship—to everything.



*Mark Nepo, excerpt from The One Life We're Given: Finding the Wisdom that Waits in Your Heart.*

## **Session 4: Birthright Gifts: Questions for Reflection**

Think about a time or experience you had as a child in which you were in your element, a time of satisfaction, of competence or joy, or a time when you recognized a “Seed of True Self” coming through you. Was there someone who “saw” you as a child in your uniqueness? How did they describe you? Write a brief paragraph about this time of your life.

Secondly, think of a time when you’ve experienced this as an adult. If you can, think of a recent time related to your experiences in your work or vocation.

After you’ve written your two paragraphs, think about the gifts these brief stories reveal. Try to put these gifts in your own words and look beneath the surface of things. Then notice whether there is any connection in terms of the gifts that appeared in the story of childhood and the story in adulthood.

How are you currently using these gifts in your work?

What gifts, if any, are you longing to use that you are not currently using in your work?

## Session 5: Discernment Circles

*“Real help, professionally or personally, consists of listening to people, of paying respectful attention to people so that they can access their own ideas first.”*

— Nancy Kline, Time to Think: Listening to Ignite the Human Mind

**Purpose:** Behind the Discernment Circle is a simple but crucial conviction: each of us has an inner teacher, a voice of truth, that offers the guidance and power we need to face and process our questions and challenges. It is rare in the life of a farmer, agricultural educator or change-maker to encounter the generosity of space and attention that welcomes the inner voice to manifest as spoken words, ideas or directions in a supportive group of peers. The function of the Discernment Circle is not to give advice or “fix” a peer’s challenge from ‘the outside in’ but to offer attentive, open-hearted listening and open & honest questions so that they can discover their own wisdom from ‘the inside out’.

### Guidelines:

- Our whole task is not to problem solve, but to provide space for the speaker to think and reflect on what they would like to do.
- Our primary support will be to ask open, honest questions
- Questions should be concise and presented one at a time. Avoid giving background as to why you are asking a question or explaining the reason for the question. If you are unsure exactly how to phrase the question, it is better to wait silently to let the question develop and become more focused
- Refrain from giving advice. Do not ask questions that suggest the answer or cloak advice in the guise of questions.
- Confidentiality is essential, both during and after the process

### Afternoon Schedule

2:15pm – 2:45pm	Large Group: preparation for discernment circles
2:45pm – 2:55pm	Groups assemble, settle in afternoon location
2:55pm – 3:25pm	Session 1
3:25pm – 3:35pm	10 minute stretch break*
3:35pm – 4:05pm	Session 2
4:05pm – 4:15pm	10 minute stretch break*
4:15pm – 4:45pm	Session 3
4:45pm – 5:00pm	Return to Main Meeting Room for Closing

### Session Pacing\*

**5 minutes:** Speaker introduces their question or challenge and provides context

**20 minutes:** Peers ask questions to help the speaker explore the issue more fully

**5 minutes:** Acknowledgement and/or appreciation of speaker’s gifts, strengths

\*Please elect a timekeeper so each person’s speaking time is respected



**My Work in the Past**

**My Work as Others See It**

**My Work as I See it Now**

**My Work as I Wish it To Be**

## **Session 6: My Work: Questions for Reflection**

What do the images have to say to you?

What surprises you?

What seems more clear now than it did when we began this retreat?

What do you believe is important as you leave this retreat and re-enter into your work life?

## Turning To One Another

There is no power greater than a community discovering what it cares about.  
Ask “What’s possible?” not “What’s wrong?” Keep asking.

Notice what you care about.  
Assume that many others share your dreams.

Be brave enough to start a conversation that matters.  
Talk to people you know.  
Talk to people you don’t know.  
Talk to people you never talk to.

Be intrigued by the differences you hear.  
Expect to be surprised.  
Treasure curiosity more than certainty.

Invite in everybody who cares to work on what’s possible.  
Acknowledge that everyone is an expert about something.  
Know that creative solutions come from new connections.

Remember, you don’t fear people whose story you know.  
Real listening always brings people closer together.

Trust that meaningful conversations can change your world.  
Rely on human goodness. Stay together.

*Margaret Wheatley, Turning to One Another, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.*

