

# Spirit & Sparks

OCTOBER 2011



The Congregational Church of Weston, UCC, 130 Newton Street, Weston, MA 02493  
www.congwestonucc.net 781-899-5417 781-647-1165-fax

## BEGINNING A HOLY CONVERSATION OF CONGREGATIONAL

**ENVISIONING:** Moderator Robin Gunderson's remarks on behalf of the Council's Stewards - Sunday, September 23

Shall we begin a journey when we do not know the final destination?

As the Congregational Life Cycles go: Birth, Formation, Stability, Decline, Death, we are clearly in the Stability phase! Do we really need to leave our comfort zone and "journey by stages" as the Israelites did?

The new governance structure, adopted by our Congregation in February of 2011, calls for the Council's Stewards to, among other things, "address strategic goals." To honor this call, the Stewards presented to Council a framework and timeline for what a strategic planning process might look like along with guiding principals:

- To always be about open and honest communication,
- To employ candor & mutual respect,
- To do our work through a faith filter and with an openness to prayerful discernment.

It is in this spirit that we worked and presented our suggestion for a way to address strategic goals. And with Council's affirmation in June, we now bring to this circle, for your discernment, the next steps toward envisioning our future.

First a definition of visioning: It is framed in the book *Holy Conversations* by Gill Rendle & Alice Mann as "A structured conversation by a group of people about what they believe God calls them to do or be." While a mission statement is one of identity and purpose, a vision statement is a word picture of what we would look like if our mission were fulfilled.

Rendle and Mann go on to outline three types of planning:

- Problem Planning: short term work designed to fix something that is broken with a time frame that is immediate – 1 or 2 meetings.
- Developmental Planning: longer range planning, asking "What's Next?" This approach connects the future to the present so that a church can move on to its authentic identity and purpose. Time frame: 3 - 6 mos.
- Frame-bending Planning: premised on the assumption that things are not working, nor faithful and appropriate to current setting for ministry. Time frame: 12 - 18 mos.

The envisioning process we propose employs the Developmental approach – this is about looking up and looking long – about 5 years out – painting a picture of what the Congregational Church of Weston, UCC looks like, sounds like to ourselves and to others when we fully live out our mission and purpose.

The process will seek to answer these three questions:  
Who are we now?  
Who is our neighbor?  
Who is God calling us to be?

Joe and I met with Associate Conference Minister Wendy Vander Hart, who is supporting many of our UCC churches through an envisioning process, and she shared this: "Churches that are thriving are the ones that are clear about mission, about purpose. They can articulate why they exist and for whom they exist."

*Continued*

## BEGINNING A HOLY CONVERSATION ... (Cont'd from page 1)

These churches have done the big work to answer big questions:

- Who are we?
- Why are we?
- What kind of story is our congregation living out?
- What purpose can we deeply own?
- What populations and life situations can we respond to with singleness of mind and gladness of heart?

This is an invitation to purpose. By claiming our story – new perspectives might be offered. What is next?

Joe has been very helpful in seeking resources and supporting the Stewards in the process to date and we very much appreciate this. Typically, during an envisioning journey, the pastor is a champion of the process, but not leader. Thank you, Joe, for cheering us on! This process requires lay leadership and the Council's Stewards are committed to and excited about this journey – wherever it may take us! But, authentic vision can only come from the congregation. And so we bring the conversation here to this circle of discernment and the Congregational Meeting to follow. Shall we together start a Holy Conversation of Congregational Envisioning?

Today's scripture from my version of the Bible reads: "The whole congregation of Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded."

*Exodus 17: 1*

And reminds us:

"I will be standing there in front of you on the rock of Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." *Exodus 17: 6*

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Larry Carr lifted up three questions to consider as we paused for personal reflection:

1. What are your personally thirsty for?

2. What do you think our congregation thirsts for?
3. What are some of the thirsts around us that call us to respond?

The Envisioning Timeline and Process was presented and affirmed during a brief Congregational Meeting on Sunday, September 23. It follows this article and is posted on the web site.

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Now we begin the work of the envisioning journey, each step illuminating the next. A congregation-wide survey, small home-based gatherings, visits to other faith communities who have done the big work of seeking clarity around mission and purpose. We will welcome Wendy Vander Hart to our pulpit. We will look to mission statements, other guiding documents adopted by the congregation and the ReVisioning document from 1999. We will reach out to our neighbors to learn about unmet needs. We will prayerfully discern our findings with the goal of reporting back to Council in January and bring forth the results of our shared work at the Congregational meeting in February.

We are committed to communicating throughout the process and hope that all will share their input, comments, questions, concerns and ideas, as well. Please reach out to the Council's Stewards at any time: Larry Carr, Priscilla Claman, Robin Gunderson, Ann Marie Kreft, and Tom Nicholson.

With appreciation,

Robin Gunderson, Moderator

*Pastor's Note – my draft copy for the editorial this month was so synergistic with our Moderator's words in church about the proposed envisioning process, given a green light by the congregation on September 25, that I felt that Robin's words should serve as the editorial this month. I only think to add some other words (not mine): "A vision without a task is but a dream, a task without a vision is a drudgery, but a vision with a task is the hope of the world."*

## CCW PROPOSED ENVISIONING PROCESS & TIMELINE: 6/7/11 – 2/12/12

### Guiding principles:

Open and honest communication  
 Candor & Mutual Respect  
 Faith filter  
 Openness to prayerful discernment

	Date	Step	Notes	Status
1	6/7/11	Stewards Meeting	-Discern proposed Envisioning Process & Timeline -Explore name for the journey	-6/7 - Edited & Approved -Open
2	6/15/11	Council Meeting	Stewards recommend Envisioning Process & Timeline	Process/framework affirmed by Council 6/15/11
3	7/1/11 – 2/12	Communication	Monthly <i>Sprit &amp; Sparks</i> article throughout journey; ongoing reporting to Council	Ongoing
4	9/25/11	Special Worship Congregational Meeting	-Initiate holy discernment to introduce & invite our congregation into Holy Conversations -Congregational Meeting within worship Affirm the Envisioning Process Adopt continued Annual Goal	
5	10/23/11	Invite Wendy Vander Hart, Assoc. Conference Minister to Pulpit	-Wendy is currently leading the Conference in an Envisioning Study and has led her home church through the process. -Tape for those who cannot be in worship	
6	11/6/11	Invite the Sharing of Visions through a congregation-wide survey; include Youth, Middle High and Children through age-appropriate processes	Incorporate best practices from Conference resources and Gill Rendle & Alice Mann's book <u>Holy Conversations</u>	
7	By 11/10/11	Reach out to larger community to inquire about thirsts	Who are our neighbors? Where is the need? Who are our partners?	
8	11/6/11 – 11/19/11	Host Holy Conversations in Home Gatherings	One Steward at each Conversation Who are we now? Who is our neighbor? Who is God calling us to be?	
9	11/20/11	Reach out to those who cannot attend	Extend open invitation to give feedback	Ongoing <i>Continued</i>

10	By 12/10/11	-Compile survey, conversation notes, input from children and youth. -Distill goal clusters	-Review ReVisioning Document and other envisioning efforts by those who have gone before us  -Consult with Wendy	
11	12/10/11– 1/10/12	Who has clarity? Examine effective/best practices	Visit other houses of faith. Perhaps: West Concord, Memorial UCC in Sudbury, Edwards UCC in Framingham, High Rock Church in Brookline	
12	1/10/12 – 1/24/12	Discern our Envisioned Future		
13	1/25/12	Present our Envisioned Future		
14	1/29/12 or 2/5/12	Host Congregational Hearing		
15	2/12/12	Present at Congregational Meeting		

Presented by Councils' Stewards  
Affirmed by CCW Council  
June 15, 2011

Modified by Council's Stewards  
September 21, 2011

Affirmed by Special Congregational Meeting  
September 25, 2011

## OCTOBER REMINDERS

<u>Date</u>	<u>Altar Flowers*</u>	<u>Ushers#</u>	<u>Fellowship Hour#</u>
10/2	Banghart (P)	Brown	Church Mouse
10/9 (Columbus Day Weekend)		Nye/Pyle	
10/16		Tanny	
10/23	Cabot	Upham & Turner	
10/30 (All Saints)		Valle	

\* Altar Flower arrangements cost \$52 when the church office orders through Leiby's or you may provide your own.  
# Instructions for Ushering or hosting Fellowship Hour are in the Events Binder. (P) Perennial Flower Donor

## WORSHIP THEMES FOR OCTOBER 2011

### **October 2 - World Communion Sunday – an Intergenerational Service with Faith Discovery**

Theme: The Ten Best Ways to Live All Over the Earth

Text: Exodus 20: 1-4, 7-9, 12-20 (The Ten Commandments)

### **October 9 – 18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost - Columbus Day Weekend**

Theme: Are We Kept by the Idols We Keep?

Text: Exodus 32: 1-16 (The story of the Golden Calf)

### **October 16 - 19<sup>h</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

Theme: Not the Dead, but the Living!

Text: Matthew 22: 23-33 (Questions about Resurrection)

### **October 23 - Guest Preacher: Rev. Wendy Vander Hart, Assoc. Conference Minister**

Theme: The New Normal

Text: Acts 2: 42-47

With Special Guest: Hamlet Mbabazi Kabushenga

### **October 30-- Parable of the Bridesmaids**

Theme: “Always the Bridesmaid; but when...?”

Text: Matthew 25: 1-13



## BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS WORK DAY – OCTOBER 23

**Burrrrh! It is time to get ready for the Fall Workday:**

Please join us on **Sunday, October 23, 2011** at **8:00am**.

Bring your tools, gardening gloves, rakes, muscle power and clean-up energy. It's time to put the garden to bed for the winter and spruce things up inside for the winter season.

Bagels, cider and coffee will be provided.

Looking forward to seeing you!

Geoff Smith, Buildings & Grounds Chair

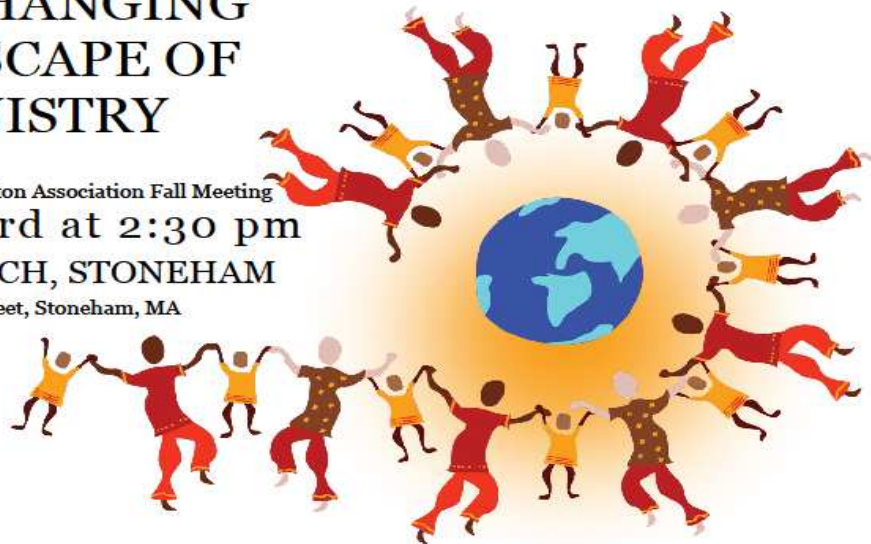
## OCTOBER 23 WORSHIP: A DOUBLE HEADER!

In our day to day and week to week faith community, we are most often immune to the work quite behind the scenes performed by the staff members of the wider United Church of Christ. That work happens in three different settings, or tiers of our denomination: the Association (ours is the Metropolitan Boston), the Conference (ours is Massachusetts) and the national (ours is headquartered in Cleveland). Closest to is in every sense is the work of the pastor to our Association, **the Rev. Wendy Vander Hart**, who has been in this position for two years. She is a very gifted minister, currently

emphasizing in her ministry just what we need: inspiration to create a crystal clear, even sparkling identity, so that who we are can be known by others and our church grow in depth and breadth. **She will be with us as preacher on October 23**, and soon after will lead the Fall meeting of the MBA (Metropolitan Boston Association) at our UCC church in Stoneham. You can see how her morning with us connects with the afternoon meeting by means of the following invitation. And you would be most welcome to attend.

### STORIES FROM THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF MINISTRY

The Metropolitan Boston Association Fall Meeting  
**October 23rd at 2:30 pm**  
**FIRST CHURCH, STONEHAM**  
1 Church Street, Stoneham, MA



Hear inspiring stories from some MBA churches that are responding to the changing times!  
Come! Be provoked, share encouragement, envision the future of your church!

To register ... <http://www.macucc.org/registrations/register/83> or call 781-890-1444 or email [macucc.waltham@verizon.net](mailto:macucc.waltham@verizon.net) or find us on [Facebook](#)

**In addition to Wendy, a special guest from Uganda will be with us, Hamlet Mbabazi Kabushenga.** Hamlet is a visionary community leader from southwest Uganda, whom Paul and Jessica Schendel met when they went there to work in 2009. They are continuing to work with him on plans to establish a Science Institute at the local community college, which he founded.

Hamlet is a Canon in the Church of Uganda, an ex-Member of Parliament and the founder of a very active grassroots community development organization. Hamlet will speak to us briefly during the worship service and will be available to talk to people more informally during coffee hour about his vision for his community and how he works to put that into practice.

# Faith Discovery for Children



**October 2 is World-Wide Communion Sunday.** We'll all be together in worship and partake of Communion by intinction. Joe's sermon will be especially children-friendly. I personally love this service because it reminds me that people all over the world are gathered to worship and praise the same changeless and loving God, each group in its own way. And we all come to be spirit-fed at the same Table. We ARE the story!

**October 9 is a One Room Sunday.** Because of a 3-day weekend, we will all be together in Faith Discovery acting out part of Moses' story where the people Moses led out of Egypt are becoming impatient. They've been waiting for more than 40 days for Moses to come back from a trip to The Mountain where he intends to speak to God. What the people decide to do does not make God happy! Moses has to calm God down to save the people from punishment. Who says the Bible isn't exciting? We'll think about standing up for people we know and people we don't.

**Every Sunday, Bring Your Bibles!**

**Stewardship Heads Up:** This year we are offering our donations each week to help protect the oceans and the animals that live there. So far we have raised \$24.05. Parents, you can help by helping your child remember to bring a coin offering. There are coin envelopes on the Faith Discovery Table and in the classrooms. Teachers will also hand out packets of envelopes for children to take home. Offerings are collected in the classrooms. For every envelope collected a glass stone is placed in the jar on the table. LET'S FILL IT UP!! LET'S MAKE IT OVERFLOW!!

## October Stewardship Ideas for Children

- Sign up to be a Light Bearer. There are still slots to fill!
- Bring in your coin offering to help protect the oceans and the animals that live there. Your offerings will go to the New England Aquarium.
- Help spruce up our church inside and out on Work Day, Sunday, October 23.

## And our October Light Bearers:

10/2: Helen Townsend  
10/9: **YOU?**  
10/16: Helen Townsend  
10/23: Kai Townsend  
10/30: Hannah Brown

## TOY, CLOTHING, & BOOK DRIVE FOR CRADLES TO CRAYONS (C2C)

Now until October 16

All are invited to donate any gently used clothing, toys, and books for children aged 12 years & younger. New art supplies are most welcome. Bring your donations to church anytime up to and including Sunday, 10/16 when CCW's Youth groups will be volunteering at the C2C warehouse.

## MIDDLE HIGH YOUTH, CONFIRMATION CLASS & SR. HIGH YOUTH OCTOBER NEWS

### Volunteering at Cradles to Crayons – from Kristen Reeder, Middle High Advisor

On Sunday, October 16 from 1:00 to 3:00 pm we have a reservation to volunteer at the Cradles to Crayons (C2C) warehouse, lovingly nicknamed "The Giving Factory." This will be a joint **Middle School, Confirmation and Senior High Youth Group** volunteering opportunity.

Once again, I ask that each youth bring a bagged lunch to church, as we will leave CCW at 12:15 pm. Please reply to my email about C2C, with a release form which must be filled out by each participant and given to me by October 16th. In addition, C2C requires a pre-registration form with each person's name, birth date of students under 18, parent's or guardian's full name and emergency contact phone numbers. I will fill out this form for the entire group and must send it to C2C at least 5 business days before our date.

If your child will be participating, please include this information in your response. This is a great opportunity for our kids to directly help children in need in our own community. My family and I have volunteered at The Giving Factory many times and it is a fun and rewarding experience.

We will be back to church by 3:30 for pick-up.

If you have any questions about what we have planned or anything else about our middle school youth group, please email me, call me, or see me during coffee hour. I am looking forward to a great year with your children. Joe Mayher co-advises the group with me, and we will also need addition adult support from time to time.

### Confirmation Class Meets on October 16 following Cradles to Crayons:

We have scheduled confirmation class from 3:30 to 5:00pm at the church on October 16 in case any of our four confirmands wish to attend the prior service outing. This is not expected, but would of course be meaningful. The class session, to be taught by Cathy Liddell and Joe Mayher, this month engages a theme about worship, including the sacraments, music and prayer. Confirmands should read chapters 10, 12, 13, 14 & 15 (which is not as much as it sounds like!) in our book of letters, *Words for the Journey*.

**Senior High Youth:** To repeat, Senior High youth are invited to attend the Cradles to Crayons service project listed above—but must contact Kristen and comply with the registration requirements! There has also been an email out there from some time ago inquiring into interest in a trip to Crane's Beach on Columbus Day Weekend, with Monday now looking preferable. (But so far only two of you have replied....) One thought was to do the CROP Walk a week late by walking 1.5 miles down the beach, turning around and walking back, if any are interested in using our time that way. Or... we can just enjoy a walk and a talk (including our service project) and a little picnic. The thought would be to leave the church at 10:30am and be home around 2:30pm. Please let Joe Mayher know if you have interested, as he is advising this group with Janet Mitchell.

## HAVE YOU NOTICED OUR WONDERFUL NEW ART EXHIBIT BY FLORENCE COMO?

We are most grateful to noted Lincoln artist Florence Como for her loan of twelve original oil and acrylic paintings which adorn our gallery wall. The exhibit features scenes from Cape Ann to Cape Cod, and from Boston to Florence! She has several "Best of Show" and First Place awards to her credit, and is represented by *My*

*Sister's Gallery* in Sandwich on Cape Cod. She is an active member of many art associations, and has taught in the Lincoln schools. Also a water colorist, she has studied with several notable mentors. We are indeed grateful for the exhibit, which will be available for two more months. Enjoy!

## FAITH COMMUNITY NEWS

### *Birthdays*

October 2 Lindsey Barnard  
 October 5 Cindy Murtha Tanny  
 October 7 Mikayla Higgins  
 October 11 Phil Saunders  
 October 11 Alisandra von Lichtenberg  
 October 14 Katie Valle



October 15 Jane Purser  
 October 17 Rob Purser  
 October 21 Francisco Shelton  
 October 25 Mario Purser  
 October 26 Owen Ramsey  
 October 30 Emily Barnard

## OUTREACH

Rebekah Gardiner for Outreach

### The Outreach Committee would like to:

- Shout out a call for Bristol Lodge shoppers, cooks and servers for November 26th.
- Thank you to the Reeder and Gardiner families for serving at Bristol Lodge in September.
- Remind everyone about CROP Walk for Hunger on Sunday, October 2nd. Look for pledge sheets or give a pledge to someone walking.
- Call your attention to a local 7th grader's website for Vermont relief [www.savermont.org](http://www.savermont.org). Coby Goldstein is a 7th grader in Weston and his fund raising is going to the American Red Cross Vermont Disaster Relief, United

Way of Vermont, and the Vermont Food Bank. Check out his website if you want to help.

- Thank you for all you do to help us reach out!



The Outreach Committee is looking for an individual or individuals who might like to be our contact with Mary's House and Hestia's House. Both shelters are part of the Middlesex Human Services program. For more information or answers to questions, please contact Rebekah Lord Gardiner, [rlordg16@gmail.com](mailto:rlordg16@gmail.com).

**The Congregational Church of Weston, UCC  
2011 Autumn Gatherings**

**All are welcome!**

**Sunday, October 2,** 1:00pm – Annual CROP Walk for Hunger  
*(meet at Weston Town Hall)*  
2:30pm – Spirit of Life Presents Matthew Fox  
“The Quest for a Mature Christianity”

**Saturday, October 29,** 5:00pm - Harvest Potluck Supper  
& Sing-a-long with Joanne Hammil

**Sunday, November 6,** 10:30am – All Saints Candle-lighting Service

**Sunday, November 13,** 10:30am – Stewardship Sunday  
*(Campaign Budget Hearing after church)*

**Sunday, November 20,** 10:30am – Thanksgiving Sunday  
*(Dedication of our pledges for 2012)*

Visit the calendar section of our website, [www.congwestonucc.net](http://www.congwestonucc.net), for the detailed calendar

**SAFE CHURCH WELCOMES YOU!**

Members and Guests!

Children's safety is important - while playing outside around the church, please stay on the lawn and on the playground with your children, and supervise children in the parking lot - where children should not play or climb trees around the perimeter of property - and please remind your children to not play in the woods.

Did you know for your safety that...first aid kits are found in kitchen and classrooms?

Call 911 and pull fire alarms for immediate emergency response. Please report any incidents/accidents and use the designated forms that are on hand in the church office.

Safe Church Needs You! Members! If you can take a walk to the classrooms during or after the anthem, to act as a hall monitors or to get the light bearer at the last hymn. You are needed to help monitor halls during worship. Check in with Cathy Liddell to coordinate.

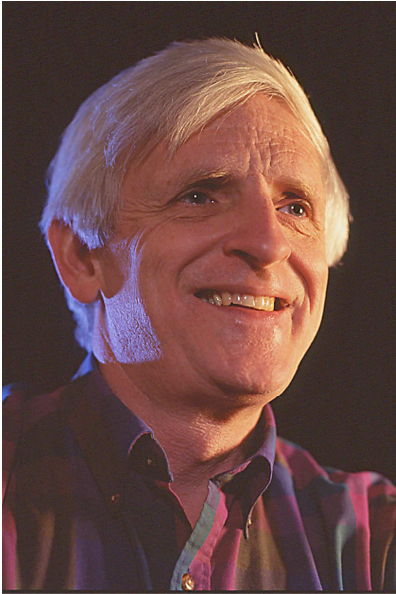
Ongoing - Please report any unusual activities or visitors to an usher or get the staff's attention.

Also, please encourage guests to sign our guest book too!

With Appreciation,  
Your friends with the Safe Church Committee  
Lisa von Lichtenberg,  
Ralph Earle  
Jessica Schendel



**The Spirit of Life:**  
**A Catholic Community of Justice & Joy**  
**Invites you to experience:**  
**World -Renowned Theologian and Author**



# Matthew Fox

**Sunday ~ October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2011**

**2:30-4:30**

**Presentation & Book Signing**

**5:00-6:15**

**Liturgy (with Matthew as guest homilist)**

**Tickets:**

**\$10**

**Location:**

**The Congregational Church of Weston/UCC**

**Matthew Fox** is an internationally acclaimed theologian who was a member of the Dominican Order for 34 years. He holds a doctorate, summa cum laude, in the History and Theology of Spirituality from the Institut Catholique de Paris. Fox founded the Institute in Culture and Creation Spirituality which became a chief target of Joseph Cardinal

Ratzinger, John Paul II's newly appointed chief Inquisitor and head of the Congregation of Doctrine and Faith. Eventually Ratzinger silenced Fox and ultimately forced him to step down as director of ICCS, and later expelled him from the Order. Fox was then welcomed into the Anglican communion where he has been a priest since 1993. He is author of 28 books which have sold more than 1.5 million copies in 42 languages. His bestselling works in the U.S. include: *Original Blessing*; *A Spirituality Named Compassion*; *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ*, and *Prayer: A Radical Response to Life* (formerly, "On Becoming a Musical, Mystical Bear.")

## **"The Quest for a Mature Christianity"**

To talk about questing for a "mature Christianity," implies of course that we have ample versions of immature Christianity in our midst. A mature Christianity would not confuse Jesus and Christ, much less Jesus and Paul. A mature Christianity would not make "flesh" a scapegoat, especially in post-modern times when science teaches us anew the wonder of flesh and the sacredness of it. A mature Christianity will develop the lower chakras instead of forbidding them; it would lead us in spiritual practices and forms of worship that heighten awareness, joy, forgiveness and grieving. It would encourage critical consciousness about issues of injustice, fascism, consumer and control fetishes. It would teach the mystics and prophets and bring alive the mystic and prophet in us all. It would tune in to cosmology and move us beyond anthropocentrism to ecological and social justice.

***Additional donations to help defray expenses would be most welcome.***