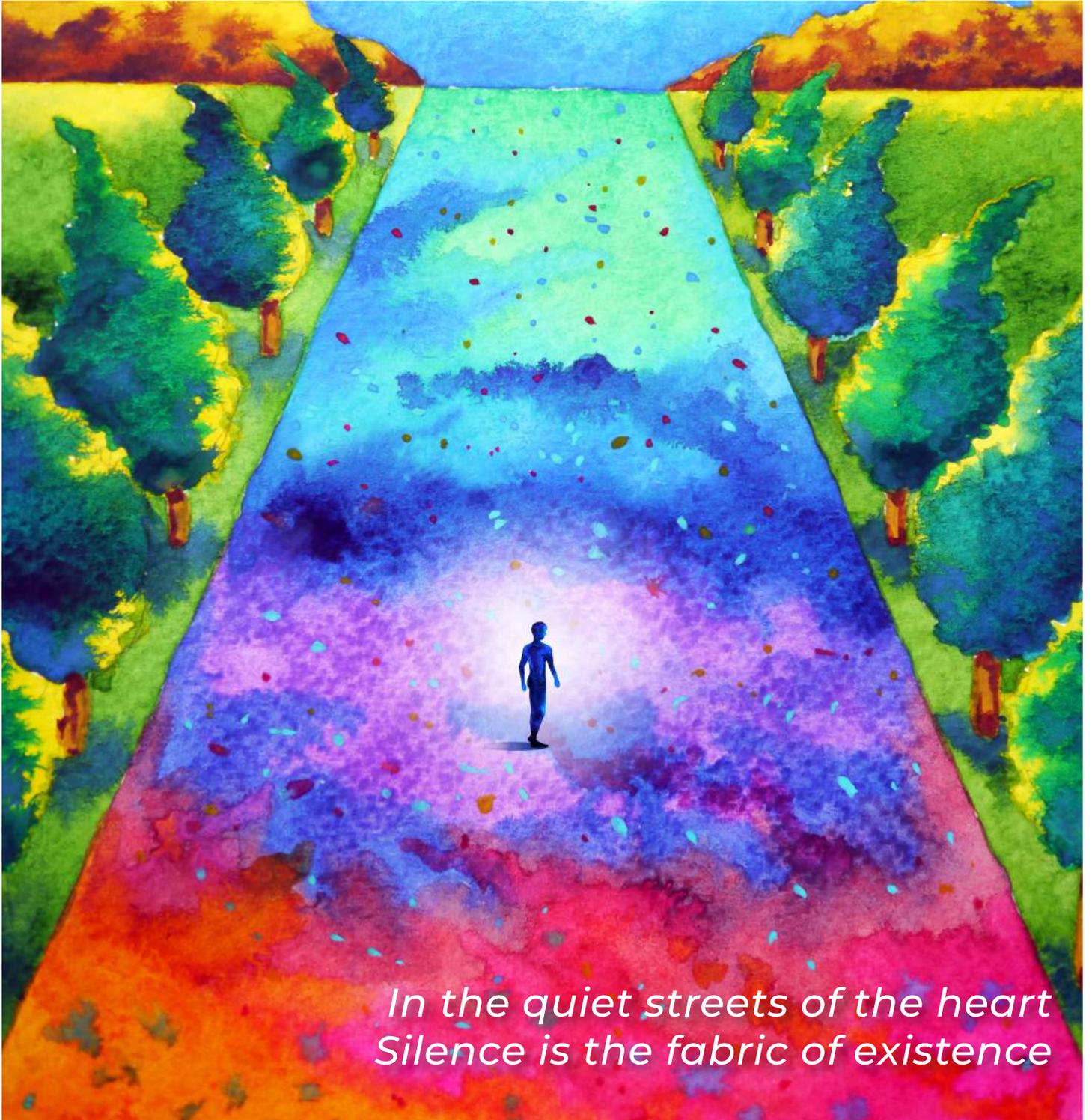


STILL POINT

A PUBLICATION OF TAU CENTER

A spirituality ministry of the Wheaton Franciscans

WINTER 2022



*In the quiet streets of the heart
Silence is the fabric of existence*

POETRY | REFLECTION | MEDITATION

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<https://www.mindful.org/this-loving-kindness-meditation-is-a-radical-act-of-love/>

<https://www.the-guided-meditation-site.com/body-awareness-meditation.html>

<https://www.the-guided-meditation-site.com/walking-meditation.html>

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CREATE A SPACE FOR STILLNESS & REFLECTION THIS WINTER SEASON



During this winter season, your spirit is beginning to rest and reflect on triumphs over the past year. Take time to acknowledge your growth and expansion as a natural evolution of your being. Let us continue moving forward with new ideas and new dreams during the changing season.

With this intention we invite you to create a dedicated space in your home or outside for quiet prayer, contemplation, reflection, and meditation on the new energy of the season. This area can be as simple as a comfortable chair with a small table, perhaps near a window to gaze on nature.

One way to savor the season is to engage in all your senses. Engaging our senses is another way of being mindful, being fully present in the moment, by paying attention to your body at this place – in this space – at this time.

We offer here a 6 week reflection series featuring loving-kindness and walking meditations and encourage you to take time to reflect and journal with written word practices and reflections. Also remember to pause and breathe and become more aware of your body during the gentle winter season. Blessings!

LOVING-KINDNESS MEDITATION IS A ACT OF LOVE

Jon Kabat-Zinn leads us in a heartscape meditation for deep healing of ourselves and others. As the pace of our lives continues to accelerate, driven by a host of forces seemingly beyond our control, more and more of us are finding ourselves drawn to engage in meditation, in this radical act of being. We are moving in the direction of meditative awareness for many reasons, not the least of which may be to maintain our individual and collective sanity, or recover our perspective and sense of meaning, or simply to deal with the outrageous stress and insecurity of this age.

By stopping and intentionally falling awake to how things are in this moment, purposefully, without succumbing to our own reactions and judgments, and by working wisely with such occurrences with a healthy dose of self-compassion when we do succumb, and by our willingness to take up residency for a time in the present moment in spite of all our plans and activities aimed at getting somewhere else, completing a project or pursuing desired objects or goals, we discover that such an act is both immensely, discouragingly difficult and yet utterly simple, profound, hugely possible after all, and restorative of mind and body, soul and spirit right in that moment. It is indeed a radical act of love just to sit down and be quiet for a time by yourself.

Loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity are rigorous meditation practices, used for the most part to cultivate one-pointed concentrated attention, out of which the powers of these evoked qualities emerge, transfiguring the heart. Just naming these qualities of heart explicitly and making their role explicit in our practice may help us to recognize them when they arise spontaneously during mindfulness practice. As well as to incline the heart and mind in that direction more frequently, especially in difficult times.

These practices, and in particular loving-kindness, can often serve very practically as a necessary and skillful antidote to mind states such as ferocious rage, which may, at the time of their arising, be simply too strong

to attend to via direct observation unless one's practice is very developed. At such times formal loving-kindness practice can function to soften one's relationship to such overwhelmingly afflictive mind states, so that we can avoid succumbing completely to their energies. It makes them more approachable and it makes them less intractable.

But with practice direct observation itself, on its own, becomes the embodiment of loving-kindness and compassion all by itself, and is capable of embracing any mind state, however afflictive are toxic. And in the seeing of it and the knowing of it—in open-hearted non-reactive, nonjudgmental presence—we can see into the nature of the anger or grief for whatever it is. And in the seeing, in the embracing of it, in the knowing of it, as we have seen, it attenuates, weakens, evaporates, very much like touching a soap bubble or like writing on water. What emerges in such moments is nothing less than loving-kindness itself arising naturally from extended silence, without any invitation because it's never not already here. Below is a gentle meditation to begin your journey. Further meditations can be found here: <https://www.mindful.org/this-loving-kindness-meditation-is-a-radical-act-of-love/>

LOVING KINDNESS MEDITATION

May I be at peace
May my heart remain open
May I awaken to the heart of my true soul
May I be healed
May I be a source of healing for all beings

May you be at peace
May your heart remain open
May you awaken to the heart of your true soul
May you be healed
May you be a source of healing for all beings



BE GENTLE - TAKE TIME TO REFLECT

From the comfort of your own home, come explore creative spirituality through reflections and the written word.

GRATITUDE JOURNALS AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Aswemovethroughourdaily lives, we can sometimes get stuck on what goes wrong while overlooking the positive moments. Taking time to recognize goodness in your life can pay off with more than just a pleasant feeling. Research has found that gratitude boosts our immune systems, strengthens our relationships, and gives us an overall sense of optimism and well-being. It can even help you sleep better!

Reflecting on the positive things that happen each day can inspire feelings of gratitude. The more you do it, the more naturally it will come to you. Set yourself a goal. Try to write in your journal every day, or at least several times a week. Set yourself a cue. For example, leave your journal and pen on your pillow and write in it before you go to bed. Invite others to join you. When you share your positive moments



*“There’s nothing more important on our spiritual path than developing gentleness to oneself.”
— Pema Chodron*

with others, you will be more motivated to take the time to consider your gratitude. And the bonus is that you’ll both feel the benefits.

WRITTEN WORD PRACTICES

How Spiritual Writing is Different From “Journaling”

Spiritual writing is a prayerful, spiritual practice, setting aside the time for soul-searching at a deep, meaningful level. When done with careful intention can deepen your relationship with

God and with your ‘self’. By using your imagination and creative mind, spiritual writing can be a means to explore the mystery of your own life experience and your soul’s means of speaking to you. Spiritual writing is particularly helpful when you are working through major life decisions or highly emotional or stressful periods.

INTENTION

Be intentional about what you are doing: create a prayerful atmosphere, light a candle,

reduce distractions such as electronics and noise. Set the tone by beginning with a scripture quote or spiritual reading.

PURPOSE

Spiritual writing, when done with careful intention can deepen your relationship with God and with your ‘self’. By using your imagination and creative mind, spiritual writing can be a means to explore the mystery of your own life experience and your soul’s means of speaking to you. Spiritual writing is particularly



helpful when you are working through major life decisions or highly emotional or stressful periods.

PROCESS

Free-Writing is one way of experiencing spiritual writing. You may find this process works for you, you may wish to create your own process.

COMMITMENT

Whichever process you choose, make the commitment of time and energy. Determine how much time you can and want to make to this process. Weekly is great, daily is better especially if you are working through a decision or emotional time. Try to commit to a consistent time of day and amount of time.

WHAT IS FREE-WRITING?

- Free-Writing is a simple process that can lead to self-discovery and connection with your inner spirit.

BENEFITS OF FREE-WRITING

- It makes you more comfortable with the act of writing.
- It helps you bypass the "inner critic".

- It can be a valve to release inner tensions.
- It can help you get in touch with deep emotions.
- It can help you connect with the Divine Spirit within you.

HOW TO FREE-WRITE

- Sometimes it helps to have a starting word or question, but it's not necessary.
- Put pen to paper and for five minutes, write non-stop.
- Don't lift your pen from the page... Just keep writing.
- Don't stop to ponder or make corrections... Just keep writing.
- Write whatever comes into your mind. Do not judge or censor what you are writing.
- If you find yourself stuck for something to write, just keep repeating the last word you have written, or take a pause and see what may come next. Or write, "I don't know what to write" ... until a fresh thought emerges.
- And then – if nothing does come – write something like, "the end" or "it is finished" – and put your pen down.

“THE MORE ROOM YOU GIVE

yourself to express your true thoughts and feelings, the more room there is for your wisdom to emerge.”

— Marianne Williamson

CONTINUE TO REFLECT FROM YOUR STILLPOINT

FREE-WRITING IS FOR YOU, AND ONLY YOU. NO ONE WILL EVER READ THIS, UNLESS YOU WANT THEM TO. THEREFORE...

- While you are free-writing, forget the rules of formal English. Because you are writing only for yourself you don't have to worry about sentence structures, spelling or punctuation, organization or clear connections.
- Do not be hindered or afraid to be honest, open and true to yourself. Let words flow out of you with ease and non-judgment.

USING YOUR FREE-WRITING

- When you have finished, read what you have written all the way through, once or maybe twice. Then re-read it another

time and looking carefully to see if you can find a key word or phrase or maybe even a sentence or two that you wish to ponder and reflect upon. Perhaps this word or phrase may lead you into another free-writing exercise. Because this is for you and only you, you can do with it as you like. You can keep your pages or journal, or throw them away.

PRACTICING FREE-WRITING

- Most people need to practice freewriting several times before they're able to make it work for them effectively. So be patient. Try freewriting as a regular exercise, perhaps three or four times a week, until you find that you can write without rules comfortably and productively.

“WRITING OFFERS

a backward glance
to where we have been...
and a glimpse of where
we are going”

— Michelle DeRusha



PAUSE PRACTICE

Pema Chödrön teaches us pause practice, a simple breath technique we can use anytime we need a break from our habitual patterns and depleted energy.

Our habits are strong, so a certain discipline is required to step outside our cocoon and receive the magic of our surroundings. Pause practice—taking three conscious breaths at any moment when we notice that we are stuck—is a simple but powerful practice that each of us can do at any given moment.

Pause practice can transform each day of your life. It creates an open doorway to the sacredness of the place in which you find yourself. Let your mind relax and drop for just a few breaths the story line you are working so hard to maintain. If you pause just long

enough, you can reconnect with exactly where you are, with the immediacy of your experience.

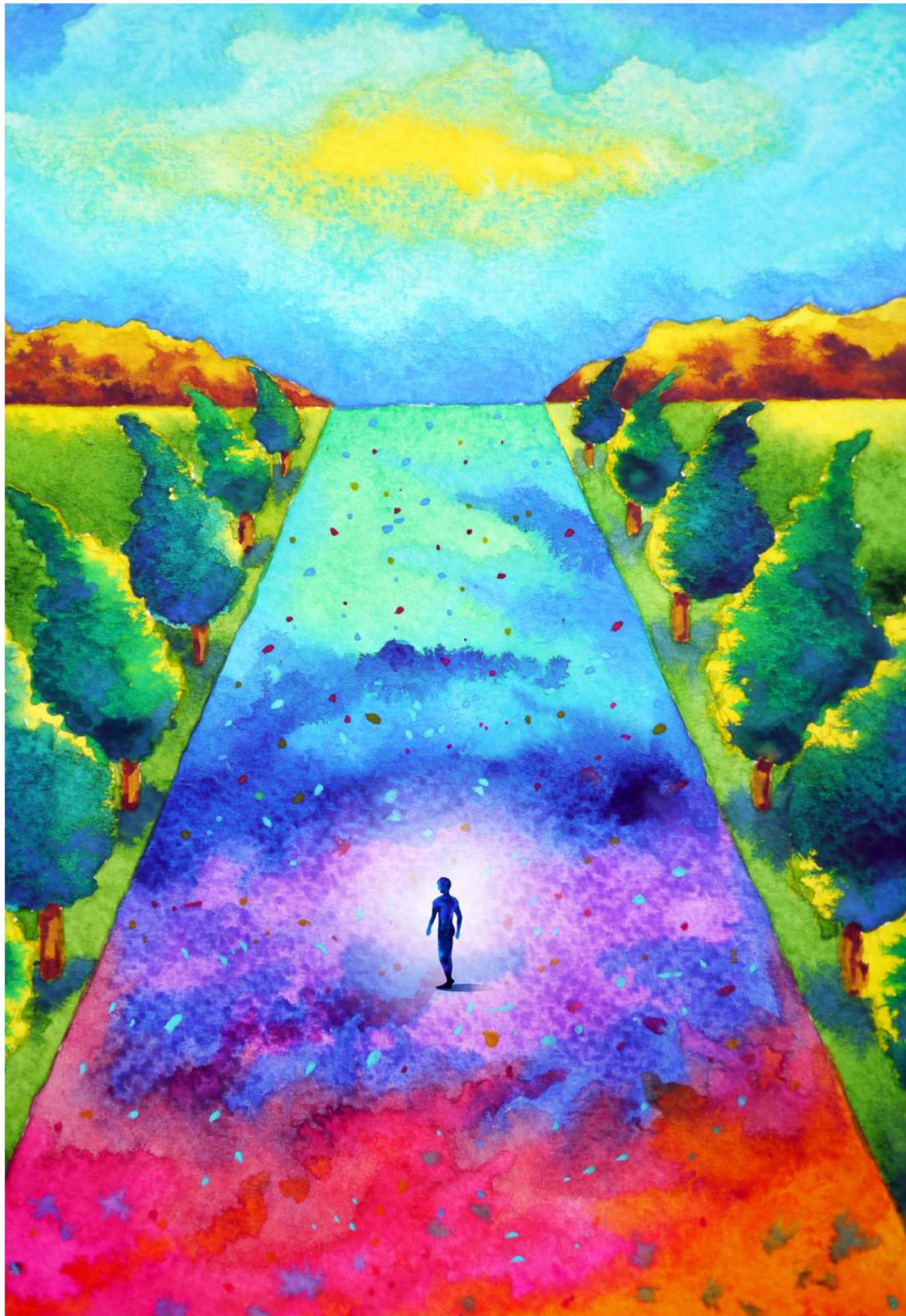
Draw on the spaciousness of your day to pause. Take three conscious breaths. Just be where you are! Take three conscious breaths. When you move, just pause. Take three conscious breaths.

Let it be a contrast to being all caught up. Let it be like popping a bubble. Let it be just a moment in time, and then go on.

Create that gap by taking three conscious breaths and being right there with the immediacy of your experience, right there with whatever you are seeing, with whatever you are doing, with whatever you are feeling. Carry this simple practice with you always.

HEART OF GRATITUDE MEDITATION

May my happiness continue
 May my happiness grow
 May I be present for my joy
 May I be present for my suffering
 May your happiness continue
 May your happiness grow



BODY AWARENESS MEDITATION

Jon Rhodes talks about beginning body awareness meditation by assuming your usual position for meditation. This could be either seated or laying down, whichever you prefer. Once you are settled and comfortable close your eyes and take a few deep breaths in through your nose, and out through your mouth.

Focus on the sensations that the breathing offers. The way the air feels cool as you inhale and warm as you exhale, how your stomach expands as it draws in oxygen, the energy that this oxygen provides your body.

If you find your mind wandering at any time away from your focus do not worry, just allow yourself to refocus on your breathing.

When you feel ready begin to shift your focus from your breathing to your body in general. If you feel any aches, pains or stiffness loosen these parts of your body until you feel as comfortable and natural as possible.

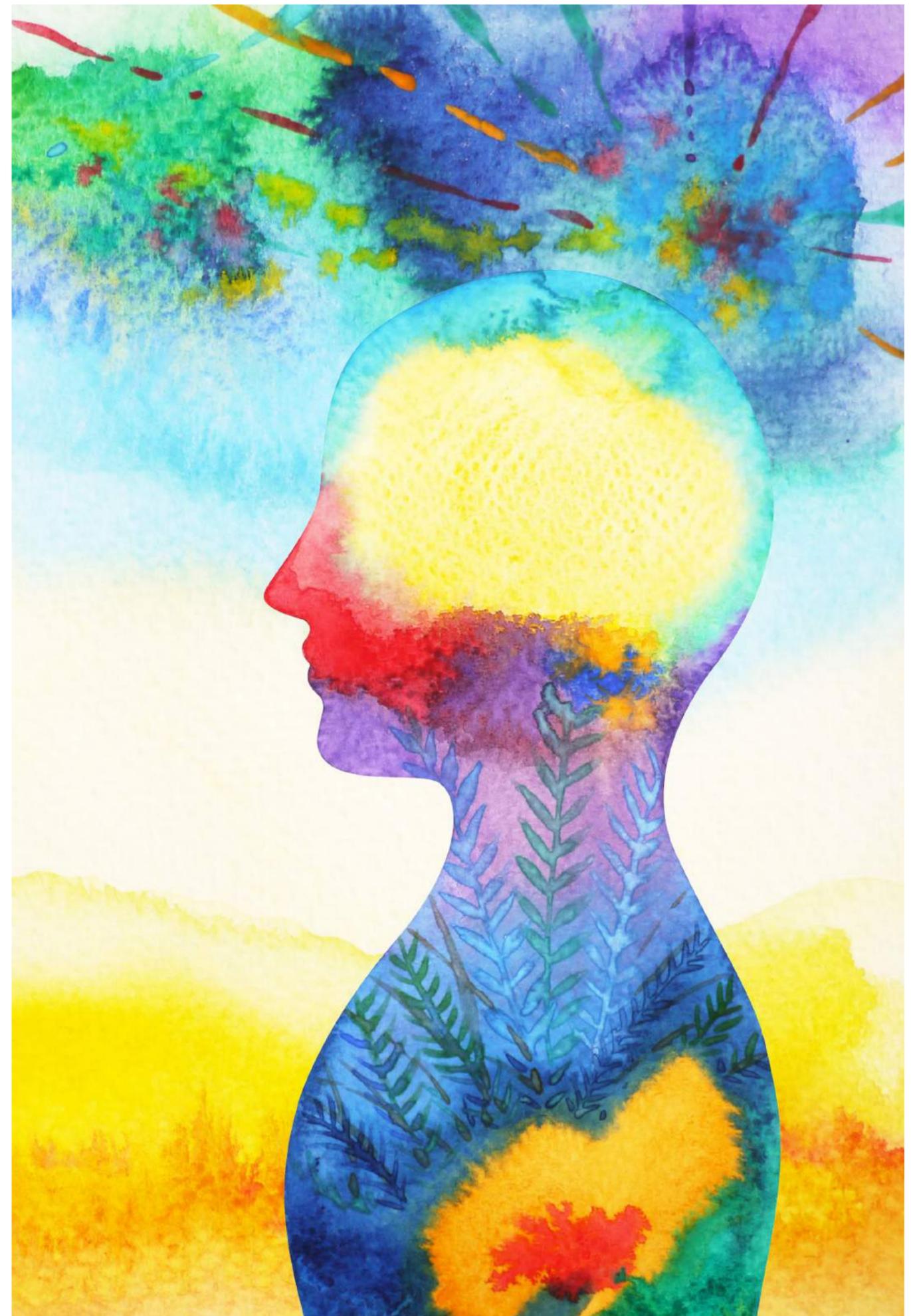
Now it is time to start focusing on individual parts of the body, beginning with the feet. As you focus on specific parts of

your body you may find that they begin to feel warmer and more relaxed. Imagine that your feet are the roots of your body, drawing awareness up from the ground up into the rest of the body.

Allow this awareness to spread up through your feet to your ankles and lower legs. Enjoy the relaxed warm feeling. Experience how your lower legs seem to feel much heavier and looser than normal. Now allow this awareness to spread to your knee joints. If you have problems with your knees (or any other part of your body) you may this time meditation to visualize your body healing itself as you go from point to point. *Body Awareness Meditation.*

Slowly let your awareness spread further up to the upper legs, hips, and buttocks. Many people find that they hold much of their tension in these areas so spend a little extra time allowing these parts of your body to relax and loosen, letting the energy and awareness course through.

When it feels right draw this energy and awareness to the base of your spine. It is important to take your time or you may find





your muscles will tense up a little. Focus this awareness up through the curvature of your spine to the tip of the spine which is about an inch below the knuckle-like bump in the back of your skull. Relax and ease the muscles around this point, this will include loosening your jaw if you haven't already done so.

Once you have a feel for this top point of your spine keep it in your mind whilst also focusing on the base of your spine. Imagine a warm ball of light at both the top and bottom of your spine. The light at the base of your spine is slowly drawn down into the ground below you like a loving anchor. The light at the top of your spine is slowly moving up towards the heavens. You will find that the muscles that hold your spine begin to loosen and each vertebra of your spine create a little extra space in between each other.

When your spine is fully relaxed shift your focus to your shoulders. You may find that you need to now readjust the position of your

shoulders to remain comfortable now that your spine is so well relaxed. Experiment with moving them gently into different positions until they feel in synch with the rest of your posture. Draw this awareness down your arms and into the fingers. Notice the very slight movements they are making all on their own.

Move your awareness back up to your throat and release any tension that you may be holding there before moving further up to your face. Feel the warmth of your awareness relax every facial muscle. Notice how sensitive your face is, how the air feels against it.

Finally shift your awareness to your brain. Become aware of just how amazing and powerful your brain is. Your brain is capable of regulating your entire body. Your brain houses your mind which allows you to think, feel and create.

When you feel ready open your eyes and return to waking consciousness.

“YOU CAN HEAR

the footsteps of God
when silence reigns in the mind.”

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

POETRY OF LOVE

Stillness in the Heart

by Kenneth Maswabi

In the quiet streets of the heart
 Silence is the fabric of existence
 Love is the heart beat of silence
 In silence, Love is revealed
 In Love, silence is displayed
 Be silenced and you will fall in Love
 "Fall in love with what," you ask.
 Fall in Love with YOU
 The eternal light
 The Love within
 The path of existence
 Then you will know
 That the "YOU" is the "THEM"
 And the "THEM" is the "YOU"
 The dimensionless eternity
 The everlasting covenant
 The ultimate sacrifice
 The unity of being
 The LOVE

Heart Poem

by Mary Oliver

My heart, that used to pump along so pleasantly,
 has come now to a different sort of music.
 There is someone inside those red walls, irritated
 and even, occasionally, irrational.
 Years ago I was part of an orchestra; our conductor
 was a wild man. He was forever rapping the music-
 stand for silence. Then he would call out some
 correction and we would begin again.
 Now again it is the wild man.
 I remember the music shattering, and our desperate
 attentiveness.
 Once he flung the baton over our heads and into
 the midst of the players. It flew over the violins
 and landed next to a bass fiddle. It flopped to the
 floor. What silence!
 Then someone picked it up
 and it was passed forward back to him.
 He rapped
 the stand and raised his arms.
 Then we all breathed
 again, and the music restarted.

WALKING MEDITATION

Enjoy a contemplative walk on our campus along the Peace Path (*maps are on page 22-23*) - a winding path through a beautiful prairie of several acres planted with native Illinois grasses and small woodlands. This is a beautiful space for a walking meditation, allowing for both spiritual reflection and physical exercise.

Please note that the building is closed to the public at this time and wear a facemask while walking the Peace Path.

MEDITATION ON THE MOVE

One of the best things about walking meditation is that you can practice it almost any time you are on your feet. It's quite a simple meditation method...one that most people can get a grip on without too much trouble.

WALKING MEDITATION INSTRUCTIONS

Begin by standing still and taking a moment to get in touch with your physical body. Feel the sensation of your feet on the ground, and notice how it feels when you shift your weight from one foot to the other. Spend a couple of minutes preparing for the walking meditation by relaxing your whole body.

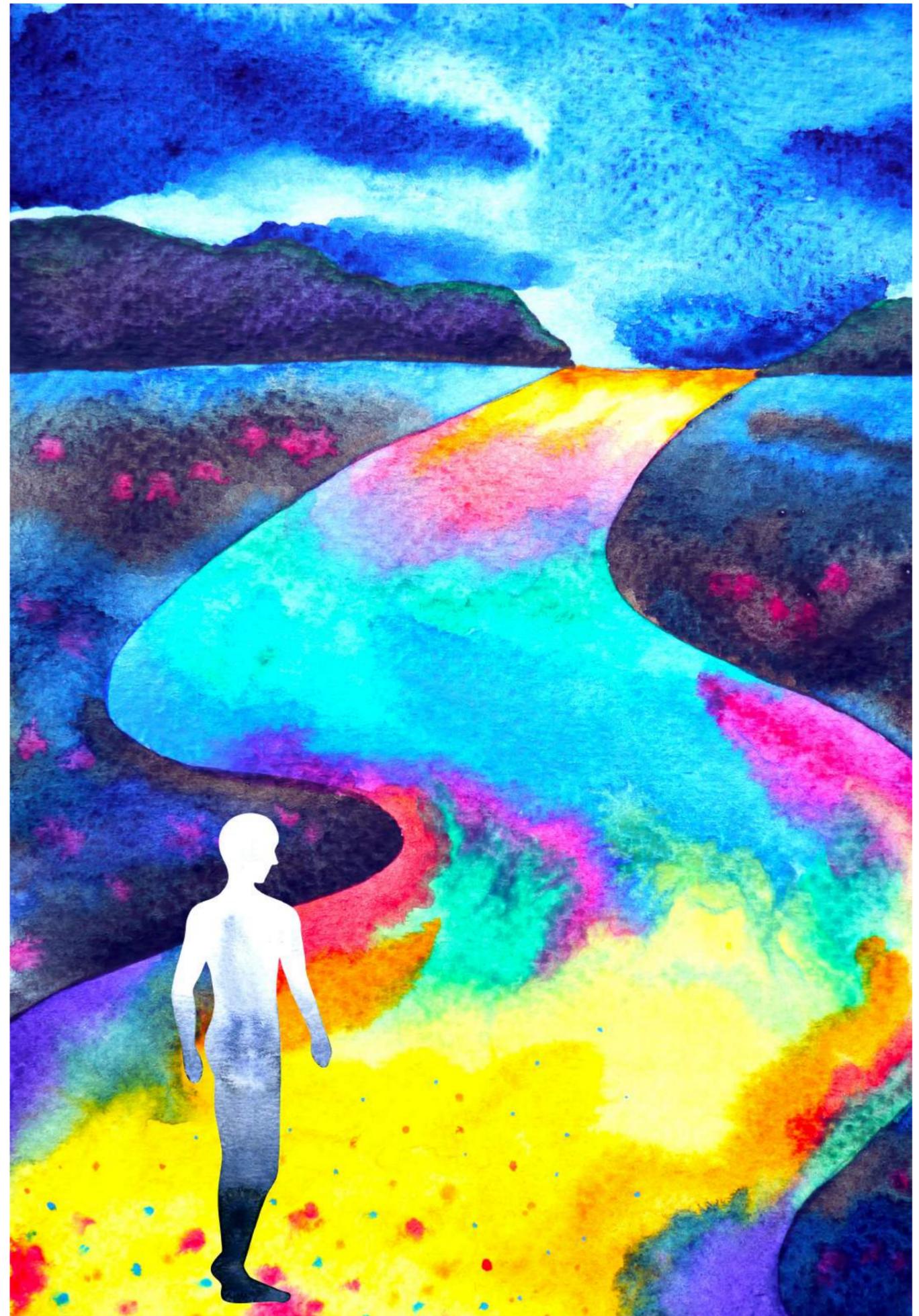
Relax your face. Let any tension in your scalp or jaw dissipate. Let your shoulders relax and let your arms hang naturally. Take a few deep breaths right down into your stomach and feel all the muscles in your torso relax as you exhale.

Become aware of the muscles in your legs and just visualize them becoming loose and relaxed.

Before you start to walk, take a brief moment to decide how long you will practice this meditation for. Make it your firm intention to stick with the meditation for the complete length of time. Making a simple declaration of intention like this will help motivate you to stay "on task" and resist the temptation to turn your walking meditation into just another walk.

As you walk, become aware of the movement of your legs and the feeling of your feet as they come in contact with the ground. The key is to absorb yourself in this rhythmic sensation, and to let go of any thoughts if they arise.

What is most important is that you devote your attention to one movement and that you return your attention back to that movement whenever your mind wanders off. Walk as you would normally walk, but devote your mind to the experience entirely.



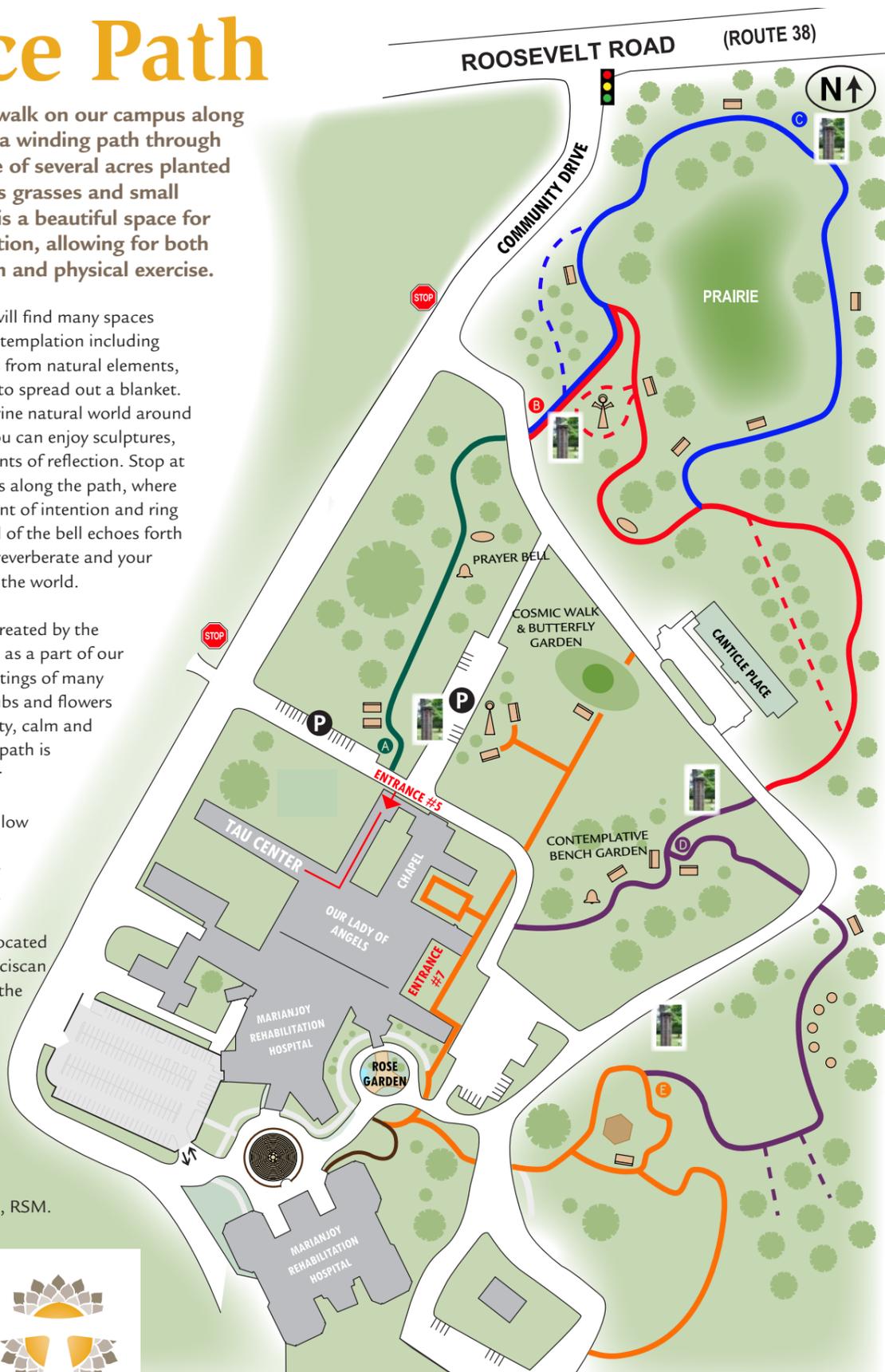
Peace Path

Enjoy a peaceful walk on our campus along the Peace Path – a winding path through a beautiful prairie of several acres planted with native Illinois grasses and small woodlands. This is a beautiful space for a walking meditation, allowing for both spiritual reflection and physical exercise.

Along the path, you will find many spaces to sit in prayer or contemplation including benches, seats carved from natural elements, or small grassy areas to spread out a blanket. In addition to the Divine natural world around you, along the way you can enjoy sculptures, statues and other points of reflection. Stop at one of the Prayer Bells along the path, where you can take a moment of intention and ring the bell. As the sound of the bell echoes forth – so do your prayers reverberate and your intentions are felt for the world.

The Peace Path was created by the Wheaton Franciscans as a part of our healing ministry. Plantings of many varieties of trees, shrubs and flowers add a quality of beauty, calm and peace. The mile-long path is paved and wheelchair accessible with many intersections which allow you to circle through the prairie for shorter or longer exploration.

The Cosmic Walk is located on the Wheaton Franciscan campus surrounding the new butterfly garden. The paved path includes 25 posts with images of the watercolor prints, *Significant Moments of the Unfolding of the Universe* by Sr. Corlita Bonnarens, RSM.



■ = .12 miles ■ = .15 miles ■ = .34 miles ■ = .27 miles ■ = .39 miles



SELF-GUIDED WALKING Meditation Along Our Outdoor Peace Path



You are invited to enjoy a walking meditation along our Peace Path on your own by using the map on the other side along with the meditation below.

AS YOU WALK THE PEACE PATH...

- Walk slowly, notice as each foot touches the ground and then lifts away, feeling the ground beneath you...
- As you continue to walk allow yourself to engage your senses...
- Listen as a sound emerges, observe as it becomes louder or softer, closer or farther, high or deep...
- Breathe in slowly, bringing awareness to the smells that are offered in the landscape...
- Feel the breeze on your skin, reach out to touch the bark on the tree or the blades of grass...
- With a soft gaze, observe the variations of color and light in the sky, in the meadow...
- Take time while on the Path to reflect – walking as long, or as briefly, as you would like...

AT EACH PEACE POLE, READ THE INSCRIPTION...

As you continue to walk, pause along the way to recite this prayer of Loving Kindness or another of your choosing:

Peace Pole #1 **A**

May I be peaceful
May I be happy
May I be safe
May I be free

Peace Pole #2 **B**

May my friends be peaceful
May my friends be happy
May my friends be safe
May my friends be free

Peace Pole #3 **C**

May my enemies be peaceful
May my enemies be happy
May my enemies be safe
May my enemies be free

Peace Pole #4 **D**

May all beings be peaceful
May all beings be happy
May all beings be safe
May all beings be free

Peace Pole #5 **E**

Read all four sections of the prayer above together



ABOUT TAU CENTER



Established in 2008 by the Wheaton Franciscans, who live intentionally as a presence of blessing in our world, the Tau Center is committed to the transformation of our world by helping individuals awaken to the sacredness of life.

In the spirit of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi, Tau Center provides a peaceful and reflective environment for people seeking a deeper relationship with God, self, others and all of Creation.

Through the integration of body, mind and spirit, Tau Center is committed to offering diverse

experiences where individuals can nourish their spirit, find companions on their journey, and connect what they discover to meaning in their life and the world around them.

We offer a sacred space to assist individuals on their own spiritual journey – whether it is to reconnect with their inner-spirit or whether they are seeking a deeper relationship with God and the world around them. Our programs encourage an awakening of the spirit that leads to hope, healing, peace and transformation.



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“Sometimes God allows us to go through things so that we can become a warrior for others. When viewed thru this lens, we don’t have time to not forgive, to hold onto our anger or to be selfish in allowing grace to flow.”

