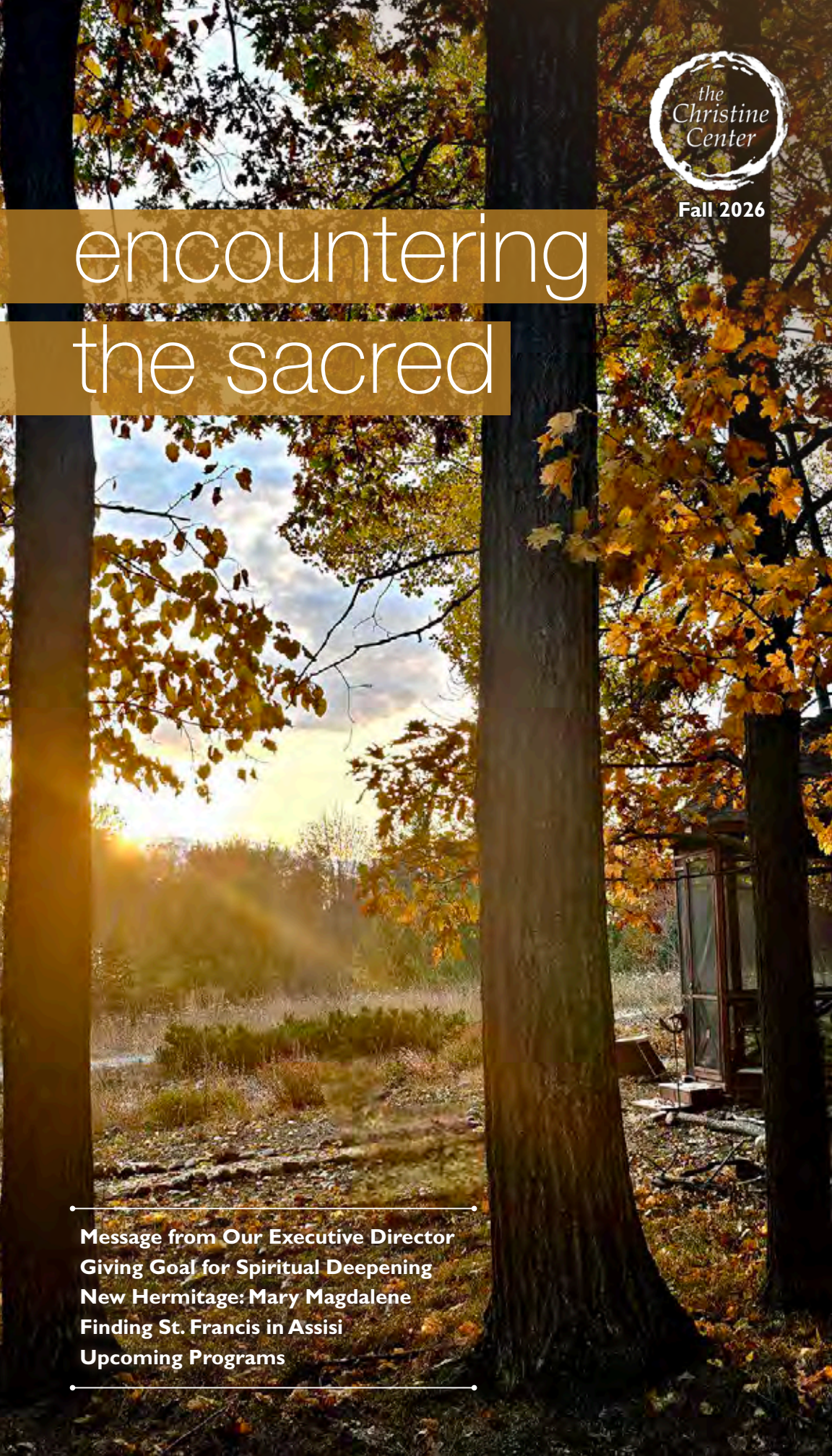


the Christine Center

Fall 2026

encountering the sacred

Message from Our Executive Director
Giving Goal for Spiritual Deepening
New Hermitage: Mary Magdalene
Finding St. Francis in Assisi
Upcoming Programs

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: JONATHAN ELMERGREEN



There was a time when many of us could picture the broad outlines of our life ahead. Today, the future can feel harder to imagine. Changes arrive faster than we can absorb them, and what seemed settled yesterday may be uncertain tomorrow.

Even when we cannot picture the future, we shape it through the way we live. Our spiritual life matters because it reaches into the places from which our words and actions arise.

For centuries, people have turned to spiritual practice to deepen their relationship with the sacred and to discern how to live. That wisdom is still available to us. In prayer, meditation, or contemplation, we can see ourselves with more clarity and allow what we discover to transform us.

Spiritual deepening asks us to let what we hold sacred shape how we live.

We can ask ourselves: Where is my practice asking something of me now? It may be in a strained relationship that needs our patience, or a difficult decision that calls for courage. What we discover in prayer or silence finds its expression in the response we choose.

We return to this work again and again, learning to carry our practice into the moments when it is hardest to remember.

At the Christine Center, we offer time and space for this work.

Away from the immediate demands of the day, people can listen more closely, ask deeper questions, and renew a spiritual practice they can carry home.

That return to daily life is part of our purpose. What deepens here can change how someone listens to a child, treats a coworker, or responds to a neighbor in need. This is what we mean by spiritual deepening for global transformation.

The life of the spirit becomes a way of caring for ourselves and the world.

As this year closes, I invite you to help sustain this sacred space. Your generosity makes room for people to deepen their spiritual lives and carry that depth into a world that needs their care.

With gratitude,

Jonathan

The world needs a place like this.

Here, amid the quiet of the woods and the welcome of a contemplative community, you can step away from the pressures of daily life. We make room for the inner work that can help you bring more wisdom, compassion, and care into the world.

This is the Christine Center's mission: Spiritual Deepening for Global Transformation.

Your generosity will sustain the Center's programs, community, and contemplative environment, while giving us the resources to respond to the needs of the year ahead.

We invite you to help raise $75,000 by December 31.

Please make a year-end gift today, in whatever amount is meaningful to you.

Thank you for believing in the power of spiritual deepening, and for helping the Christine Center continue its work.

christinecenter.org/support

SCAN CODE TO DONATE

Thanks to your gifts, what begins here reaches far beyond here.

Sustain the Campus

Nurture the People

Put More Care into the World

Help Raise

$75,000

by December 31 to Sustain this Place

Will you give

- **$50**
- **$100**
- **$250**
- **$500**
- **$1,000**

or another amount meaningful to you?

Mary Magdalene

A Hermitage Rooted in Simplicity, Devotion, and Care for the Earth

Nestled within the woodlands of The Christine Center, the newly constructed Mary Magdalene Straw Bale Hermitage tells a story of generosity, devotion, and care for our Earth Community.

Made possible through a generous grant from the Sisters of Saint Francis – Sacred Heart, who also gave the hermitage its name, the project began with the vision and work of Eric Eisenhauer. Eric initiated construction shortly before he passed away, and what he began was carried forward under the leadership of John Stecyk, our Facilities and Grounds Director, with the help of experienced natural builder Mark Mazziotti, and many dedicated volunteers who offered their time, skills, and care.

As the walls took shape, staff and volunteers tucked blessings and intentions within them—hopes for the peace, healing, and spiritual renewal of all who would one day find refuge here. In this way, the hermitage was built not only with natural materials, but with prayer, generosity, and loving intention.













Constructed with straw bales, a renewable material that provides natural insulation, and finished with earthen and lime plasters, the hermitage reflects our commitment to ecological responsibility and Franciscan simplicity. Its very construction invites us to consider how we might live more gently upon the Earth.

Its name carries a beautiful resonance. Mary Magdalene, remembered for her steadfast devotion and as the first witness to the Resurrection, encountered the risen Christ in a garden, initially believing him to be the gardener. Her story reminds us that the sacred may reveal itself in unexpected places, in the midst of ordinary life.

Perhaps that is part of the invitation of this simple hermitage: to step away from the noise of the world, enter the quiet of the woods, and make room for what may be waiting to meet us.

What began with generosity and one person's vision has become a shared expression of devotion and care. Mary Magdalene now offers a place of solitude, prayer, and renewal—a living legacy of simplicity, community, and spiritual deepening.

where the sacred finds us









Assisi Pilgrimage 2027

DATES ANNOUNCED SOON!



By Valerie Haberman
Programming and Communications Director

An Encounter with St. Francis

St. Francis lived a radical expression of faith, allowing himself to be touched by the fullness of life around him. He moved beyond the social conventions of his time, embracing people with leprosy, living without possessions, and ministering in the streets and among those in need. He purposefully lived in the margins and let all aspects of life touch his heart.

His ministry drew people who felt called to leave behind familiar lives and walk alongside him on a path of deeper purpose. Together, their way of life gave birth to Franciscan spirituality as a distinct expression of Christian faith.

This year, as we commemorate the 800th anniversary of St. Francis's death and the Jubilee Year dedicated to him by Pope Leo XIV, we led twenty-two pilgrims on a journey in the footsteps of St. Francis and St. Clare, marking our second year offering this pilgrimage.

At Eremo delle Carceri, a place where Francis withdrew into the mountains above Assisi for solitude and prayer, I wandered into the quiet forest above the stone structures and, alone on this mountain path, experienced a deep presence within and around me. My Being felt wide open and connected.

There was a longing to see what Francis saw here, to experience this land as he might have known it.

As I paused and allowed my eyes to take notice of what was around me, these words kept arising within:
Of God. Of God. Of God.

The trees, the stones, the mountains, my body—life moved through us all with deep kinship and a sense of belonging. I felt tenderness and affection for everything in my gaze.

This is where Francis found me.
This was his church, his cathedral.

Francis was called to both contemplation and service. He returned often to the solitude of these mountains, seeking intimate communion with God. And the same sacred presence he sought in prayer was encountered in the streets of Assisi, in the suffering of a person with leprosy, in communion with his Brothers and Sisters, and in his reverence for all of creation. He did not see contemplation and action as competing paths. His life was shaped by their continual movement together. His solitude deepened his capacity to encounter life more fully.

To walk in the footsteps of St. Francis is to open ourselves to this same kinship with life. To allow the world around us to touch our hearts, deepen our sense of belonging, and shape the way we live.

Where does the sacred find you?

featured program

Seasonal Soul Coaching

Listening to the Wisdom Within

With Deb Hager

Our soul holds a wisdom that becomes accessible when we quiet ourselves and listen.

Seasonal Soul Coaching is an experiential practice of turning inward and reconnecting with this deeper knowing. Guided by the changing seasons and the elements of air (summer), water (fall), fire (spring), and earth (winter), participants are invited to clear away mental, emotional, and physical clutter, creating space for what is true within to emerge.

Through this process of inner discovery, Soul Coaching helps us clarify our purpose and bring our lives into greater alignment with it. Rooted in nature-based spirituality, the practice offers a nurturing space to release what obscures our inner knowing, deepen our connection with ourselves, and discover what is calling us toward a more authentic way of living.

Begin Your Journey | Jan. 1–3, 2027

Begin the new year with an introductory Seasonal Soul Coaching retreat at The Christine Center. Continue the journey through four seven-week online sessions beginning in February, offering guided practice, reflection, and a supportive community as you deepen your relationship with your inner wisdom.

ongoing programs

Twice Daily Weekday Meditations*
with Sister Johanna & Christine Center Residential Community, ***Weekdays*** 8:45–9:30 AM & 5:00–5:30 PM (CT)

Our Hearts Were Made For This*
with Sara Neall
Sundays 9:00 AM (CT)

Tao Te Ching: Offering a Way Forward
with Ron Moor
Wednesdays 10:15 AM (CT)

Eucharist (Catholic Mass)*
with Fr. Steve Brice
Third Thursday of Each Month 10:00 AM (CT)

Death Café: A Compassionate Space for End-of-Life Conversations*
with Paul Norton & Nancy Newman ***Third Thursday of Each Month*** 7:00–8:30 PM (CT)

Full Moon Meditation*
with Barb Wooley
Monthly 6:30–7:30 PM (CT)

* *Offered at No Cost*

Weather Accommodations

Plan your travel with ease—receive 50% off lodging when adjusting your stay to avoid predicted storms.

Extend your retreat

Arrive early or stay late and receive 50% off lodging.

To register or learn more, go to **christinecenter.org/program-offerings/**

PROGRAMS AND OFFERINGS

upcoming programs

december

DEC 3 – DEC 6	**Midwest Diamond Approach: Discovering Our Inherent Worth** with Kathleen Graham, Kara Vangen, and Jim Lockridge
DEC 4 – DEC 6	**Inner Alignment Seasonal Retreat** with Andrea Russell
DEC 7, 14, 21	**Grief, Gratitude, and the Holidays: A Conversation Circle for the Heart** with Chris Flynn ***Mondays*** 11:00 AM (CT)
DEC 11 – DEC 13	**Rest & Renewal Retreat for Women Affected by Cancer** with Julie Trombley
DEC 17 – DEC 20	**Wintering Together: Creativity & Connection Winter Solstice Retreat for Young Adults (18–39)** with Upper Midwest Wake Up Sanghas
DEC 17	**Death Café** with Paul Norton & Nancy Newman 7:00–8:30 PM (CT) ***See Ongoing Programs, Left***
DEC 24 – DEC 27	**Christmas Community Retreat** with Christine Center Community
DEC 28 – JAN 1	**New Year's Winter in the Woods** with Christine Center Community

january

JAN 1 – JAN 3	**Community-Created Private Retreat: The Gifts We Bring** Community-created
JAN 1 – JAN 3	**Seasonal Soul Coaching** with Deb Hager
JAN 4 – FEB 22	**Wintering: A Book Study for Our Winter Season** with Chris Flynn ***Mondays*** 11:00 AM (CT)
JAN 7 – JAN 10	**A Book of Hours for the Creative Life** with Lisa Mer
JAN 11 – FEB 15	**Born to Flourish Book Study** with Joanne Nelson ***Mondays*** 6:30 PM (CT)
JAN 22 – JAN 24	**Disturbance as a Teacher** with Ro Hanus

february

FEB 19 – FEB 21	**IMAGO Couple's Relational & Educational Weekend Workshop** 🌈 with Margaret Berg and Jason Isenberg
FEB 25 – FEB 28	**Centering Prayer Retreat** with Ron Moor and Johanna Seubert, FSPA
FEB 26 – FEB 28	**Mindfulness Retreat** with Paul Norton

Check the website for newly added retreats!



The Christine Center
W8303 Mann Road
Willard, WI 54493
www.christinecenter.org
715.267.7507 or 866.333.7507

Non-Profit Org US
Postage Paid
Eau Claire WI
PERMIT NO 2000