

PrairieFire



A TWO-YEAR PROGRAM
**OF SPIRITUAL RENEWAL
AND FORMATION**

How is Your Spirit Growing?

Explore PrairieFire!

Do you desire a more meaningful life enriched by a deepening spiritual awareness, new ways of building and contributing to community, or living authentically in an increasingly challenging and unpredictable world? Consider applying for PrairieFire, a two-year program of spiritual renewal.

PrairieFire: The Metaphor

In a healthy prairie, one of the most complex yet balanced ecosystems on earth, hundreds of plants and animals exist together harmoniously. The perennial grasses and flowers native to the prairie grow deep, hold water, crowd out weeds, improve the soil by providing nutrients and contribute to the innate beauty of the land.

Before the appearance of humans, lightning, wind, and herds of grazing nomadic, hooved herbivores managed the prairie. In modern times, we manage the prairie through controlled burns. These fires eliminate invasive weeds not native to the prairie that choke out healthy flowering perennials. In the process, prairie fires clear the way for long-dormant seeds to come to life, germinate, and grow. The variety and lushness of new growth resulting from a burn is often two to threefold from the previous year. Only native perennials that have been the basis for a healthy prairie for eons will survive the prairie fire.

Like the prairie, the human being is a complex system. Within the human condition disturbances can affect our natural spiritual balance. Fear, anger, or worry about our family, professional and work demands, societal expectations, cultural conditioning, and even the state of the world can constrict awareness of our innate spiritual nature that flowers in its oneness with creation. In our life journey, it is necessary to periodically “burn away” that which blocks the growth of the deeper seed of the Divine Presence within all of us. This growth restores natural balance and invites us to renewal, flowering, freedom, and a joyful life.

PrairieFire: The Program

We live in a world where we are taught little about spirituality and our personal spiritual natures. We go through our days in what Thomas Keating calls “ordinary psychological awareness.” A chief characteristic of this type of awareness is that it looks to the outside world for validation and meaning. Family, institutional, societal, and cultural dictums teach us how we “should” be in the world, and yet subtly and powerfully keep us from awareness of our deeper spiritual selves. We live unconsciously as if on automatic pilot with little interior awareness. We behave and become according to what we have been taught, and we judge others who have been taught differently.

At some point in our lives, something often happens to move us into a state of awakening, making us question the wisdom of living out of this ordinary psychological awareness. This movement can take many forms. Perhaps we find we don’t like who we’ve become or the values out of which we’ve been living. We may find that the job, the house, the possessions, or the lifestyle that were supposed to make us happy don’t. Perhaps we have an inner sense that something is just not right, that something important is lacking in our lives. Maybe a crisis, a loss or a betrayal has shaken the foundation of our lives in ways we have never experienced.

Whether spontaneously suffered or intentionally chosen, often such events powerfully draw us from the lure of the outer into new awareness of our inner spiritual being – and deeper still, into awareness of that Presence in whose image each of us is created. This process leads to authentic healing. Just as the prairie recovers or heals following a prairie fire, new life springs forth in us.

PrairieFire, a two-year program of spiritual renewal, deepening and formation, provides a safe and sacred environment to allow the clearing of our inner terrain to promote new growth. In the safety of a community that provides support, resources and containment, we explore together our ways of thinking, our notions about God, and negative attitudes such as attachments, aversions, judgments, competition and expectations. We will discover how to remove the barriers of harmful thinking that keep us from knowing the truth of our divine natures as made visible in our ordinary lives.

The result promises to be a deeper level of acceptance of self and others; a closer relationship with the Divine; increased congruence as our lives more fully express the wonder of oneness with the whole of creation; and a new commitment to live in heightened awareness of the presence and activity of the Divine accompanying us in the holiness of everyday life.

If you are ready to explore and embrace a new way of being in the world while in sacred community with others, we invite you to consider PrairieFire. If your spirit resonates with the spirit of PrairieFire, we encourage you to apply.

PrairieFire: Focus

PrairieFire is an invitation to a deeper spiritual life, an invitation to set time aside for renewing of self and awakening of soul. It is an opportunity for education and mutual guidance and support in developing spiritual awareness and life-sustaining spiritual practices.

PrairieFire: Goals and Objectives

- To build an intentional community where participants will find the safety and structure needed to nurture and revitalize their souls.
- To provide participants with grounding in the contemplative Christian tradition with a focus on Benedictine spirituality.
- To facilitate experiences of contemplative spiritual practices and listening skills for deepening one's relationship with self, others, and the Divine Presence.
- To foster discernment that leads each participant to a way of being in the world, characterized by contemplation, non-reactivity, prayerful listening and emerging expressions of one's true self.

PrairieFire: Program Components

- Monthly gatherings for two years from September 2021 through June 2023
- A two-day retreat each September (2021 and 2022). The 2021 retreat will be September 19-21. It will open Sunday afternoon and close Tuesday morning.
- Day-long gatherings each month from October through June each year. Meetings will take place on every third Saturday from 8:30-4:00 pm
- Gatherings include a variety of experiences, such as
 - Opening and closing circles of meditation, centering and personal sharing
 - Topical presentation with monthly readings assigned
 - Small group spiritual direction
 - Experiential exercises with time for quiet personal reflection.
 - Community-building with an emphasis on compassionate hospitality

Course requirements:

- Monthly individual spiritual direction sessions (a list of spiritual directors is available)
- One directed spiritual retreat (a minimum of three days)
- Three assigned books each year and monthly topical articles
- Regular reflection and integration papers (each paper submitted is returned with written comments)
- Participants are expected to faithfully engage in all aspects of the program.

Topics covered include but are not limited to:

Year 1

- The Christian Contemplative Tradition as a Path of Renewal
- Celtic Spirituality: Listening for the Heartbeat of God
- The Human Condition: Addiction, Attachment and Codependency
- Liberating the Heart: Surrender, Letting Go and Forgiveness
- Listening Skills: Deep Listening, Heart Listening, Compassionate Listening

Year 2

- The Rule of Benedict
- Incarnated Spirituality
- Obstacles to Spiritual Growth
- Creativity as Spiritual Expression
- Listening Skills: Continued Deepening of Skills Experienced in Year 1

Spiritual Practices include but are not limited to:

- Centering Prayer
- Lectio Divina
- Welcoming Prayer
- Sacred Chant
- Sacred Movement
- Art as Prayer

PrairieFire: Meeting Schedule and Class Size

We will begin with a two-day retreat in September and one Saturday per month, Oct – June.

Class size will be limited to 24 to ensure an optimal experience.

Sample schedule for monthly day-long gathering:

- 8:00 – 8:30 a.m. – Gathering and Refreshments
- 8:30 – 9:30 a.m. – Centering, Opening Reflection, and Check-in Circle
- 9:30 – 11:45 a.m. – Topical Presentations
- 11:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. – Lunch
- 12:30 – 2:15 p.m. – Spiritual Practices Presentations and Experiences
- 2:15 – 3:30 p.m. – Group Spiritual Direction
- 3:30 – 4:00 p.m. – Closing

PrairieFire: Admission Requirements

Submit the application, including two references and a spiritual autobiography. The application process opens January 1, 2021 and continues until the class is full. Interested persons are encouraged to apply early since enrollment is limited.

Other admission requirements include:

- A personal interview with the leaders of PrairieFire.
- Demonstration of solid rootedness in one's personal spiritual journey.
- A commitment to going more broadly and deeply into one's spiritual life.
- A commitment to enter regular individual spiritual direction.

PrairieFire: Program Cost

Application fee: \$50 (non-refundable)

Tuition: \$1,950 annually for two years

Tuition payment schedule:

\$200	Non-refundable deposit. Upon acceptance into the program this will be a down payment toward tuition for Year I
\$775	Due September 1, 2021
\$975	Due January 15, 2022
\$975	Due September 1, 2022
\$975	Due January 15, 2023

Additionally, the cost of books, individual spiritual direction, and your personal retreat will be the responsibility of each participant. Limited scholarship funds are available for those who show financial need.

PrairieFire: How to Apply

1. Contact Andrea Severson to let her know you're interested: aseverson@dmpcc.org, telephone: 515-274-4006, ext. 164.
2. Download, complete and submit an application. Applications accepted beginning in January 2021.
3. Pay the \$50 non-refundable application fee.
4. Secure two recommendations to go with your application. Recommendation forms can be downloaded from the website.