



GOOD NEWS

A Publication of the Valle Crucis Conference Center

July 2017

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Deeply Rooted on Sacred Ground

Good News
July 2017



\$175 for 175 Years

Ever wonder how Valle Crucis got its name? In 1840, a botanist from New York traveled through this valley and was struck by its remoteness and natural beauty. On his way back to New York, he stopped in Raleigh and spoke with Bishop Levi Silliman Ives, who oversaw the Diocese of North Carolina. In **July 1842**, Bishop Ives traveled to this area, held services, and talked to the people he met. Legend has it that Bishop Ives saw the image of a St. Andrew's Cross, in the three streams in the valley, or in their accompanying mist, and named this sacred place Valle Crucis, which is Latin for Vale of the Cross.

Fast-forward one hundred and seventy-five years.

Step onto the porch of the Inn and feel the same breeze that Bishop Ives felt coursing over the sheltering mountains. The birdsong is the same, as is the scent of lilac and leafy undergrowth. What has changed is the ministry that is offered here in this valley. No longer limited to boys and men studying divinity and agriculture, or to young women learning French and Bible history, the Conference Center now offers hospitality to all people seeking a place of peace, learning, and fellowship.

Change necessitates change, of course.

Maintenance of these beautiful buildings takes significant resources. Growth and modernization takes even more. Consider, if you will, an opportunity to honor and celebrate these 175 years of ministry. Our Board of Directors is leading the campaign to pledge \$175 for 175 years.

Join our Board of Directors to pledge your support of \$175 in a new or additional donation, and help us continue to be stewards of this sacred place. You can guarantee that every dollar will be invested in the continual recreation of this ministry.

Yours in hospitality,

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2017 VCCC PROGRAMS

COME SPEND SOME TIME ON SACRED GROUND

A Journey in the Daring Way

Sunday, July 30 - Wednesday, August 2

The Rev. Cyndi Banks &

The Rev. Karla Woggon

\$400 includes lodging, meals, and program

\$230 commuter rate includes meals and program

Housing in the Inn

A sacred space to explore living with courage and vulnerability, and the things that get in our way.

Based upon the research of Dr. Brené Brown.

We live in anxious times amidst a multitude of internal and external voices that define what success looks like in our lives. It is easy to lose our bearings and find ourselves struggling with all the voices telling us that we fall short. The Daring Way process helps us peel back the layers and understand what happens to us - and goes on to point a way forward where we can engage our lives with our whole heart.

We will wrap this experience in prayer, ritual, and community, rooted in an inclusive Christian spirituality, as we find our way forward together. Due to the nature of the work we will do, this event is alcohol-free. We also ask that participants be present for the entire event - we are unable to accommodate late arrival and early departure. Commuters are welcome, but we ask that you be present for all sessions and meals. Facilitated by the Reverend Karla Woggon and the Reverend Cynthia Banks, both Certified Daring Way Facilitators.

The Rev. Cynthia Banks serves as Rector at St. Luke's Episcopal Church in Boone, NC. Ordained in 1994, Cyndi has served a range of churches in small-town, rural, and urban areas, moving to Boone in 2004. Cyndi is married, the mother of a teenager, stepmother to a grown son, and is obsessed with golf. "Brené Brown's work has set me free like nothing else I've learned, increasing my capacity to take risks and find my way through tough places."

The Rev. Karla Woggon serves as the Rector of the Episcopal Church of the Ascension in Hickory, NC.

Ordained in 1995, she has served parishes in the Diocese of Louisiana and Washington, D.C., and was delighted to return to her home diocese of Western North Carolina in 2007. Karla is married and has two adult step children. She loves hiking, backpacking, sea kayaking, and just being in the wilderness any chance she gets. "Brené Brown's work has helped me find the courage to say yes and live brave even while I'm shaking in my boots. Her work has unleashed new passion in my personal and professional life."

Registration for this program can be downloaded from our web site at www.vconferences.org/programs, or you can call (828) 963-4453 to get your name on the attendee list.

As Nature Intended:

Healing with Native Flowers and Herbs

Friday, August 18, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Deb Vail

\$50 (\$40 program + cost of materials)

1st Floor of Johnson Hall

Deb and Harry make Sacred Forest Flower Essences from wildflowers growing here in the Appalachian forests and fields. Join our Grandparents of the Forest as we enjoy a hands-on workshop showing us how to connect to plants, make and use native flower essences for healing as well as how to make basic herbal infusions which can be used as nourishment for our bodies.

Deb is also the founder of Sacred Living, and is most happy when helping others to navigate the spiritual and emotional aspects of life by connecting to the wisdom of the present moment of nature for support and spiritual healing. Her larger work can be found at www.sacredliving.net and in her joint venture with husband Harry LeBlanc, www.grandparentsoftheforest.com.





2016 VCCC PROGRAMS

COME SPEND SOME TIME ON SACRED GROUND

Short Introduction to Centering Prayer

Saturday, August 19 - Sunday, August 20

Rev. Rob Field & Becky Hannah,
Center for Spiritual Wisdom

\$140 Full Program

(Commuting Not Recommended)

Most faith traditions have some form of meditation or contemplation. Virtually all methods of meditation have a goal of expanding, or deepening, the consciousness of the practitioner. The details vary. Centering Prayer is a surrender method of meditation or contemplative prayer that reaches back to the early days of Christianity. Join Rev. Rob Field with the Center for Spiritual Wisdom, and Becky Hannah with Contemplative Outreach, as we learn the basics of this ancient method of prayer.

Accommodations are in the Farm House, Mission House, and Annex. Participants should plan to arrive mid-morning on Saturday and stay through lunch on Sunday. A short and sweet introduction in a holy place - the perfect morsel of centering to prepare you for autumn!

Women Writers Workshop

Thursday - Sunday, Sept. 1 - 4

Katarina Whitley

\$308 Full Program

\$191 Commuter Rate (includes all meals)

Join this group of women writers to capture memories, define thoughts, express emotions, bring order out of chaos. New writers are most welcome.

A native of Thessaloniki, Greece, Katerina Whitley has worked as a church journalist on the diocesan and national levels, taught at universities, and is the author of six books.

Full Program rate covers all lodging, meals, and program costs, with accommodations in the Mission House. Commuter rate includes meals and program costs. Deepen and hone your craft, get to know some wonderful women, and enjoy the beauty and tranquility of Valle Crucis for a long weekend.

Come Thou Long Expected: A Short Advent Retreat

Friday, December 9, 10:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

Katerina Whitley

\$40 includes lunch

Location: 1st Floor of Johnson Hall

What comes to your mind when you think of Advent? Can you stop worrying about decorating and gift buying to concentrate on the Coming of the Christ Child? Every year, people of faith long for something different, spiritual and holy, to prepare them fully for a Christmas to remember.

Katerina Whitley will focus and refine this longing. The world waited for this “central event in the history of creation,” as C.S. Lewis called it. We will examine this waiting through writings, poetry, the prophets, the Birth Narrative, and our own hopes and desires for peace and joy.

Advanced Centering Prayer Retreat: Deepening the Silence

Sunday - Sunday, Nov. 27 - Dec. 4

Becky Hannah, Joan Ricci Thome, &

The Rev. Bob Cook

\$533 Full Program

This retreat is for those who would like a prolonged experience of centering prayer and are interested in entering into the more profound levels of spiritual practice in an atmosphere of silence, solitude, and community.

Due to the length of this retreat, each participant should have an established practice of centering prayer for at least a year. This retreat is limited to the first 20 registrants. Participants must stay on campus and plan to attend the entire retreat.

If you have questions about the contents or itinerary for the retreat, please feel free to contact Becky Hannah at (828) 702-3518.

More information about our programs, as well as registration forms, can be found at www.vccconferences.org. You may also register for any of our programs by calling the office at (828) 963-4453.

Valle Crucis Mission Memories: Community through Service, Fellowship and Hoedowns

Keith Martin

*This memory was originally published in the Summer 2017 edition of **Carolina Mountain Life**. We thank them for the use of this wonderful story.*

Over four decades ago, a wonderful, unique and rewarding program took place in the High Country that local residents and participants still remember with great fondness. Some wonder if such an experience should be replicated today.

In 1974, Bishop Matthew George Henry of the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina conceived the idea of the Valle Crucis Mission School Summer Youth Program. Helen Whitener (now Tester), a mid-20s dynamo from Hickory, was charged with the task of creating the program, and became one of four directors during its 12-year period of existence from 1974-86, along with Julie Epps Gurganus, Ellen Scruggs and Ginny Walters Brien.

According to Helen Tester, the program had three initial goals: to teach youth to live and work together in Christian community; to learn about life in Appalachia from the people of the Valle; and to learn practical skills by working with local farmers.

Julie Epps Gurganis still lives in the High Country, and remembers that, “Our hoes were provided by the National Episcopal Church through the Presiding Bishop’s Fund for World Relief. To learn about rural Appalachia, we worked and ate lunch alongside the farmers in exchange for food. We piled into a pick-up truck and I remember riding through the mountains enjoying the crisp morning air before hoeing tobacco, putting up hay, harvesting gardens and gleaning row crops before being rewarded with great food and warm fellowship around the table—both on farms and in the Mission School dining hall.”

Gurganis says that in exchange for lodging at the Mission School, the group would mow the grass, clean buildings, serve food, and other odd jobs. “Participating in the parish family at Church of the

Holy Cross was important to us, and I still have song sheets from our time there. We were plugged into a four-county program to help elderly folks and others in need of assistance to weed gardens, clean windows, or whatever might be helpful; sometimes we just visited,” recalls Gurganis.

“In our free time, usually on weekends, we played music and sang, square danced, went to festivals, hiked the Appalachian Trail, waded creeks and climbed Bishop Falls, visited local artisans and educators, played volleyball and other outdoor games, and hosted barn dances, among other fun outings.”

Tester shares her most memorable moments. “A highlight of the week was the Red Barn Square Dance. The music was great and those in our group who played guitar or another instrument often joined whatever band was playing. Welch (Tester)

called the dances and the whole community would turn out. That old barn floor would shake with the stomping of feet as he called the 'shoe fly' swing. I can still hear his voice as he'd call at the end, 'Swing 'em boys. Swing 'em girls. Swing 'em home!'”

Gurganis adds, “We learned to honor the lives and traditions of Appalachian farmers, craftspeople and our neighbors. Anyone open to being in community with the people surrounding Valle Crucis can learn, yet we always received more than we gave.”

Sherry Rickard Aasen now lives in Pittsburgh but spent the summers of '74 and '75 in the program, in addition to weekends during her college years. Like most of the folks contacted for this article, her “observations are colored by my youth and hazy from the years that have passed. We called ourselves the ‘farmhouse gang.’ I thought my being there was just an opportunity presented by being in the Episcopal Young Churchmen, but years later, I came to understand that the program was intended to provide guidance to teenage youth, some of whom were at risk. I was oblivious and happy.”

Aasen adds, “It seemed to me that local families needed help because their grown offspring generally went off to find work because the income from the

That old barn floor would shake with the stomping of feet as he called the 'shoe fly' swing. I can still hear his voice...

“Swing 'em boys. Swing 'em girls. Swing 'em home!”



up early. “We’d feed the pigs and talk, then Wes Byerly usually made biscuits for everyone to enjoy with breakfast. One torturously hot summer day, a group of us went to make hay and, like banditos, we wore bandanas over our faces to protect our lungs from the dust. I learned a lot about hard work that day—in particular, trying to get the hay in before it rains would come. I also discovered that ‘making hay while the sun shines’ has to do with responsibility and goals, rather than with fun and goofing off!”

Taylor recalls that after a day of hard work, they would hike up the mountain to the pool near the waterfall. “I jumped from the rocks into icy water that shocked my system so that I couldn’t catch my breath. It was all like that: a summer of learning experiences and of extremes, of great joy and such heartbreak at summer’s end... I thought I might never be happy again. But I was wrong, and that taught me about my own strength.”

Ellen Scruggs Sheppard worked in the program in 1977 before becoming director until 1980. “To live in Christian community was a goal; we worshipped together, prayed together, shared our lives with each other. I hope that the kids learned as much as I did. I’ve used the ‘model of service to others’ when directing EYC events at my home parish. To this day, the music learned while playing at the circle dances in the apple barn is most important to me. I continue to play at church, for weddings and other gatherings.”

In summarizing the experience, Sheppard said it best: “Valle Crucis lives on in me!”

farms was insufficient.” She said she learned to plow tobacco fields “with an old wooden and metal plow pulled by Bill the mule, figuring out how to make a ‘tsk, tsking’ sound with my tongue and cheek to get him to move!” She also learned to put in studs, drywall, tape and spackle, and “paint, paint, paint... learning to be pretty handy and confident.”

Aasen remembers helping out in the kitchen, “especially making brown apple betty with graham crackers, apples, and cinnamon. There was a couple that worked at the mission school who were like parents to me; I felt loved and comfortable in that kitchen.”

She shares another memory when she felt less ‘comfortable’...“We had to watch for snakes that liked to bake on the hot stones, or slither down the stream to the cool areas. Once there was a copperhead wrapped around the curtain rod in the dining room; I was fascinated when someone got a broom and pillow case to entice that snake down and into the sack.” Aasen agrees that the hoedowns were a good way to form community. “I learned to play the spoons there, and how to clog. There was also hand-churned ice cream and we girls sewed our own red and white checked outfits.”

Former participant Shay Taylor lives in Baltimore and remembers that several of the youth used to wake



Randy Drury and Helen Whitener (Tester)
in front of the Annex, ca. 1972

Thank you for Tipping the Scale for Hospitality!

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The North American Academy of Piping & Drumming
The Rev. Dorothy L. Pratt
The Women of St. Philips Episcopal Church
Sue Spirit
Edith C. Traver
Moirra J. Turner, Fiddletree Music Company
Tom & Susan White

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By Holy Cross Church, Valle Crucis



Want to see your name here?

Generous donations such as yours help us continue our ministry of hospitality.
Donate securely on our web site at www.vcconferences.org or mail to
P.O. Box 654, Valle Crucis, NC 28691.

Valle Crucis Conference Center 2017 Programs Registration Form

PO Box 654, Valle Crucis, NC 28691 (828) 963-4453 www.vcconferences.org

Please complete entire form and mail with your deposit check to the address above. Registration form can also be found online.
Checks can be made payable to VCCC.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Primary Phone: () _____ Cell Home

Email: _____

Confirmations are made by email. Please include an email address when possible.

Non-refundable deposits are required for multi-day workshops, with remainder of balance due on arrival.

July 30 - August 2

A Journey in the Daring Way

Housing in the Inn

- \$400 Full Program OR \$230 Commuter
\$90 Deposit

August 31 - September 3

Women Writers Workshop II

Housing in the Mission House

- \$308 Full Program OR \$191 Commuter
\$90 deposit

August 18

As Nature Intended: Healing with Native Plants and Flowers

Johnson Hall

- \$50 (\$40 program + cost of materials)

November 26 - December 3

Advanced 8-Day Centering Prayer Retreat

Housing in the Inn

- \$533 Full Program
\$100 deposit

August 19-20

Short Introduction to Centering Prayer

Housing in the Farm House & Mission House

- \$140 Full Program
\$50 deposit

December 8

Short Advent Retreat

Johnson Hall

- \$40

Total: _____

If attending a multi-day workshop:

I would like to room with: _____

- I am requesting a single room, with knowledge that a single may not be available.*

Diet requests, allergies, or other needs: _____

- Yes! I would like to give \$175 in celebration and support of 175 years of a ministry of hospitality in this special place. My donation is included with my program registration and deposit.***

Registration forms for programs, general information, and policies can also be found on our web site,
www.vcconferences.org. Please feel free to make photocopies of this brochure and any related materials.

JOIN US!

2017 PROGRAMS

A Journey in the Daring Way
July 30 - August 2

**As Nature Intended: Herbal
Infusions & Infused Oils**

**Short Introduction to
Centering Prayer**
August 19-20

Women Writers Workshop
August 31 - September 3

Advanced Centering Prayer
November 26 - December 3

Short Advent Retreat
December 8



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July 2017**



The Valle Crucis Conference Center is a ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina. Located on over 450 acres of mountain woodland and verdant farming valley, the Conference Center is truly one of the more beautiful places on Earth. With its beauty comes a sense of timeless spiritual grace that transcends denomination or faith tradition.

The mission of the Valle Crucis Conference Center is to inspire, by loving example and service, those who break bread with us and share in the quest for spiritual renewal, Christian community, and stewardship of this sacred place.

The Valle Crucis Conference Center is located in the historic Mission School, featuring buildings dating from the late 19th Century and early 20th Century, nearly all of which are on the National Historic Register.

The Conference Center is open year-round to accommodate groups of 5 to 150. Rates include three hearty, nutritious meals a day, beautiful meeting spaces with modern amenities, and a view that is simply breathtaking.

To inquire about availability of our accommodations or meeting spaces, or to learn about our Hermitage retreat cabins, visit our web site at www.vcconferences.org or call **(828) 963-4453**.