

You've been invited ...

 fspa.org/content/s/you-ve-been-invited

March 15, 2021

By Sister Kathy Roberg, FSPA Formation Team

We all know the routine. Turn on your computer. Open your email. Find the invitation to a Zoom meeting. Click the link. Set your volume, turn on the camera and wait for the host to let you in. You've joined the others whose faces appear on your screen in "encuentro" — an encounter. We all can say, "Been there, done that." Is this a sign of our times, of what is ours to do in this sacred space? Is this perhaps the Spirit's way of creating interconnectedness so that the bonds of belonging and togetherness can be woven together? Are these Zoom "encuentros" — encounters — happening to heal our own brokenness as well as a fragmented world?

The reality of connecting in the COVID-19 pandemic has become all too familiar and constant for the global networking system. It's easy to manage, safe in protocol and is now the way of encuentro. Genuine encuentros, however, cannot be realized within a Zoom space. Real encuentro is to stand, connected respectfully, face-to-face within each other's sacred space, discovering the beauty in wonderment and recognizing the presence of God. We may have to wait for the Divine moment when COVID is wiped out to again unite in a relational way, standing physically present together.

But for the given time, we do have Zoom. These virtual spaces come with a variety of purposes — committee meetings, strategic planning, evaluating procedures, development proposals, yearly goal setting, etc. Many are vital and help to keep the internal mechanism of an institution spinning. Zoom opportunities come in webinars, conferences, retreats and other avenues for enrichment, reflection and contemplation. Some people have created Zoom calendars which can fill up very quickly. It is possible to experience Zoom fatigue but also to limit your time engaging in it. Encuentro through Zoom is an easy way to connect, to zoom in on new ideas via cyberspace.

There is no stopping the Zoom era, and I would say there is no stopping the movement of the Spirit.

The FSPA Formation Team's dedicating phase — lifelong formation — one of three phases that include discerning and entering, is intended to flow with that movement of the Spirit. We, and many of our sisters, have zoomed into this movement and discovered a wide variety of resources that may stimulate thinking beyond our own perspectives, provoke questions and even unlock unknown mysteries in our own soul world. These experiences can be framed as encuentros. For non-computer users, encuentro is out there, waiting.

We are not static human beings, but we strive to move forward into newness. We yearn from the bottom of our existence for something greater to reflect on and converse over. Our souls need soul talk at times, and resources, available online, in books and music and walks in nature, may be some of the nourishing ways we can take care. One of particular interest is "Living and Leading From a Place of Immense Horizon" by David Whyte, published in the Summer 2020 issue of Leadership Conference of Women Religious' Occasional Papers, in which he speaks of the essential role of spiritual practices, particularly the contemplation of poetry in the work of transforming the world. It is available to sisters in the St. Rose Media Center.

The dedicating phase of FSPA formation is in the very beginning stages of processing this information for you, so stay tuned. You are all invited.



Virtual formation in action

Religious communities from around the country came together in February to celebrate vocations in a groundbreaking way, the virtual 2021 Religious Education Conference. RE Congress declared the event — themed "Proclaim the Promise!" — to be "a radical invitation to believe that our lives and our world are sustained by God's promise."

And it fulfilled that promise. Just under 11,000 people representing 21 countries attended the virtual three-day event. From their computers or mobile devices, they could click their way to the virtual FSPA booth to watch a video, obtain information about the congregation and engage in conversation with several sisters in a chat room forum.

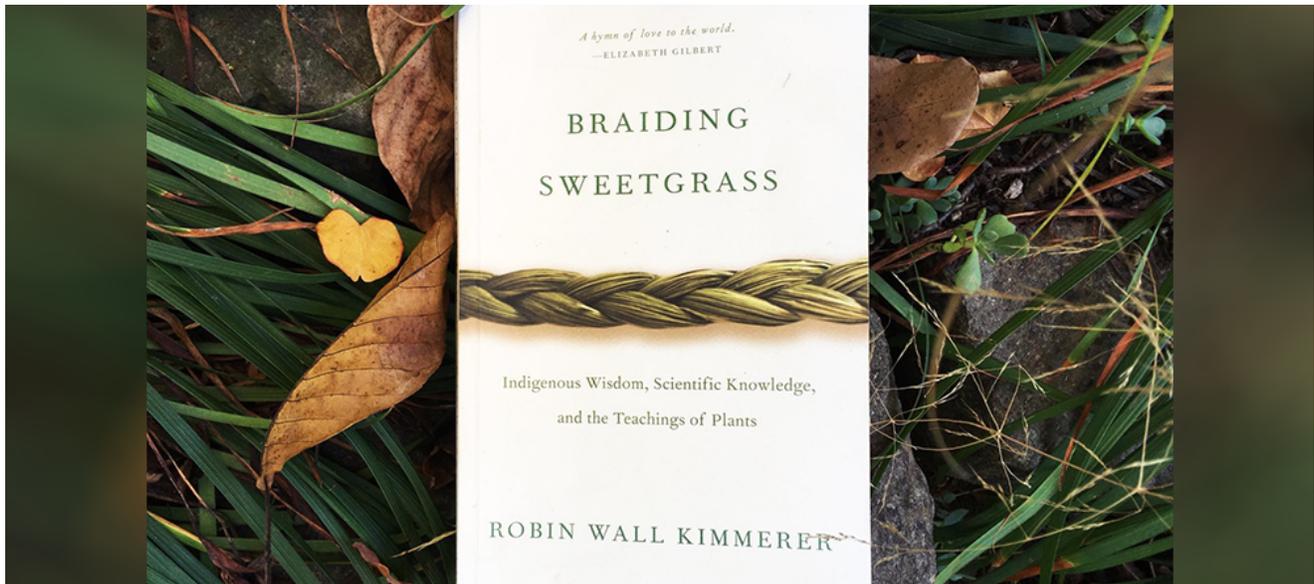
Sister Sarah Hennessey was a volunteer who virtually greeted FSPA booth visitors. "It was interesting, for sure," she shares. "I chatted with a teacher in New Orleans, Louisiana, who was taught by Franciscans in Pennsylvania and was interested in anything Franciscan related."

That teacher was one of 163 attendees who visited the FSPA booth. Of them, 21 visitors claimed a free book through our book giveaway to read and discern from and perhaps share with others. Attendees had their choice of one of five FSPA-authored books: "Cheering for the Good, Leading When It Matters," "Sister Thea Bowman Shooting Star," "Eucharistic Adoration, Reflections in the Franciscan Tradition," "Instrument of Peace," and "Mary of the Angels Chapel: God's Answer to a Bold Promise."

"Braiding Sweetgrass" woven with social and ecological justice for all creation

fspa.org/content/s/braiding-sweetgrass-woven-with-social-and-ecological-justice-for-all-creation

March 15, 2021



"In some Native languages, the term for plants translates into 'those who take care of us,'" writes author Robin Wall Kimmerer in her book, "Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants." Robin is a SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor of Environmental Biology and the founder and director of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment. Both FSPA Integral Ecology Director Beth Piggush and Justice and Peace Promoter Pat Ruda have read the book and offer their own perspectives of the social and ecological justice they found within the pages — those that call us to care for all creation.

Beth Piggush

"Braiding Sweetgrass" by Robin Wall Kimmerer is a book that has supercharged my senses to the Earth Community of people and planet. Robin presents this book as a gift of braided stories "meant to heal our relationship with the world" by weaving together the three strands of "indigenous ways of knowing, scientific knowledge and the story of an Anishinaabekwe scientist trying to bring them together in service to what matters most."

Two themes that resonate with me are ceremony and overconsumption. The significance of braiding sweetgrass, of ceremony, is symbolic of the philosophy and spirituality of the indigenous people. Sweetgrass is a sacred, healing plant to the Potawatomi people and is braided "... as if it were our mother's hair, to show our loving care for her." The author shares the meaning of becoming indigenous to a place, of how the land is the "real teacher." Often while reading, I was reminded of all the lessons I learned as a child playing outside, like the

difference between a raspberry leaf and a nettle leaf. The methodology Kimmerer used with her ethnobotany students was meant to enlighten them to the fact that "The plants adapt, the people adopt." In addition, she elaborates on the purpose of ceremony and how "the community creates ceremony and the ceremony creates communities."

The author frequently references the Haudenosaunee Thanksgiving Address, the ritual that commenced all meetings in the Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy. It begins, "Today we have gathered and we see that the cycles of life continue. We have been given the duty to live in balance and harmony with each other and all living things. So now, we bring our minds together as one as we give greetings and thanks to each other as people." In conclusion, those gathered would respond, "Now our minds are one."

The address honors the Earth, Water, Fish, Plants, Food, Medicine, Animals, Trees, Wind, Sun, Moon, Stars, Teachers and The Creator. And after each piece, everyone replies, "Now our minds are one." As Robin writes, "It is a lesson in Native science."

The rhetoric feels like some prayers I grew up within church — a call and response liturgy — but its goal is consensus. The more I saw this idea come back around in the course of the book the more I wished that a similar consensus was present in Christian cultures. There are daily intentions, traditional prayers and ceremonies of faith, but is there a respect and understanding that Christians have everything we need already?

The other theme that hit home for me is overconsumption, the parallels she draws between the indigenous people's stories of the Windigo monster and the greedy nature of mankind today that allows for the destruction of nature's structures, habitats and balance in the name of progress and profit. Our modern culture is this selfish behavior, our Windigo. Robin states that "we seem to be living in an era of Windigo economics of fabricated demand and compulsive overconsumption." In addition, "Our leaders willfully ignore the wisdom and the models of every other species on the planet — except, of course, those that have gone extinct. Windigo thinking."

Robin also braids together three different points of view with themes of reciprocity, the spirit of community, a gift economy versus a property (market) economy, gratitude and the four aspects of being — mind, body, emotion and spirit.

This is a beautiful book that resonates with me even more when I think about The Revolution of Goodness proclaimed by FSPA and the commitment to action to "build bridges of relationships that stretch us to be people of encounter who stand with all suffering in our Earth Community."

As the warm air starts to ascend on us and the gifts of Mother Earth come alive after a long winter sleep, I want to think I will be paying attention. And this mindfulness will sharpen my intention to action for our whole community. We can start to realize that when we take, we

also need to give back ... we have reciprocal relationships with the planet, with people and with God.



Robin Wall Kimmerer writes that "the land is the 'real teacher,'" and FSPA land at St. Joseph Ridge is serving as such. Pictured in Jacoba's Greenhouse are Viterbo University nursing student volunteers Alexis Dubiel, Destiny Anderson, Carson Timm, Emily Bassler and FSPA Ecospirituality Project Outreach Coordinator Karen Stoltz who shared with them our ministry of ecospirituality firsthand.

Pat Ruda

"Braiding Sweetgrass" is a popular book read and reflected upon by religious communities around the country. This writing helps us understand the indigenous culture's sacred plant, sweet grass, and how the origins of plant, animal and human life on Mother Earth connect us all. Robin Wall Kimmerer is a trained scientist, decorated professor and a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, a tribe of indigenous people located in Oklahoma. The book is wonderful in many ways and can take us back to our childhoods gathering wild strawberries, tapping maple syrup, or even splashing around in a muddy pond.

I did not grow up with firsthand knowledge of indigenous cultures, only knowledge of what our history books taught us. When I read "Braiding Sweetgrass," I realized that I could connect with many of the stories and also gained a new appreciation for the beautiful culture that was introduced in the writing. I know that to understand others you must listen deeply to their words, and the author allows us the opportunity to do so. I am only beginning to understand some of the rituals and why they are so sacred to the indigenous people.

Sweet grass is a fragrant, holy grass known in indigenous culture as wingaashk, the sweet-smelling hair of Mother Earth. Breathing it in is said to stimulate memories. The braided stories are very compelling and bring together the notion of interconnection to Mother Earth. Another wonderful lesson that Robin brings forward is the idea to never take more than you need from nature. If you treat Earth well, it will be here to support and nourish you. I believe this is an important message for all of us that speaks to the protection of Earth against climate change.

If we look at this teaching in the social justice framework, we will begin to explore lifestyles, address consumerism and over-use of our natural resources. The question then becomes whether or not we see Earth as property or as a gift. If I choose to see Earth as a gift, I need to appreciate and respect its beauty that I have received. I will not take more than I need. This is the profound philosophy that Robin shares throughout the book.

"Braiding Sweetgrass" offers much room for discussion and certainly deserves to be read in our community to educate us with an appreciation for the culture and sacred ways of indigenous populations.

FSPA is offering several opportunities in 2021 to experience ecospirituality, justice and peace:

- **April 13:** "Starting Your Garden Inside" will be presented by FSPA Eco-spirituality Project Outreach Coordinator Karen Stoltz. This offering is part of the 2021 Eco in Action Lunch & Learn series, hosted virtually by the FSPA Eco-spirituality Committee on the second Tuesday of each month at noon. Find more information and register at fspa.org/EcoAction.
- **April 14:** "Exploring Intersections: Catholic Sisters on Racism, Migration and Climate" is a collaborative project of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious Region 10 and a virtual series offered the second Wednesday of every month in 2021, focusing on social issues and exploring how they intersect with racism, migration and climate in thought-provoking and engaging conversation. Visit exploringintersections.org to learn more, including how to join upcoming sessions.
- **April 24:** The 2021 Affiliate Spring Gathering will feature "Seeking Justice in the Community of Creation," presented by Eric and Brenna Anglada, from 9 a.m. to noon.
- **May 22:** "Reaching In & Reaching Out: Our Call to Ecological Relationship," is a collaborative program presented by the Franciscan Spirituality Center, Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center and Marywood Franciscan Spirituality Center. For event details and registration, visit fscenter.org.
- **Dec. 3-4:** White Privilege Symposium



MAY 22, 2021

Discover

your relationship with the Creator and all of creation

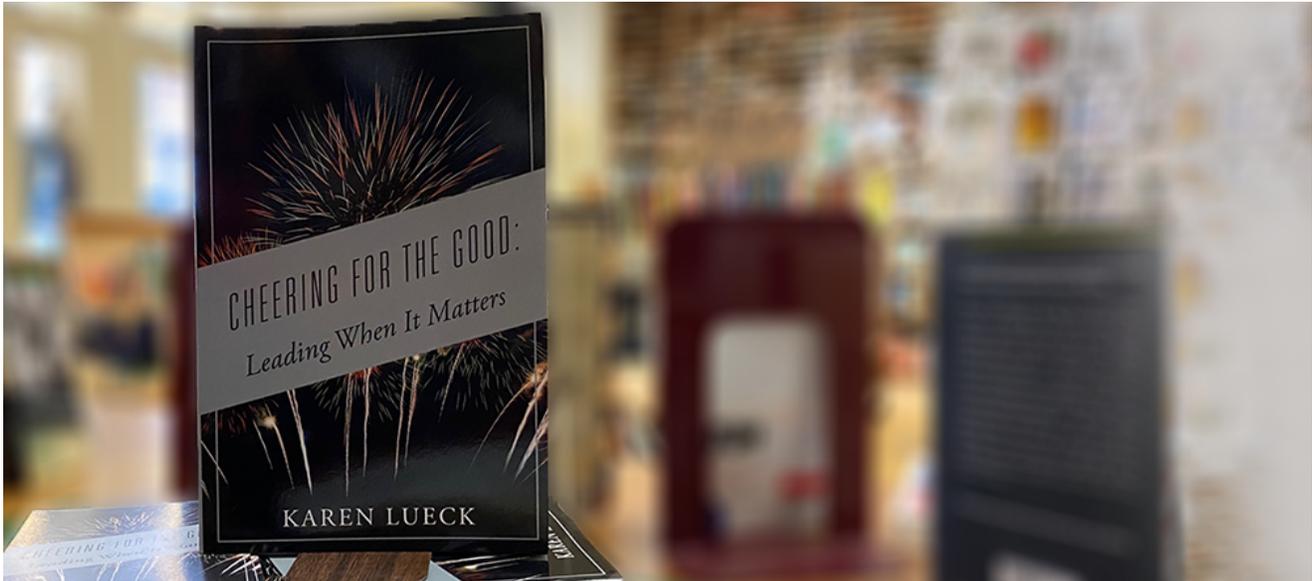
Reaching In - Reaching Out:
Our Call to Ecological Relationship

Sponsored by:
Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration
Franciscan Spirituality Center
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Sister Karen Lueck publishes book encouraging a different view of leadership

fspa.org/content/s/sister-karen-lueck-publishes-book-encouraging-a-different-view-of-leadership

March 15, 2021



In her new book, "Cheering for the Good: Leading When It Matters," Sister Karen Lueck is urging everyone to step up and be the change. Using the metaphor of cheerleading, she encourages readers to exercise leadership in their own corner of the world, using their unique gifts, collaborating with others, embracing our oneness, and focusing on what's right with the world. Good leaders inspire us to be our better selves. These models of leadership call for much more collaboration, compassion, inclusion, humility and integrity.

"People are hungering for a different view of leadership, one where they can embrace hope. And that's what we've seen lately," says Sister Karen. "Many leaders have come to the fore during the COVID-19 crisis. They have put the common good ahead of their own comfort and safety. They have spread the message that we are all in this together and that we must look out for everyone. They have used their creativity to serve the needs of the whole. When the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us, we will need to make decisions about who we want to be as a people. Will we go back to who we were before, or will this challenging time have been a point of transformation for all of us? In order to become leaders, people need first to believe in themselves as good, with unique gifts and wisdom."

Throughout the book, Sister Karen cheers for the readers to claim their power. She gives examples of good leadership in today's world and provides reflection questions at the end of each chapter to help the readers further delve into their own call.

When asked about her favorite message from this book, Sister Karen said, "I love a paragraph in the last chapter of the book entitled Standing on Holy Ground: 'I am cheering for you to be the best leaders you can be. Remember, everyone is a leader, so you have plenty of partners in this mission. If any of you decide to sit this one out, to let someone else do it, to count on the experts to carry out our mission, we as a whole will be immensely poorer. And the earth and its creatures will suffer. We're counting on each other. Together we commit ourselves, a tiny band of pilgrims, united in love, on a journey of transformation, to bring life, love and presence to a world aching to be healed and transformed.'"

Get the Book
in print or digital at:

OutskirtsPress.com

Amazon.com

Barnes & Noble (in store or
online)

Pearl Street Books in

La Crosse, Wisconsin

Listen to the Podcasts
about "Cheering for the Good"

What is spirituality?

Connecting the Diocese

Find links at

fspa.org/cheeringforthegood

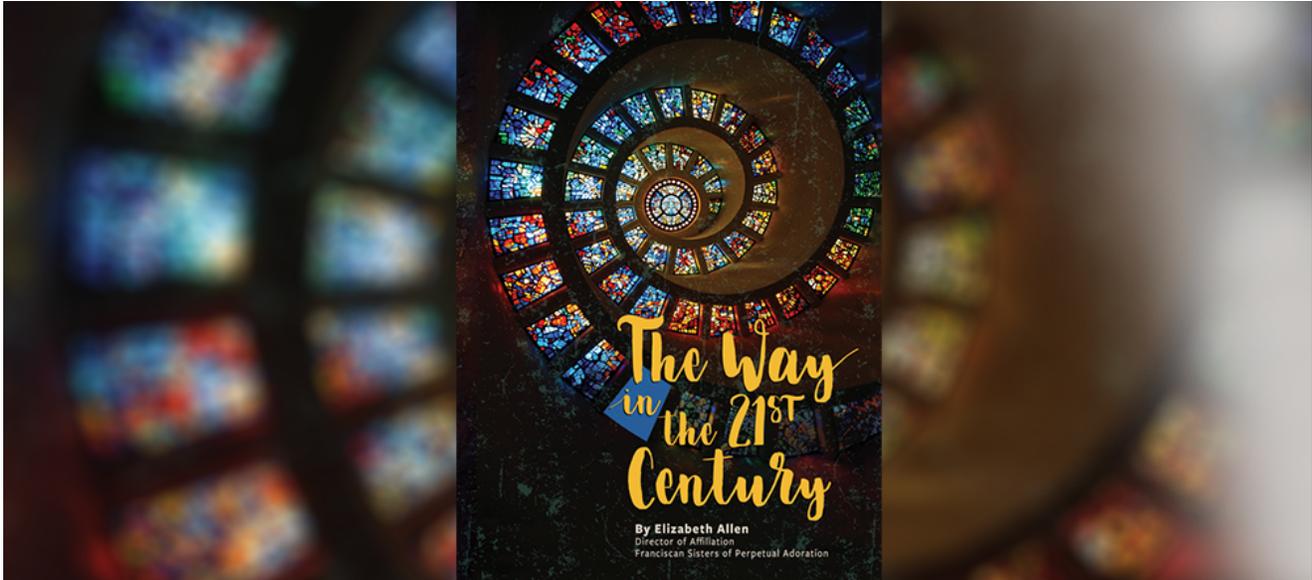
Host a Book Club
with Sister Karen

klueck@fspa.org

Finding "The Way" through universal values

fspa.org/content/s/finding-the-way-through-universal-values

March 15, 2021



"It is time again to claim The Way," begins FSPA Director of Affiliation Beth Allen in her recently-published guidebook, "The Way in the 21st Century."

On the very first page, she acknowledges that there are many obstacles inherent in this "era of heightened social and political discourse," in a culture that all too often polarizes us by differing beliefs and backgrounds and labels. She recognizes "the loss of common language in our values and identities." But Beth also offers an invitation "to reach out to those unfamiliar to us ... find a common ground within our relationships, community and the Earth." And what readers will discover is an abundance of opportunities to reclaim The Way in the pages to come.



"This guidebook invites the reader to think outside the box, to see the gifts in our Franciscan story through the lens of universal values," says Beth. Those values include reflection, presence, simplicity, humility, peacemaking, stewardship and service. Much of what she shares in the book is rooted in her affiliation ministry and prior work in hospital chaplaincy: seeds that she scrupulously tended to as they began to sprout. "Certain questions kept coming up for me. What is the purpose of affiliation for faith seekers? Why is Franciscanism attractive?" Having been an affiliate since 2005, she found herself asking, "'Why am I an affiliate myself?' I kept circling back to our values as the grounding point."

Those values, Beth finds at times, "are not always easily translatable. Ongoing conversion, minors, contemplation and poverty are not terms that we use regularly in our culture." She begged the question, "What do these values mean to a non-vowed person today?" and then pushed herself through the process of answering it. "Originally I thought about creating a 10-session handout that I could provide to affiliates that would speak to Franciscan values in practical and tangible ways in the context of our current times. As so many things do in life, it really evolved from there."

Throughout the writing process, Beth sought feedback from many FSPA and affiliates, as well as past directors of affiliation. "I asked others what resonated, what was disconnecting or missing and so forth. It was essential for me to receive as much collective wisdom as I possibly could." Sister Jean Moore, "a highly-respected Franciscan theologian," was a significant inspiration for Beth. "Her passing was painful for me, and dedicating the guidebook to her felt obvious."

Sister Karen Kappell, a member of the FSPA Affiliation Operating Board, has fully supported "The Way" and Beth's perspective throughout the book. "She offers both a contemporary look at Franciscan values and an opportunity to truly discover Gospel life."

Now that "The Way" is in the hands of sisters and affiliates, Beth hopes they will "see themselves as an important part of the publication's message as persons who commit to these values over and over again and find support in our community to do so. I hope that there's at least one reader out there who will see God through a more open lens, in a way that otherwise felt closed off. I also hope I shed a light on the beauty and goodness that is a part of our Catholic and Franciscan story while revealing that everyone is connected to universal values and truths."

Since the 2018 FSPA Mission Assembly, says Beth, "the message and image that has really stuck with me is being called to be a bridge. Ultimately, I hope readers sense the many bridges I was trying to build to connect all of us as one human family."

And Sister Karen believes that "The Way" is truly guiding us over that bridge. "The book invites with its beauty and creates a pathway that helps one walk the journey through daily living." She also gives gratitude to Beth for sharing "The Way" with sisters, affiliates and FSPA partners in ministry. "I am confident that it will provide fruitful thoughts and affect many Franciscan hearts."

All sisters and affiliates will receive a complimentary copy of "The Way in the 21st Century." It is also available for purchase in print and Kindle e-book format at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).