LASP *eBook*

Leading as Sacred Practice

Introducing the "Six Ways"—

Servant Leader, Circle Wizard, Natural Native

Space Steward, Crucible Guardian, & Ritual Intercessor

By the LASP Ensemble—

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"A Leader in Every Chair" in the Circle Wizard Way is language from Christina Baldwin & Ann Linnea in *The Circle Way.*

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Contents

Click Page # to View

1. Our Intention 5

2. Our Story 6

3. What Is at Stake for You? 7

4. Six Ways of Knowing & Leading 9

Way 1 Servant Leader 10
Way 2 Circle Wizard 13
Way 3 Natural Native 16
Way 4 Space Steward 19
Way 5 Crucible Guardian 22
Way 6 Ritual Intercessor 25

5. Foundation Practices 28

6. Your Way Forward 30

7. Author Profiles 31

8. Contact 33

"The Sacred is that which has value in and of itself and gives meaning to the whole."

ANN DOSHER

Return to
Contents

Our Intention

To see leading not only as transactional and transformational, but also as a sacred practice.

To nurture a community of healers, warriors, visionaries, and teachers learning to be with the sacred and the transpersonal.

To practice different ways of leading and knowing that lighten the felt burdens of leadership and encourage dignity and mutual regard.

Return to Contents

Our Story...

In 2014, we (Holger Scholz, Gisela Wendling, and David Sibbet) met for the first time at EuViz—a European conference of visual practitioners. It included trainers and facilitators from South America, filmmakers and graphic facilitators from the United States, artists from Asia, coaches from Australia, and graphic artists and facilitators from Europe.

The opening of the conference was arranged in the form of a large circle, suggesting a medicine wheel with four cardinal points. It was beautiful how the whole atmosphere, the procedures, and the way we were all came together. The conference had the energy of a beehive, with a buzzing and flow of movement that felt intelligent and coherent.

Moved by what was going on we (Gisela, David, and Holger) reflected on how a sense of the sacred seemed present. Could we live "Life as Ceremony" we wondered? We were surprised to find that each of us had used this expression previously in other contexts. We felt an immediate sense of recognition and kinship. Months later, in further conversation at a Visual Intervention Lab at Holger's Beuerhof retreat center in Germany, the term "Leading as Sacred Practice" emerged as a theme for a gathering. We hoped to point to what leadership could be more fully about. It was a beginning. A few weeks later, we asked Alan Briskin, a colleague exploring collective wisdom, if he would be interested in joining this exploration. He was! The ensemble was complete.

We were aware that there was not yet a shared language for what we felt and were compelled to explore with regard to Leading as Sacred Practice. We were also committed to inquiry, not ideology. Over the next four years, our intention resulted in three large gatherings in Germany and the United States. In community, we learned much about what brings us closer to the sacred in leadership. This eBook reflects our commitment to share this learning and continue the dialogue wherever we can.

Return to
Contents

What Is at Stake for You?

As a leader in these turbulent times, are you looking for new direction, practices, and behaviors that will help you . . .

- Move from a paradigm of separation to one of connectivity?
- Use designed processes such as circle and rituals for work to amplify coherence, intention, and awareness of the larger collective ecosystem?
- Be in service of the future that is emerging?
- Bring forth collective wisdom and overcome collective folly?
- Find the authority within, aided by caring support, to step forward with commitment and courage?

Return to Contents

is an emergent,
collaborative effort for
people who believe in good
and wise leadership.

Return to
Contents

Six Ways of Knowing & Leading

Our breakthrough has been finding and articulating six ways of knowing and leading that embody Leading as Sacred Practice. As you read about these, notice what resonates for you.

Servant Leaders

Circle Wizards

Natural Natives

Space Stewards

Crucible Guardians

Ritual Intercessors

Return to Contents

Way #1 Servant Leaders

Servant Leaders are in service of those they lead, contribute to the commons, and care for the community as a whole.

Return to Contents

Way #1 Practice being a Servant Leader

Servant Leaders respond to their deepest calling to serve. We are guided by a felt sense of regard for others, for loving attention to the Earth, and for the potential impact of our collective actions.

As Servant Leaders, we are women and men who live with curiosity and the question of how to be in service of life, in all its manifestations.

As Servant Leaders, we respect our fundamental needs as humans: to be loved, to be witnessed, to be held in times of crisis, to be asked to contribute, and to be acknowledged for our contribution.

We stand in humble appreciation.

We ally with the higher good and return again and again to an inner orientation to serve, even as we are challenged by the responsibilities of our role and needs in the larger environment.

The Servant Leadership Way explores . . .

- your own path to service;
- holding the whole and parts at the same time;
- the need for diversity of contribution and input;
- generosity as a contagious behavior;
- supporting an evolutionary process while serving more immediate group needs.

Return to
Contents

Explore these *Servant Leader* questions on your own—while you meditate, run, think, dream or write. See what comes.

Inner work questions you may consider:

- What does the term "to be in service" evoke?
- How am I currently in service to life, my organization, my community, my family, and myself?
- To what extent do I currently embody the value of loving, witnessing, and holding others?
- Which of these values would I like to invite more of into my life?

Outer work questions you may consider:

- How are the people I lead and work with in service of the larger whole?
- If I were to extend my concerns beyond the immediate groups or organizations I work with, what might that look like?
- How do the people I collaborate with respond to the deep human needs we have for being loved, being seen, being held?
- If my group, team, or organization were to express these deeper human needs more fully, where would we begin, what might be possible, and what would it feel like?

You can also practice by embodying these sensibilities: Model your humanity with vulnerability • Try generosity as a contagious behavior • Be inclusive • Have humility • Be loving and caring • Experiment with not-knowing to invite collective learning.

Return to Contents

Way #2 Circle Wizard

Circle Wizards . . . understand the nature of this ancient human practice. We can transform mundane interactions into experiences of creativity, joy, and depth.

Return to Contents

Way #2 Become a Circle Wizard

When people experience genuine collaboration, fellowship, and focus on purpose, then leadership rotates around the circle, moment by moment.

As Circle Wizards, we are women and men who become fluent in helping others connect and confer together on what is meaningful and needed. Circles create spaces for mutual regard and mutual effort. The center of the circle becomes a well-spring of ideas; people step forward for different tasks; energy is thoughtful and creative.

As Circle Wizards, we know the experience of hosting a group and having leadership lifted onto the shoulders of everyone present. It is a magical experience, and once a group knows they are capable of shared leadership, they desire to keep using it.

The Circle Wizard Way explores . . .

- how to prepare and host circles in support of the group's deeper purpose;
- how to sustain focus and the necessary energy needed in the moment;
- applying circle in different contexts and for varied purposes, including sense-making, planning, group cohesion, and community building;
- bringing forth a depth of meaning and felt sense of connection that is healing and transformative;
- creating safe spaces for exploration and bold action.

Return to Contents

Explore these *Circle Wizard* questions on your own—while you meditate, run, think, dream or write. See what comes.

Inner work questions you may consider:

- Can I imagine every person as a carrier of deep wisdom, regardless of differences?
- When I think about someone who annoys me, can I imagine the contribution that person could make if I accepted them fully?
- Can I notice the presence of circles and cyclical movements around me?
- What would life be like if I experienced each day, each week, and each year as a circle —beginning and ending and beginning again?
- How could this cyclical worldview inspire my leadership?

Outer work questions you may consider:

- How would things change if I imagined a leader in every chair?
- What might happen in my meetings and gatherings if I made greater use of circle practices, not only as a process but as an intervention?
- How might being in a circle impact my agenda and the quality of conversation?
- How would it feel if everyone felt responsible for the quality of interaction in the circle?
- What burdens would be lifted if everyone displayed mutual regard for each other and the work we shared?

You can also practice by embodying these sensibilities: Design spaces for connecting, equalizing, and sharing mutual regard • Practice staying attuned to the deeper purpose of why a circle is being called • Practice seeing a leader in every chair • Use soft eyes to see beyond initial opinions and differences • Allow conversations to build and deepen with questions rather than answers • Pay attention to stories, metaphors, emotion, and body language for bringing forward meaning and emergence • Direct your attention to the center, where the voice of the collective crystallizes.

Return to Contents

Way #3 Natural Native

Natural Natives . . . are centered in themselves, yet remain adaptive and resourceful, emanating love for life and powerful presence. In connection with the Earth we are never far from home.

Return to Contents

Way #3 Remember You're a Natural Native

"Natural" refers to the original gifts we have as human beings and our connectedness to Mother Earth.

As Natural Natives, we are women and men who trust in our best instincts and embrace collaboration with the elemental gifts of the Earth. We embody the ability to imagine, create, preserve, and transform. We perceive our connection to other humans, animals, nature, the soul of the world, and the cosmos as the teacher and the teaching. To access this wisdom, we trust in and deepen the gifts of intuition, awe, beauty, curiosity, and coherence. Home is always inside us and around us in the natural world.

As Natural Natives, we are able to ask questions in the most simple and seamless ways possible. We know how to listen beyond the words themselves, with love, empathy, and curiosity. We speak with clarity and brevity. We know how to be still and how to listen for deep wisdom amid silence. We are touched by the natural beauty within and around us. We know how to bring forth a sense of belonging. We practice following the drumbeat of our heart as we align with the pulse of the Earth.

The Natural Native Way explores . . .

- being at home in and with oneself, no matter what is going on around us;
- attending to the land as co-host;
- knowing we are connected to life, in all its manifestations;
- experiencing being alive, joyful, responsive, and responsible.

Return to Contents

Explore these *Natural Native* questions on your own—while you meditate, run, think, dream or write. See what comes.

Inner work questions you may consider:

- What are the original gifts I was born with?
- When do I feel at home with myself? Do I ever feel homeless?
- Do I notice when I am experiencing calm and peacefulness?
- Am I aware of when I get agitated and reactive?
- Am I open to receiving love?
- What might happen if I imagined myself as a Natural Native?

Outer work questions you may consider:

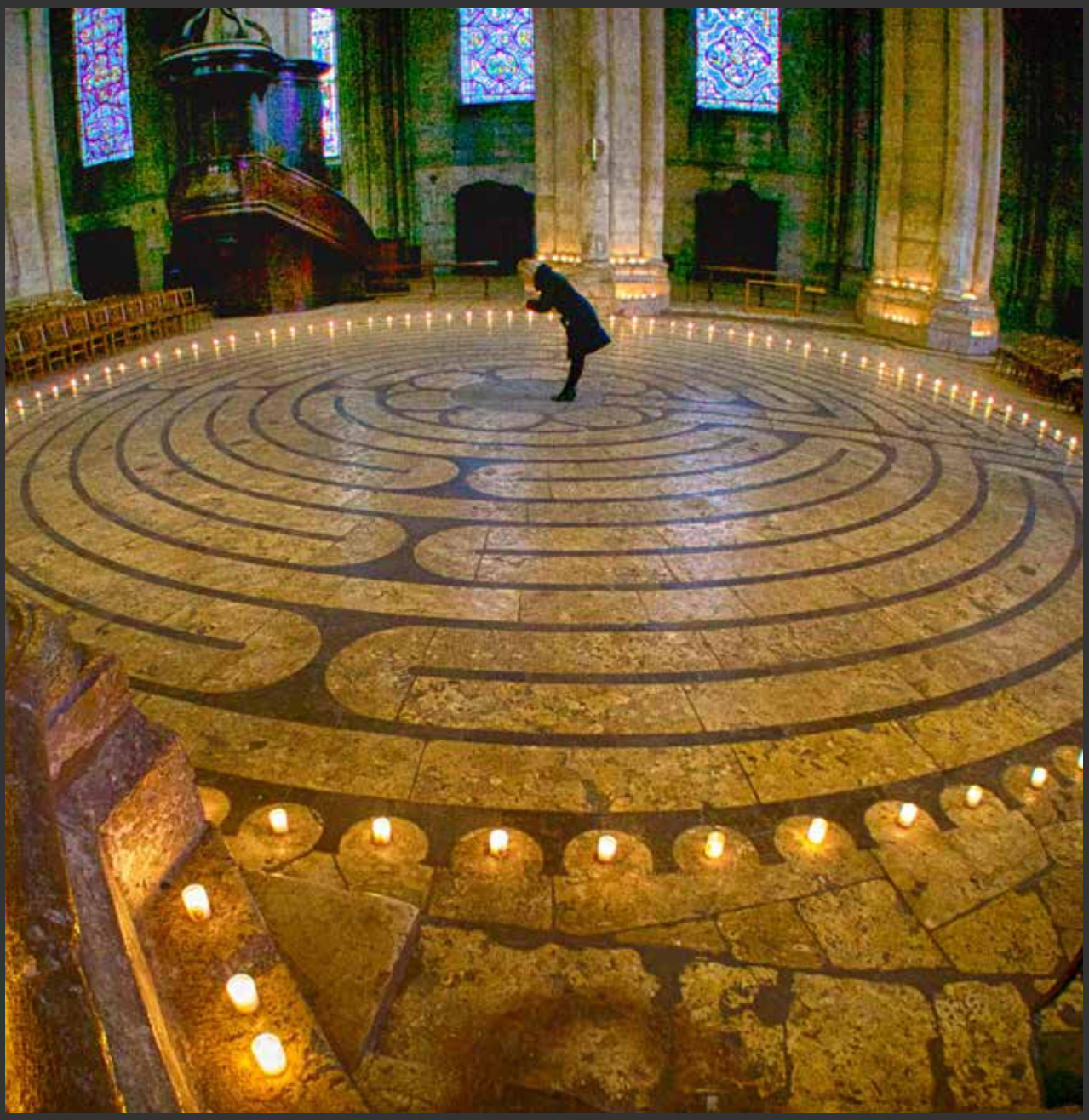
- Do I understand the interdependence among my team, my organization, and the larger community?
- How do I bring forth a sense of belonging for people I collaborate with?
- Can I think of my work relationships as part of a larger ecosystem? How might these relationships be as diverse as those of animals and trees in a forest?
- What does success look like from the perspective of a natural native?
- How often do I spend time in nature with the people I work with?
- How does the work we do impact the natural world?
- Is there something we can give back that nourishes our larger community and planet?

You can also practice by embodying these sensibilities: Take more walks • Spend a night outside • Welcome the land as teacher and host • Notice your emotions and triggers • Care for yourself • Consider learning from traditional and indigenous peoples • Practice what it means to harvest, to leave no trace, and to give something back • Listen for your original gifts • Cultivate seeing a larger ecosystem, not just parts or partial perspectives.

Return to Contents

Way #4 Space Stewards

Space Stewards . . . attend to our own inner awareness and spaciousness and to the aesthetics and functionality of outer spaces where our work will take place.



Return to Contents

Way #4 Become a Space Steward

Experience how to recognize and cultivate physical, emotional, and sacred inner and outer spaces that call forth our best selves.

As Space Stewards, we are women and men who attend to the physical, mental, and emotional spaces that allow for the emergence of what is needed.

We bring our personal experiences with the generative qualities of spaciousness to the people and groups we work with.

We know what the spaces are like where there aren't answers yet and where we are waiting for what will happen next.

We are familiar with creating spaces where we set aside time for silence, reflection, and healing.

The Space Steward Way explores . . .

- how generativity arises from "being" and how being requires intimacy with one's own presence;
- suspending certainty and embracing not-knowing as a forerunner to new learning;
- cultivating mental spaciousness, which involves frameworks of thinking that make room for the unknown, the transpersonal, and the still;
- practices that involve using mind against mind to deconstruct old beliefs, leaving room for reflection and new contributions;
- helping the Crucible Guardian to prepare both people and physical space for the extraordinary to occur.

Return to Contents

Explore these *Space Steward* questions on your own—while you meditate, run, think, dream or write. See what comes.

Inner work questions you may consider:

- How much inner and outer space around me do I cultivate for myself?
- What is the power of making things nice and spacious?
- What, in my experience, is the blessing in good preparation?
- What is the benefit of practicing letting go as a leader and making space for someone or something else to come in?

Outer work questions you may consider:

- What is my relationship to the aesthetic in the realm of my work?
- Based on my experiences, what is made possible by beauty, coherence, or nuance?
- Can I appreciate the impact of not doing as being as powerful as doing?
- Can I see aesthetics and attention to space as an ally for the sacred?
- If so, what would I do differently in preparation for gatherings to evoke the sacred?

You can also practice by embodying these sensibilities: When preparing for an event, attune to the inner and outer space that is needed • Practice being spacious • Be open to letting go of prior assumptions and letting in new insights • Make things nice • Recognize that a space can also be a sacred space • Invite the sacred into the space with intention, with beauty, and with reverence.

Return to Contents

Way #5 Crucible Guardian

Crucible Guardians . . . challenge and guide us and protect the space we are in as we remake ourselves during times of deep change.

Return to Contents

Way #5 Learn to be a Crucible Guardian

Crucibles are containers strong enough to allow high heat to meld diverse elements together and to transform them into the new.

As Crucible Guardians, we are women and men who work with the heat of change. We work with the betwixt and between, where we are no longer the old and not yet the new—the birthplace of a new future. This work often requires transformational change. It includes recognizing and supporting specific instances of transformational moments and understanding how such instances morph and replicate over the long arc of a complete change process.

As Crucible Guardians, we honor the fact that rites of passages reflect archetypal patterns of transformational change. Ceremonies and rituals, when properly designed, cultivate and harness the energy needed to move through transitional and liminal states. As Guardians of the Crucible, we serve the process in which the old loses its form so that the new can be born. We help design, build, and protect the crucible long enough to meaningfully support those who are in the midst of transformation, a time when we are most vulnerable and most potent.

The Crucible Guardian Way explores . . .

- working at the thresholds of inner and outer processes so that the melding of different elements can safely give birth to what is wanting to emerge;
- creating, maintaining, and modulating the work of crucibles as sacred containers where the magic can happen and wisdom appears;
- finding ways to creatively work with uncertainty, ambiguity, and not knowing as conditions for the new to take shape;
- the experience of communitas, which is the spontaneous arising of a felt sense of connectedness among those who share a crisis, disruptive experience, or major change process.

Return to Contents

Explore these *Crucible Guardian* questions on your own—while you meditate, run, think, dream or write. See what comes.

Inner work questions you may consider:

- How do I experience being in the betwixt and between?
- Can I see and relate to crisis as a necessary part of renewal?
- What is my experience with ritual and ceremony? What brings them alive for me? What might be missing?
- Am I currently going through a change in my life that is not complete, and if so, what am I noticing that is needed?
- If I were a Crucible Guardian, what would be required of me?

Outer work questions you may consider:

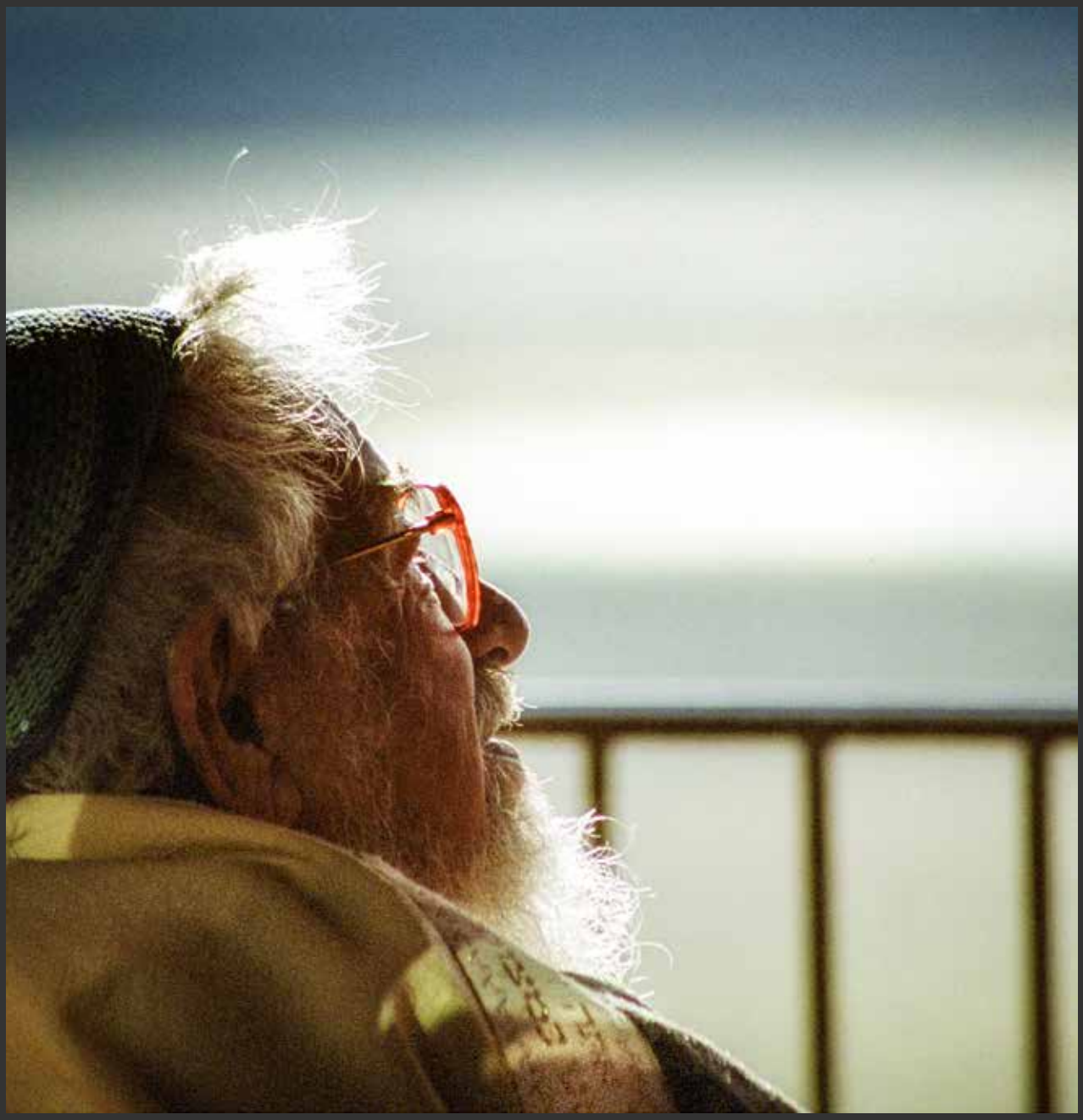
- How do I go about creating crucibles (containers) for change?
- How might I work with the spontaneous arising of connectedness?
- Would I be able to fully welcome, make space for, and support communitas among those I am working with?
- If I were a Crucible Guardian, how would I pay attention to the readiness for change in my system?

You can also practice by embodying these sensibilities: Attune to inner and outer spaces and sense the readiness for change in yourself and others • Help create crucibles strong enough and enduring enough to transform the old into the new • Recognize that rites of passage are universally applicable patterns that underlie all change processes • Use designed processes to cultivate, harness, and focus the energy of change • Change and grow through real experiences.

Return to Contents

Way #6 Ritual Intercessor

Ritual Intercessors . . . broaden our and others' experience by guiding rituals that ignite healing, connection, and transformation.



Return to Contents

Way #6 Be a Ritual Intercessor

The Ritual Intercessor intervenes on behalf of an individual or group by seeking guidance from spirit, offering prayers, and calling for ritual when it is needed.

We Ritual Intercessors are women and men who have a strong relationship with the invisible or transpersonal world. As we practice working with these higher forces, we pursue our own spiritual practice. We understand that guiding groups through the acts of healing and transformation requires being finely attuned to the energies and readiness of everyone who is participating. These sensitivities are supported by ways of knowing and kinds of perceptions that are beyond the rational mind. These include intuition, the wisdom of the body, and attention to emotion and all senses, as well as guidance that comes from spirit and the natural world.

As Ritual Intercessors, we work closely with the Crucible Guardian who attends to the overall process container, the embodied horizontal dimension. We attend to the vertical dimension, which is aligned with spirit. It is through acts of connecting with spiritual insights, source, and different forms of guidance that we access what is needed to create a new future.

The Ritual Intercessor Way explores . . .

- being open to dimensions in life that are transpersonal, universal, and larger than any one person;
- partnering with the transpersonal/invisible world to receive guidance, which includes sharpening intentionality and staying tuned to higher dimensions;
- sensing what is evolving in an emergent and dynamic process and helping it become realized in the here and now—this is midwifing emergence;
- tracking the unfolding patterns within a ritual process.

Return to Contents

Explore these *Ritual Intercessor* questions on your own—while you meditate, run, think, dream or write. See what comes.

Inner work questions you may consider:

- What kind of inner and outer guidance have I experienced in my work and life so far?
- Am I aware of shifting between different ways of perceiving and knowing?
- Am I aware of having experienced alternate attentional or consciousness states that went beyond the rational?
- If so, how have they informed or guided me? And how might they have directed my work as a leader?
- How might I cultivate these different ways of knowing and perceiving and incorporate them in my practice?

Outer work questions you may consider:

- When the path forward is not clear, for my team, organization, or community, how would I name what is stuck, polarized, or limiting?
- What would have to happen that would bring about the shift that is needed?
- How might rituals provide a context for guidance and shifts in attention that would serve my team, organization, or community now?
- How can insights and feelings coming through rituals bridge different ways of knowing and liberate group members to feel their connectivity?

You can also practice by embodying these sensibilities: Open your senses to different ways of knowing • Inquire how rituals can support inner movements within the personal and collective domains for healing, visioning, and transformation • Practice asking for and being receptive to guidance, especially guidance that comes from beyond the rational mind and stems from an intuitive, earthbound, or mystical source.

Return to Contents

Foundation Practices

Over the course of three week-long gatherings in Germany and California, and innumerable Ensemble dialogues, a set of what we are calling "Foundation Practices" have emerged. They began as guiding principles for our first conference and now have evolved as a framework for practice.

CIRCLE We learn how circles work, symbolizing the whole and paving the way for new ways of connecting and sharing mutual regard.

SACRED SPACE We learn how to recognize and cultivate physical, mental, emotional, and sacred spaces that call forth our best selves and support further growth.

LIMINALITY We purposefully step into and acknowledge the betwixt and between—where we are no longer the old and not yet the new. We appreciate it as the birthplace of a new future.

NATURE, EARTH WISDOM We explore the meaning of "spirit" and "sacred" in relation to the land. The land becomes our teacher and host.

COMMUNITAS We learn about the spontaneous arising of a felt sense of connectedness among those who share a disruptive experience and are empowered by the experience to move forward and feel hopeful. This is the sacred function of a community of people going through change together.

LINEAGE We explore the power of lineage as it relates to bloodlines, ancestry, teachers, traditions, and all the others that stand behind us and with us.

Return to Contents

Foundation Practices, Cont.

LEADERSHIP We support the role of servant leadership, making contributions to the commons and caring for the community as a whole.

SOCIAL FIELDS We increase our awareness of how groups are immersed in larger energetic and informational fields, learning how to access wisdom from other humans, nature, and the cosmos.

ENSEMBLE WORK We facilitate as a collective activity sharing mutual intention. We learn how to care about what allows everyone to be personally creative and seen while simultaneously advancing the whole group's constructive contribution in the world.

SENSEMAKING We explore how methods of finding meaning and patterns are enhanced and illuminated by inviting all of our senses—somatic, visual, intuitive, energetic, emotional, and conceptual—into the process.

HARVEST AND COMPLETION We learn from traditional and earthbound cultures what it means to harvest, to leave no trace, and to give something back.

Return to Contents

Your Way Forward

We hope our eBook has brought you joy and inspired possibilities. If you want to explore these Six Ways further, please join us for our "LEADING AS SACRED PRACTICE" programs.

Global Learning & Exchange Network (GLEN) series on-line: https://glen.mykajabi.com/leading-as-sacred-practice-exchange-series

Leading as Sacred Practice Summit (hybrid in-person/on-line) at IONS Earthrise Retreat Center in Petaluma, CA) September 27–October 1, 2021: https://www.glencommunity.org/leading-as-sacred-practice

Return to Contents

The LASP Ensemble

ALAN BRISKIN, PhD, is an award-winning author, artist, and leadership consultant. His most recent book, *The Power of Collective Wisdom*, was a Nautilus Silver Award winner in the category of Conscious Business and Leadership. His other books include *The Stirring of Soul in the Workplace, Bringing Your Soul to Work, Daily Miracles,* and *Centered on the Edge*. He is a co-founder of the Collective Wisdom Initiative. His consulting practice spans thirty-five years of helping leaders and teams apply practical wisdom to complex issues of organizational change and transition. He has given keynotes and conducted workshops throughout the United States and internationally, including co-leading retreats with spiritual leaders Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi and Reverend Lauren Artress, whose rediscovery of the labyrinth has become a worldwide movement.
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Return to Contents

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DAVID SIBBET is founder and CEO of The Grove Consultants International, leaders in applying visual practice to innovation and change. He is co-director of the Global Learning & Exchange Network (The GLEN) and author of John Wiley & Sons' best-selling Visual Facilitation series: *Visual Meetings, Visual Teams, Visual Leaders*, and *Visual Consulting* (coauthored with Gisela Wendling). David is designer of the Grove's Sustainable Organizations Model, the Drexler/Sibbet/Forrester Team Performance System, the Grove's Visual Planning Systems, and the Grove's Facilitation Series. He is a recipient of the Organization Development Network's Lifetime Achievement Award. David is a student of Arthur M. Young and his Theory of Process. In addition to consulting on transformation change projects, he is president of California Poets in the Schools. The son of a Presbyterian minister, David understands Christian Protestant perspectives but is also a longtime vision quester and practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism. Seeking an integral perspective across these traditions is a passion.
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HOLGER SCHOLZ is the founder of Kommunikationslotsen, a dialogic OD consultancy in Germany. His professional passion is cultivating our natural capacity for facilitating and mentoring as a practical means of working with leaders and organizations. As a Kommunikationslotsen consultant, he has worked with individuals, groups, and organizations. Holger became involved with large-group interventions in the 1990s. During this period, he came into contact with North American indigenous worldviews. Much of Holger's work is based on his training as a large-group facilitator, coupled with his unique encounter with Lakota traditions, ceremonies, and cultural techniques he learned in Germany and later in the United States.
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Return to Contents

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Return to Contents