



### The Vision Of The Mission

By Marlin Knecht

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Recently Sherry and I sold our place in Colorado. It was a very difficult decision because it was the place that I used to think of as our own private monastery, high in the mountains of the Rockies with its beautiful, peaceful views. It was a place where we had experienced much on our own spiritual paths.

We prayed much about the decision of selling it, and again about buying another property here in the east. In time, I came to feel that it was time to create a place near where we lived, a place of service and outreach to others. I felt close to the people in my local church and wanted to create a place where they and others could come and experience the closeness to God that I often felt in nature. But I also wanted it to be more than this.

Not too long after making this decision, we purchased a 20-acre piece of forested property a few miles south of Newport, NY.

With building plans now approved and a rough driveway

in place, our vision of a **Christian experiential learning center** is beginning to take physical form.

The Mission is to be a place for **restoration, renewal and spiritual growth**, integrating a unique blend of elements such as hiking trails, places of devotion, works of art, and a retreat center.

The idea behind the Mission is to represent spiritual growth with metaphors that mirror elements in the life of a Christian. We hope to foster activities that build trust, provide space for renewal and restoration, create pieces of art that evoke a sense of the sacred, and communicate foundational pieces in the Christian walk.

One of my visions is to create various hiking paths through the woods that represent different spiritual practices. These might be the *path of service*, the *path of study*, or the *path of devo-*

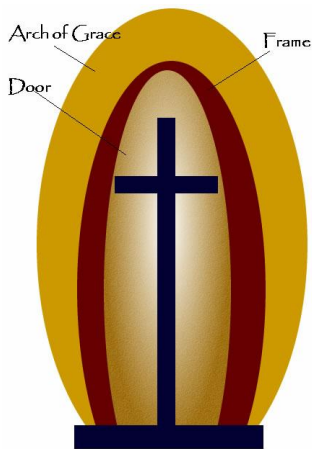
*tion...* each of these providing a way to 'draw nigh unto God,' as it says in James 4:8. A traveler down any one of these paths might find the steps with the Beati-



**At the entrance to the Mission**

tudes inscribed on them, or the 'Romans 12' door rising from the woods, covered only by the sky and an arch representing the grace of God.

We expect the Mission to be an active platform for ministry, outreach and community. By sponsoring prayer groups, discussion forums and other events, we hope people will enjoy it as a gathering place — physically, intellectually, emotionally — that provides food for the body, mind and soul.



Design 1 - Romans 12:2 Door

... Except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Matt: 18:3

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Rom 10:10

## What In The World Is A 'Romans 12' Door?

Romans 12:2 reads, "... be ye not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, ..." (KJV) "

Laying in bed one night, something came to me about the meaning of transformation in a Christian's life and the importance of study. I have since created plans for the Mission's 'Romans 12 Door.'

What is a transforma-

### Call for articles

One of the things I feel I need to do for myself is to write. Simultaneously grounding and enlightening, writing provides a way to easily offer concepts and ideas within a community for reaction and comment. Ongoing conversation (with exception of times of silence) in community is, to me, part of what community is all about

Paul writes "Whosoever, speaks this with his mouth... is saved." I believe we are called to express ideas with each other in order that we have a way to converse, learn and study. *Study to show thyself approved...*

tional door' in the life of a Christian, and what does it represent?

The Romans 12 Door will lie on the **path of study** through the woods surrounding the Mission. Like most doors, this transformational door may represent opportunity, things we fear, and more. One side of the door is dark and the other light. As we approach transformation we may stare into the abyss, fear-

ing the unknown. Then as we pass through the door, and grieve that which we have left behind, we step to the other side. We see the light side of the door and the passage comes to mind. *All things work to the good of them that love God and keep his commandments.*

There is a lot more to this door, but you'll have to visit - or help create it—to find out the rest of the story.



writing articles is one way of doing this. Research may even provide the basis for a conversation with God.

Readers are invited to submit articles, letters, or other thoughts for publication in this newsletter.

## Christian Empowered Community and Community Empowered Christians – The CEC Model

By opening the Mission to all who are interested, I hope to encourage growth of a “Christian Empowered Community” – and community empowered Christians (CEC). The CEC Model is about individuals empowering community, and Community empowering individuals.

### How does community empower individuals?

To me, community is about creating a space that holds the sense of the sacred, the silent, the deep, the intimate and evokes a sense of reverence. I believe that a spiritual community can offer many benefits to us:

#### 1) Spiritual protection.

There is strength in numbers. On a spiritual path, no matter how intelligent or well intentioned we are, we can lose our way by losing perspective and self-objectivity.

**2) Support.** Doing spiritual practices is a many-fold process of doing **inner work** while participating in **outer service**.

When we do serious inner work, it can bring up difficult issues, unexpected memories, and it can challenge us to grow. In a community formed for the purpose of spiritual growth and “drawing nigh unto God,” others are there to offer love, support, and guidance as we go exploring, take risks and approach the **transformational doors** of life.

While our closest friends in

community may not be fully objective about us, they can nonetheless act as an important grounding influence.

Moreover, it may provide a safe and supportive space to allow us to take risks we would not otherwise take. These risks could be as simple as visiting a sick person or offering to pray with someone. These are beginning places.

#### 3) Prayer group.

*Where two or three are gathered together in my name there I am among them.* At times I have grappled with issues so difficult I knew of very few people with whom I felt comfortable discussing the issues at hand and asking for prayer.

#### In what way can individuals empower community?

As we grow spiritually, purify and cleanse ourselves, our vertical relationship with God grows higher and deeper.

When this happens we also develop the capacity to build and support our horizontal relationships with one another. This is community building, based on a **shared journey** and a **common vision**. These two things constitute commitment on the part of individuals.

As individuals practice various spiritual disciplines, they build community through both the inner and outer

work they do. For some time I have had a vision of how these practices might be a part of community life.

It’s a vision of a community that lives and breathes to be “in relationship” with God.

**It’s a community** that holds in its hands the heavenly jewels, those that flow out from the treasure chest of heaven and cover our world.

*For where your treasure is there your heart will be also.*

Matt: 6:21

**In this community**, we would confess again and again to one another as a point of meeting and self-ownership. This is a beginning point...

*“if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

1 John 1:9

**In this community**, we would begin in order that we might know one another and in this knowing begin to know ourselves and God ...

**In this community**, we would learn the elements of transformational trust – a trust that doesn’t arise from the checks and balances of the ego, but one that arises from the desire to seek after

*the kingdom of heaven and his righteousness.*

**In this community**, we would practice self-intimacy, that we might be intimate with God, and in this come to know the Grace of God.

**In this community**, we would celebrate the handshake between internal growth and external service, and in doing so celebrate the joy of self-sacrifice.

**In this community**, we would practice internal silence that we might hear the still, silent voice within.

**In this community**, we would practice dying to ourselves, our attachments and desires daily, that we might be renewed again and again.

**In this community** we would practice simplicity that we might know truth.

**In this community** we would watch love grow as a practice and as an experience.



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## *Purpose of the Mission*

*The purpose of The Mission is to provide a space for restoration, renewal and spiritual growth. By encouraging experiential learning, we hope to empower both adults and children to draw closer to God.*

*Elements of this community include art, nature, forums for discussion, service opportunities, worship, and more.*

**WE ARE ON THE WEB AT  
MISSIONRENEWAL.COM**

We invite you to participate in the Mission in whatever way you feel inspired.

During fair-weather weekends this fall, you may find us enjoying a hike or campfire at the land; please feel free to join us. If you wish to camp, just bring along a tent.

If you have suggestions for the Christian Resource Network, article topics, discussions, events or other ideas, we'd like to hear from you.

### **Upcoming Articles:**

- Religious Pluralism and a multi-cultural world.
- Boundaries, Psychology and The Christian way.
- The Basics of Christianity.
- Christian Parenting
- Community, Spiritual Disciplines and Spiritual Growth

### **Missionrenewal.org to provide outreach network**

Many of us want to help and serve others. Knowing how to best help, whom, when and where can sometimes be difficult, however. One of our plans is to develop a **Christian Resource Network**, to connect those who wish to serve with those in the community who need various kinds of assistance. We anticipate creating resource lists, visitation groups, prayer links, etc.

Email [marlin@ureach.com](mailto:marlin@ureach.com) or call 877-388-8389.

