



Vessels of Peace

Women Embodying Peace ...
Inspired by the Sacred Feminine ...
Serving Divinity, Humanity, Earth

VESSELS OF PEACE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER
OCTOBER 2005 - ISSUE #20A - SPECIAL CRESTONE RETREAT EDITION

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NOTE ABOUT THIS EDITION

Dear VoP Women,

When I began to assemble the newsletter for this month, I realized that there was simply too much material for one issue. Already our newsletters are lengthy - and the Visioning Circle women made it clear at the retreat that they love the richness and variety of the content, even if long, and don't want that to change!

But what to do? I did not want the newsletter getting truncated by your email systems or filtered out by your spam detectors. So I decided that for October, we will have a two-part newsletter - part one will cover the Crestone retreat experience, and part two, which will be sent out about a week after this one, will offer our regular format. It feels like yet another sign that this newsletter wants to expand its format and reach, so we are beginning the process of exploring how best to do that.

We welcome your feedback and suggestions about what you would like to read and know about in this publication and also, if you would like to contribute your writing or other talents, time, or financial support, please email me at lyndaterry@vesselsofpeace.com

I hope you find reading about the Crestone VoP Visioning Circle Retreat as inspiring as we found it to be there; Vessels of Peace will return to Crestone in 2006 and invite you to join us there! More details in the months ahead...

Sending you loving blessings of peace,

Lynda

IT'S THE ENERGY, DEAR HEARTS!
Retreat Reflections from Lynda

It began in May ... and only grew stronger over the summer months. Like a heartbeat in my consciousness ... Cres-tone, Cres-tone, Cres-tone ...a constant awareness of this remote, beautiful place of Silence, tucked up against the western slope of the Southern Rockies ... And by the time our first Vessels of Peace Visioning Circle retreat concluded last month, there was no denying the import of that repeating refrain. Crestone is a place where Peace and the Sacred Feminine converge - or is it emerge? - and the experience of that confluence changes you forever.

It's not just the altitude forcing your heart and lungs to compensate for the thinner concentrations of oxygen; it's the Light of that energy ... and we experienced it everywhere.

Early morning light through stained glass in the Sangre de Christo chapel of the Carmelites ... the earthlight energy of the elementals at Kiara's acres of rock and crystal gardens ... the Light of Diksha offered to us with such love and respect in the meditation yurt at the Temple of Consciousness and again, as Jyorei, at Shumei Institute's Sanctuary ... The sunset's changing light reflected on the mountains and along the valley's horizon ...Lakshmi's compelling radiance vibrating throughout her temple at Haidakhandhi ... Shimmering equinox energy reflected in the countless golden groves of aspens ... Misty blue-gray twilight carrying the chanting of the peace mantras up through the Lindesfarne Chapel's domed roof ... Translucent light emanating through the Sige mandala, on the altar in Shakt House ... And at night, the moonlight and the stars ... always, the stars ...

I slept in a room with high windows that brought the sky inside every night, bathing my bed in moonbeams some nights, in star streams, on others. In the quiet solitude of that room, the light energy of the heavens worked on my physical and energetic bodies, communicating and activating, transmitting and transmuting. Five years ago - even a year ago! - I would have thought such a thing pretty "out there," even with all my years of meditation, mystical experiences, and exploring the "frontiers" of spirituality. Well, it IS "out there" - AND it's also "in here."

That's the beauty of the Crestone experience: You are simultaneously totally out there, in Spirit's natural wildness, no hiding ... and totally inside, in the Silence of your heart, no hiding.

Incredible ...

I am not so naïve as to think that Crestone is the only place in the world that offers this experience, but it IS the only place in the world where 20-some different spiritual centers representing numerous spiritual traditions, plus a few hundred "locals," have chosen to live and work together to honor and nurture a vision they all share – a vision of a place where Divinity, Humanity and Earth meet as One.

Something very special and important is going on in those foothills, on those mountains, in that valley, under that vast Colorado, high desert sky, and Vessels of Peace is part of it. We will return there, create a space that becomes the "Mother Vessel" for our service. We have entered into a sacred trust with this beautiful, holy place ... and it is good ...

Note: For more about Crestone, see the links under this issue's Link of the Month, below.

RETREAT REFLECTIONS CONTINUED: SHARINGS FROM THE VISIONING CIRCLE WOMEN

Note: You will be learning more about the women of the Vessels of Peace Visioning Circle - and their role in helping us nurture and grow our service to the world - in the months to come. For now, some of them share their own reflections and descriptions of the retreat. We begin with Cathy, from Wisconsin, who wrote this summary of the week to send to some friends. It gives you a sense of the week's activities and flow.

I arrived at Denver, met other women at the airport, and we drove together to Crestone (about 200 miles away). Some of the women came Monday and one came Tuesday. It took me a full day to adjust to the altitude of 8000 feet. It was a challenge to keep hydrated in the desert too. Monday a few of us soaked in the hot springs and got the lay of the land. The retreat officially started Tuesday at 4 PM when we all brought something to offer for a shared meal.

There were 10 women. Ages ranged from 30's to 70's. We came from all over the country and one from Canada to be together as a visioning circle for Vessels of Peace.

We stayed in townhouses where the view was the very close, very huge, rugged mountains to the east (sunrises!). The range is called Sangre de Cristo (blood of Christ). The normally gray rock turns red at sunset. Awesome! One morning there was snow on a few high peaks.

Wednesday was the International Day of Peace. The whole day was spent in silence and ended with chanting. At 7 a.m. we were meditating in a Carmelite Monastery chapel, and after lunch we walked a labyrinth and received diksha at Sai Maa's ashram. In the evening we were in a dome at the Zen Mountain Center. The acoustics were awesome, and we chanted "Peace, Om Shanti, Salaam, Shalom." Lynda used mala beads to count the number of chants out loud and then we did them silently. We repeated this a few times and then we did spontaneous Oming and sounding, which was recorded. The recording sounded like a huge choir, not just 10 women!

Thursday was more meditating and also group brainstorming. We came up with lots of ideas. In the afternoon we went to an incredible garden of mostly rocks and huge crystals placed in patterns and designs. We had a chance to look all over the grounds, and each found a spot where we sat for the moment of the equinox. When Lynda sounded the chime at the moment the equinox began, we each stated our intention for the beginning of a new personal cycle. The idea is to think of Fall as like the conception, winter is the gestation, spring is birthing and summer is maturing. One of the things I liked is you don't know what the cycle will be, but rather you are saying you are ready for it to come in, and you are asking to be conscious of what's coming. The book this approach was taken from uses a garden analogy for life - thus the rock garden environment. We followed with some sacred movement led by one of the women and then sacred sound led by another woman.

Friday was another ashram, that of Babaji, and in the temple was a statue of Lakshmi. Very interesting energy. In the afternoon we went to a Japanese center. We were given a tour that concluded in their sanctuary. We chanted with them and then the young Japanese men gave us Jyorei, which was Reiki-like. It felt like a very generous gift.

Friday night was the big deal part for Lynda. She had been given a sharing that she gave a working title of "The Darshan of Peace." We all went into meditation with some really beautiful music. She went into a trance-like state of very high energy. She transformed into a beautiful presence of loving energy and went to each of us and looked in our eyes and spoke to each of us individually. She said that she was given the technique to share and that we would each be able to offer it if we felt called. Everyone cried during their turn. It was a precious experience. Lynda expressed relief and gratitude that she had fulfilled her obligation. It was the culmination of a very spiritual and high energy week.

Saturday we went for a walking meditation and then did a spontaneous ceremony out on a hill, concluding the retreat at noon. Then we had the rest of the day to do as we pleased and drove back to Denver Sunday morning. I send you all a piece of this wonderful week.

Jo, from Minnesota:

The Visioning Circle retreat at Crestone was such a blessing. I didn't know that desert could be so lovely. The sunrises over the mountains were worth getting up an hour early to watch. The accommodations were perfect.

For me, this retreat was an introduction into a whole new relationship with Spirit. I discovered I enjoyed meditating for long periods of time. Actually, the whole week was like one long, lovely meditation, shared with nine other beautiful women. We laughed - we talked - we walked - we ate - and shared with each other. We visited and shared with the residents of the chapels and ashrams and sacred sites located in Crestone. And I was introduced to the Goddesses of the 11 intentions, and now they are a part of my life. I know I don't have to return to Crestone to relive this experience, because I carry it in my heart. But I also know that I WILL return to Crestone. It is too beautiful and too powerful a place to visit only once!

Karen, from Colorado:

Thank you again for your beautiful facilitation, inspirations and flexing with what each of us—and the divine feminine—needed. I will remember the Sige evening for a long time, as an example of how we collectively can be led to the perfect next step, if we just listen and allow.

Christina, from Maryland:

As I pondered Lynda's request for some notes on my experience of the VoP Visioning Circle retreat, ... I didn't know which of the many wonderful experiences I wanted to highlight. This was the third time I had been on retreat in Crestone: the first time was over 10 years ago in the spring, and the second was this past May. This was the first time with Vessels of Peace and the first time during the season of autumn. Not having spent much time in the desert, I was surprised by the big change in the environment from the previous times I had been there. The aspen trees were at their peak of yellowness, and large shrubs were deep red. What a glorious autumn landscape.

I had taken the book, *The Feminine Face of God: The Unfolding of the Sacred in Women* (Anderson & Hopkins, 1991) with me to re-read on the plane and while waiting in airports. I had only a few chapters left to read when I returned home. Various sections in those last few chapters mirrored what I experienced with the Visioning Circle in Crestone and what Vessels of Peace is all about. And, it became clear to me that what I want to comment on about the retreat has to do not with the landscape, not with the various forms of meditation we did, not with the spiritual centers we visited, not with the visioning we did, not with the depth of community that was built, but with the infrastructure of the way the Visioning Circle worked as a group and the way Vessels of Peace works.

In one chapter of the book, the authors discuss "The Making of Community." Dorothy Maclean, one of the founders of Findhorn, is quoted as saying; "I see something new in the making. Communities in the past were generally founded by one magnetic or very wise person, and people would sit at the feet of that person and do what they said. But I see a new type of community emerging, one in which we each tune into our own higher self and no one is higher or better than anyone else, a leaderless community in which we're all leaders." This "new type of community" was very much in evidence in the way Lynda had organized the retreat, the way she turned to us for our wisdom, and in the way each of us took the lead at various times and in various ways. In the diversity was our strength.

In the next chapter of the book, "Being the Sacred Garden," the authors state, "Clearly, it is

time to ask ourselves where we are going. And as every woman we interviewed agreed, where we are going, where we must, go is back into daily life. They speak not only of the need to slow down and create an opening for awareness of the sacred in our daily lives, but of the need to embody, to enact, to be a vessel for that awareness so that it flows into all our relationships.” Brooke Medicine Eagle is quoted, “ By being willing to receive, we draw down the light. It pours through us continually wherever we stand. We need to share it with our community - to talk about it, to live it out and hook it into the earth. That’s the challenge for me now. To be able to stand and hold open a space for spirit to come into all my relationships. ... The challenge is not just to have visions and dreams, but to make them real.” This is the challenge that each member of the Visioning Circle at the retreat vowed to undertake; a “sacred trust” as one member aptly named it. We each will do this in different ways, ways appropriate to our diverse paths in life.

And, that is the challenge that is open, not just for the Visioning Circle members, but also to each of you who are members of Vessels of Peace. The 11 Intentions use the language of “I honor and receive” And the last statement in the 11 Intentions is, “I honor and receive the Divine Feminine in all her infinite forms. May her grace flowing through me uplift and transform the world.” The world begins with our daily lives - our family and friends, our unpaid and paid work in our communities, and most of all with ourselves as clear channels for her grace to flow through us.

Wende, from Ontario, Canada:

When I returned home I felt grounded and connected ... which has stayed with me, but you really have to work on it in an urban noisy busy stressful environment ... I continue to feel connected with Lakshmi, a source of comfort, peace and guidance. Last week I was crossing a busy intersection and focused on sending the darshan of peace out to whomever was passing. I was getting chills up and down my body; it felt like it was radiating out from me. And my meditations have been very deep. ... At times it seems like the material world is SO DENSE, but just staying connected to the divine mother is helping me ... it's a constant reminder.

Valerie, from Florida:

I ... feel like I have been re-birthing. Moving a bit more slowly and intentionally through my life, looking at where I want to continue and where I need to let go. I find myself asking, “What would a little more peace from within me look like here?” Some of my friends say I'm “glowing.” It was a most beautiful gathering. Thank you for calling us together.

And we conclude with Cathy again, who sent this additional piece after further contemplating her Crestone experience:

A Lesson to Bring Home from Crestone

I spent a week in spiritual retreat in Crestone, Colorado. Every turn presented another opportunity to quiet myself and go within. I became filled with peace. Ahhhh. I'd somehow forgotten about seeking deep stillness prior to my week of spiritual retreat. Not intentionally. More like slowly gaining weight back after a diet.

When I returned home, life seemed busy and noisy. I spent a week accelerating back up to match the pace of the life I led before the retreat. I can somehow automatically disregard my desires and natural rhythms. This might be what is meant by unconscious living. This automatic fitting in. I soon felt like I was zipping along again in fast forward. But what happened to that delicious inner peace?

Here's what I'm learning: rushing doesn't get you anywhere but on to the next task or activity. I have a choice I can make.

I can live in stillness. It will take a conscious effort to do so. It will take practice. Maybe I can be stillness in motion. Maybe I can disconnect from the outer frenzy rather than disconnecting from my inner quiet. Maybe from this quiet core I can still be in my life and participate in life happening all around me - but from this inner peace, maybe I can savor life and every detail.

I spent a week in spiritual retreat with 10 incredible women in a incredible place called Crestone, Colorado. We spent time in sacred places and sacred inner spaces. We practiced sacred movement, sounding, meditation and prayer. We created close connections with Vessels of Peace, the land and each other. And I came Home. My whole being feels expanded in gratitude. What there is for me to say is Thank You. Thank you to Crestone, to the women who were my companions and who embody Vessels of Peace for me. Thank you.

CRESTONE LINKS

To find out more about Crestone in general and its many spiritual centers, we offer the following links:

This link is to a good article about Crestone and its history:

<http://crestonecolorado.com/shambala.html>

These two Tibetan Buddhist teachers/groups were the first to come to Crestone:

<http://www.vajravidyaretreatcenter.org/History%20of%20Center.htm>

<http://www.kttg.org/history.html>

More Tibetan Buddhist centers:

<http://www.yeshehorlo.org/>

<http://www.pundarika.org/>

http://www.pundarika.org/Yeshe_Rangsal.htm

The Zen Buddhist center:

<http://dharma sangha.com/>

The Shumei Institute:

<http://www.shumeicrestone.org/home.html>

The Carmelite monastery and hermitage:

<http://www.spiritual life institute.org/>

Two Hindu centers:

<http://www.babajiashram.org/>

<http://www.humanityinunity.org/HIU/CrestoneAshram/TheTempleofConsciousness/index.cfm>

The indigenous peoples center:

<http://www.sacredmountainsfoundation.org/>

I Am Harmony B & B - the site of owner Kiara Perkins' incredible rock gardens:

<http://www.kiaraperkins.com/index.html>

Crestone Area Visitors Association:

<http://www.crestonevisit.com/index.html>

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FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT VESSELS OF PEACE

Vessels of Peace is an international circle of women committed to presencing peace in all areas of their lives. For more information, go to www.vesselsofpeace.com