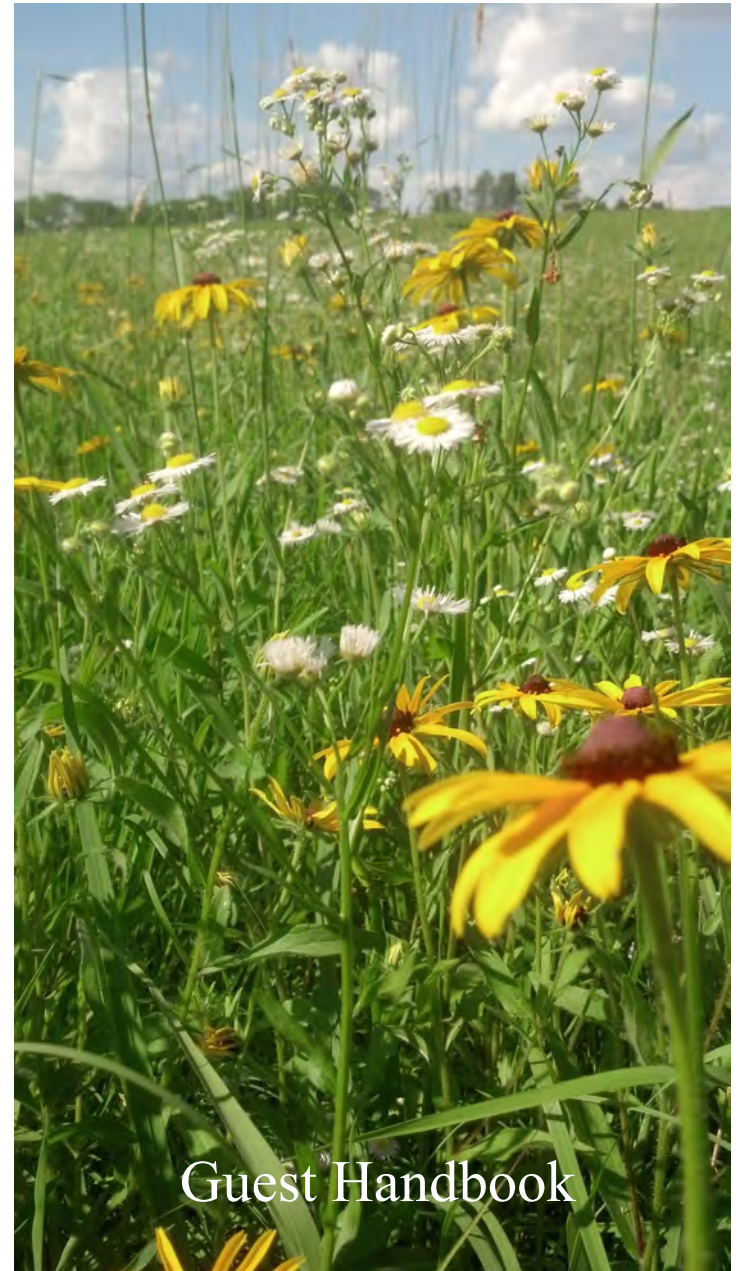




Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat  
 2664 145th Ave.  
 Wheatland, IA 52777  
[www.theprairieretreat.org](http://www.theprairieretreat.org)  
[olpretreat@chmiowa.org](mailto:olpretreat@chmiowa.org)



Guest Handbook

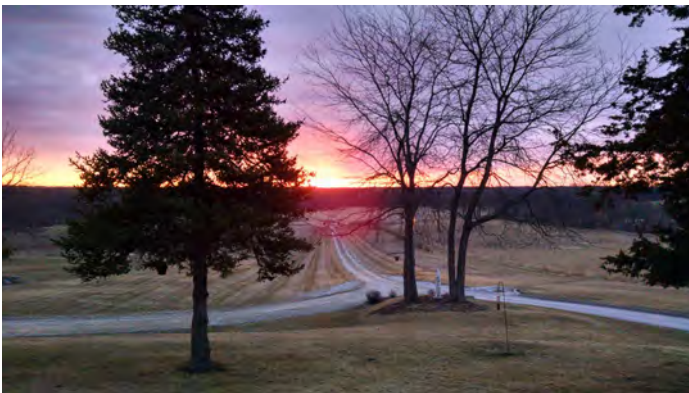
## GUEST HANDBOOK

WELCOME!

The Sisters of Humility of Mary, the director and staff of Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat welcome you to the Prairie Heights guest house. For your comfort and stay at the Prairie, we ask that you please take a few minutes to read these pages. If you have any questions or needs, please feel free to ask staff for help.

Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat is a ministry of the Congregation of the Humility of Mary in Davenport, Iowa. You can learn more about the Sisters of Humility and Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat by accessing [theprairieretreat.org](http://theprairieretreat.org). A complete listing of programs and presenters can be found there.

2664 145th Avenue, Wheatland, IA 52777-9670  
563-374-1092



## OUR HERITAGE

- Established the first private “normal” school—St. Joseph Jr. College—in 1925 to train thousands of young women as teachers for Iowa’s rural school system.
- Created the first religious “vacation schools” to educate the children of rural Montana families in the basics of their Catholic faith. The model spread quickly to Iowa, then throughout the Midwest.
- Established Marycrest College in Davenport, the first liberal arts college for women in southern Iowa.
- Among the first of women’s communities in the U.S. to support talented sisters to obtain advanced degrees and specialty credentials at top-ranked universities.
- Instrumental in establishing the Sister Formation Movement of the 1950’s which prepared the way for thousands of American sisters to become professionally prepared for ministry and service to the people of God.

Among the first American communities to implement the reforms called for by the Second Vatican Council, especially the principle of self-determination in ministry, prayer and lifestyle.

## “PIONEERING” IS A WORD THAT OFTEN DESCRIBES THE HUMILITY COMMUNITY



As Napoleon II began to expand the French empire through military might, he decreed that church bells throughout France should ring whenever he had a “victory.” Appalled by this demand, Father John Joseph Begel refused to ring the bells of a tiny church in Donmartin, France,

where he had gathered a group of women to teach the children of the poor.

In retaliation, the authorities notified the priest that the teaching credentials of the young community would be revoked. They were faced with a choice: stay and obey or leave France. So in 1864, 11 sisters, their founder, Fr. Begel, and 4 orphans left the small French farming community to come to America seeking religious freedom.

Twenty years later, five members of the young community set out from their home in Pennsylvania to “go west” with the pioneers. Seeking always to respond to “the greatest need” the group ultimately settled in southeastern Iowa where they flourished as a community, built schools and hospitals to serve the growing population and continued their pioneering spirit in many “firsts” throughout their history.

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Located in rural east central Iowa on a 100-acre native prairie grass woodland. The Prairie offers quiet beauty conducive to personal prayer and reflection. The indoor and outdoor environments connect us to our Source, the Creator, who is at the heart of all that we celebrate at The Prairie. Organic and locally grown foods and ecological practices are signature to The Prairie.



## MISSION OF THE PRAIRIE

We who carry on ministry at Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat provide hospitality and service in a sacred space of peace and beauty that promotes respect for all creation in the tradition of the Sisters of Humility. Individuals and groups of all faiths are invited to use our facilities and services.

## *Magnificat*

*My soul sings to you in utter joy, O my God,  
and my spirit is glad in your saving might.*

*You have looked on me with love*

*because of my simplicity and humility,*

*and all women and men will say I am blessed.*

*It is because of your Holy Name that I have been exalted.*

*To all those who know you, you are gracious*

*and full of mercy.*

*You show favor to the powerless and oppressed,*

*And turn your face from the proud and domineering.*

*Those who hunger in any way you have filled*

*with their heart's desires, but the self-satisfied*

*remain empty of your peace.*

*In your mercy you remember your chosen people,*

*our ancient fathers and mothers*

*and their children forever.*

**Adapted by Delphine Vasquez, CHM**

## THE CONGREGATION OF THE HUMILITY OF MARY

A contemporary religious community of women based in Davenport, Iowa. Like the woman in the gospel who lights a lamp to search for lost treasure, we seek the will of the Spirit in the signs of the times. Motivated by compassion and justice, we give ourselves wholeheartedly wherever the needs are greatest.

### THE SEARCH FOR LIFE'S ESSENTIAL MEANING IS FOUND IN REFLECTION AND PRAYER

One cannot live a true humility spirit without a deep sense of honesty before God and one another. That relationship with God is expressed beautifully in the Magnificat, the prayer sung by the young pregnant Mary when she is welcomed for a visit to the house of her cousin Elizabeth. In her song of praise for God's miracle in her life, Mary reminds us that God accepts us as we are; there's no need to pretend to be somebody we're not. Great things can happen to even the "least among us" because God's ways are different than humankind's.

Not surprisingly, the Magnificat is the community prayer of the Sisters of Humility. There are many translations of this prayer and many interpretations of the Magnificat in poetry, song, and art. Join the Sisters of Humility in prayer with the following version, by Delphine Vasquez, CHM.

## BECOMING AT HOME AT THE PRAIRIE

We suggest that as you begin your stay, you ...

Take a little time to unpack your suitcase  
and your heart as well.

Look around your room and the sacred space where you will  
spend time during these days of retreat. What affects you?

What makes you feel comfortable, at ease, prayerful?

Take time to notice...look out your window to enjoy the  
unique view of creation.

Spend some quiet reflective time in the Chapel and a library  
on the lower level of Prairie Heights.

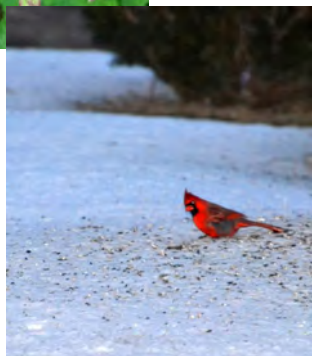
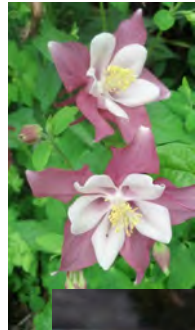
Spend a little time exploring outside experiencing the  
Prairie, with all its sights, sounds, and smells...another  
sacred space.

In the stillness of this space, listen to your God speaking...  
through the Book of Nature ...through your own  
experiences...through your body...through other  
people...through the Book of Scripture...

Through the many ways God reveals mystery.

Be at peace!

*In the stillness we will hear  
your voice, O God.*



## PRAIRIE MEMORIAL GARDEN



A Memorial Garden provides a long-lasting tribute to a loved one who has passed away as well as offering a place for the survivors to remember and heal from the loss. The Memorial Garden at Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat has been blessed and is situated in the open space beyond the Labyrinth and inside the Stations of the Cross circle. This sacred space of prayer and meditation is a fitting location to honor deceased loved ones.

In keeping with The Prairie's policy of preserving the natural beauty, the Memorial Garden is designed to remember a loved one with a stone engraved with the individual's name and birth and death dates. The stones will be placed in a spiral surrounding a native Burr Oak Tree, a symbol of long life and deep roots.

### GUIDELINES

1. Any time after the death of a loved one, contact the director of Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat to begin the process of memorializing the person. (563-374-1092)
2. Share the story of the loved one and his/her connection to The Prairie.
3. Give specific dates that are to be engraved on the stone.
4. Offer a donation of at least \$500 to have a stone engraved and placed in the spiral. Stones will be etched by Hansen Monuments of DeWitt, IA, and placed in the order in which the memorial gift has been received.
5. Stones will be ordered and placed after every six memorial gifts have been received.



## ADDITIONS COMPLETE THE DREAM

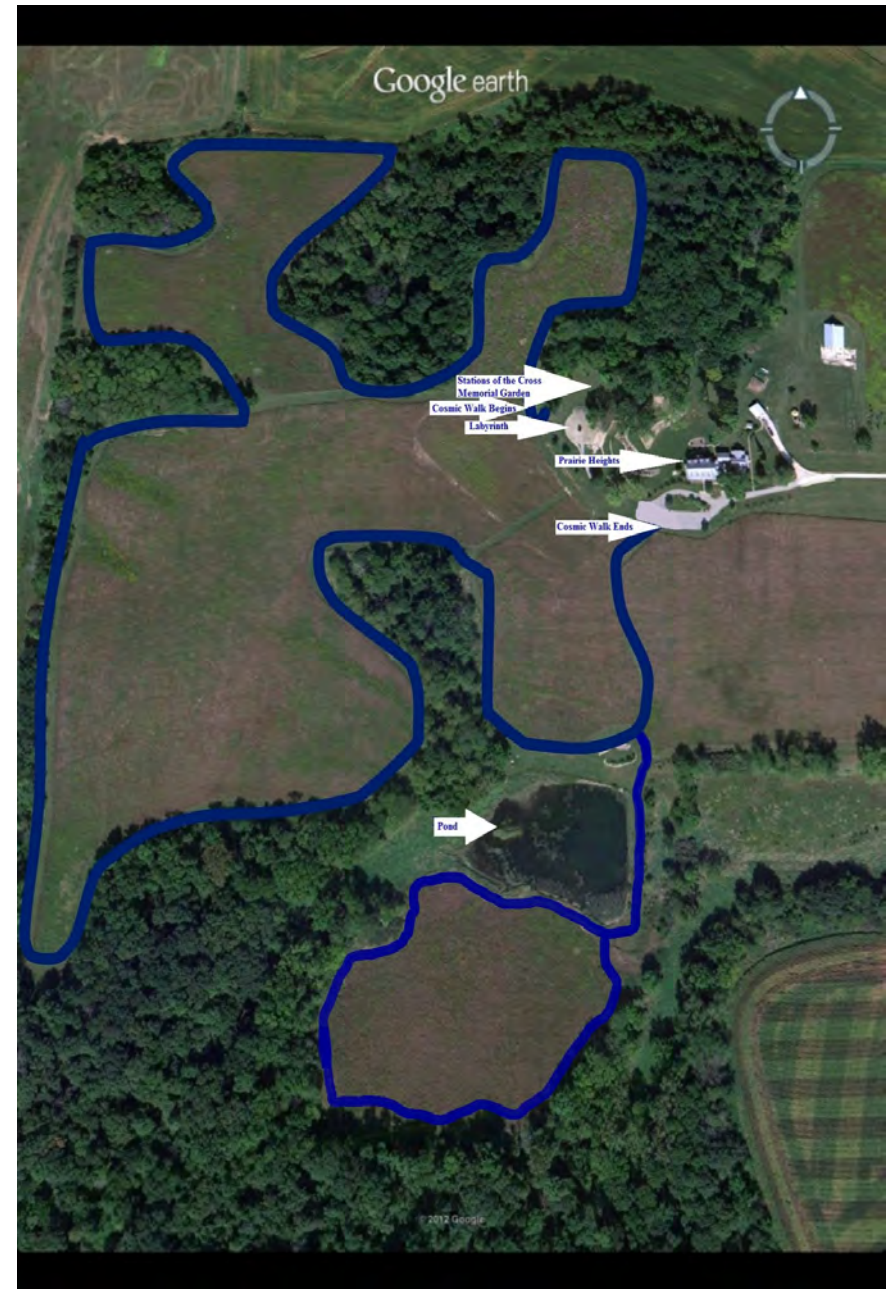
In order to accommodate larger groups, the Sisters launched a capital campaign to build “Prairie Heights,” an all-purpose conference facility. As it was being completed, Marycrest College, founded in Davenport by the Congregation of the Humility of Mary, closed its doors and two religious landmarks from the campus found new homes at The Prairie:

- The statue of Mary, Our Lady Seat of Wisdom, which had stood for over 60 years on the campus bluff overlooking the Mississippi, now guards the wildlife pond near the contemplative sitting area where guests are invited to spend time alone, reflecting on the beauty of God’s creation.
- The Stations of the Cross from Our Lady’s Chapel were converted to outdoor Stations and now are adjacent to the Labyrinth.

Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat was officially blessed on October 4, 2003. Since then thousands of guests have come to relax, reflect and rediscover God’s voice in “the stillness” of The Prairie.



## PROPERTY MAP







## TRANSFERRING THE DREAM

Sadly in July, 1998, only months after the first guests were hosted at The Prairie, Father Vincent died of cancer. The ownership of The Prairie property reverted back to the Abbey but there was no one available to take over its operation. In a letter to CHM President, Sr. Jude Fitzpatrick, The Prairie was offered to the Congregation of the Humility of Mary. The community became intrigued not only with the idea of a spiritual reflection center, but the wooded location and native prairie grasses complemented the Sisters' priority of "care of Earth." In 1999, the Congregation of the Humility of Mary purchased the property with the goal of expanding the facility into a place of solitude and spiritual reflection for the CHM community as well as spiritual seekers of all faiths.





## **THE DREAM** *continued*

Throughout the 1980s, under the auspices of New Horizons of Faith, Fr. Vincent Fabula, a monk of New Melleray Abbey near Dubuque, Iowa, and Sr. Joann Kuebrich, CHM, conducted adult religious education programs in the rural parishes of eastern Iowa. Over and over they heard requests from the laity for more opportunities for spiritual renewal.

It soon became clear that what was needed was an accessible place for prayer; a centrally located retreat center devoted to spiritual growth and renewal for God's people in the Davenport Diocese.

Driven by a dream for a place of spiritual stillness, Fr. Vincent and Sr. Joann toured the countryside looking at properties. They finally found the 200-acre Dierickx farm near Wheatland. With support from several state and federal conservation programs, a wildlife pond was built and 90 acres of native prairie grasses and a variety of trees were planted. The Victorian farmhouse was restored and the property was named Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat.



## **OVERNIGHT GUESTS**

### **Second Floor**

Eight guest bedrooms, two with queen beds, six with one twin bed. All these bedrooms share a bath with one other room. All rooms have extra set of bed linens; towels and a flashlight are in the dresser drawers next to the bed. Other supplies that you might need for your stay can be found in the laundry room at the top of the stairway of Prairie Heights. Please feel free to ask a staff member for other needs you may have. This level is accessible by stair or stair lift.

### **Garden Level**

The Garden Level has an efficiency apartment with a queen bed and a mini kitchen where meals can be prepared. In addition, there are two semi-private sleeping areas. One shared bath. You will also find the library and the chapel on the Garden Level. This level is accessible by stair or stair lift.

### **Victorian House**

Just beyond the back door of Prairie Heights is the Victorian House. There is one darling guest room with two twin beds in the attic up a steep set of stairs. It has a great view and skylight. Staff facilities and offices are also in The Victorian House.

## KITCHEN AREA

### Beverages:

- Tea for brewing
- Coffee filters of various sizes
- Ground coffee
- Coffee mugs  
*(above the coffee makers or on counter in breakfast nook)*
- Coffee creamer and sweetener *(on beverage counter)*
- Feel free to use coffee maker.  
*(Directions inside cabinet)*



**Toasters:** in cabinet under the coffee makers.

**Condiments:** in the left refrigerator.

**For private retreatants—placemats and napkins for meals:** in the right hand drawer in the breakfast nook area.

**Clean Up:** To save water and energy and for sanitizing purposes, please rinse off used dishes, table service, pots and pans and stack them on the designated trays. Unless arranged otherwise, staff will fill and empty the dishwasher.

**Recyclables:** Please rinse clean and place recyclables in the containers marked for recycling behind the doors in the pantry.

**Compost:** The compost bucket is under the island sink. Please place all vegetable and fruit peels in bucket. Also add egg shells, coffee grounds and filters. Do not add meat or bones.

**Trash:** Place trash in the tagged receptacles near either sink.

## THE PRAIRIE: A DREAM COMES TRUE

Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat is the fulfillment of a dream for a place of spiritual renewal in the Iowa heartland by a prayerful monk, a forward-thinking pastoral team and a visionary religious community with a commitment to spiritual growth and care of Earth.

### RESPONDING TO THE NEED

In the late 1970s, when the Sisters of Humility were negotiating the sale of Ottumwa Heights College in Ottumwa, Iowa, concern was expressed by the school's president, Sr. Bernadine Pieper, about how to continue the religious mission of the college. A survey of parishes in the area indicated a great need for adult religious education. Therefore in 1979, New Horizons of Faith was chartered with an active board of directors meeting regularly to evaluate the parish educational needs of the Diocese of Davenport.





## MEALS

For groups that request, healthy nutritious meals are prepared with local foods and served by the staff. Individuals may also use kitchen facilities to prepare their own meals for a minimal fee.



## BOOKS, MOVIES & RESOURCES

Available for your use in the lower level great room library. Art supplies, pens and pencils and paper are available by request.

## FEES

Believing that every person needs opportunities for stillness in his/her life, fees at The Prairie are designed to be affordable to all. Scholarships are available for up to 50% off the cost of a program.

## ACCESSIBILITY

The Prairie Heights first floor is accessible to all for daytime programs. 2nd floor and garden levels are accessible by stair or stair lift. Grounds are accessible by golf cart. All facilities are smoke-free.

## RESERVE

To arrange private time at The Prairie, or to book the facilities of The Prairie for a group event:

- Phone: (563) [374-1092](tel:5633741092)
- Email: [olpretreat@chmiowa.org](mailto:olpretreat@chmiowa.org)

## SPECIAL PLACES AVAILABLE FOR YOUR USE, INSPIRATION AND CONTEMPLATION

**Library:** In the Garden Level of Prairie Heights is a small library of contemporary spiritual books. Feel free to use any of the books during your visit at The Prairie.

**Porches:** Prairie Heights has a large front area porch furnished with chairs and small tables for your use.

**Walking Paths:** The Prairie's grass fire lanes that wind through the natural prairie grass provide walking paths for guests to enjoy a peaceful walk. Stop at the pond for a refreshing break. A guide for the Cosmic Walk is available in the Great Room or in the mailbox at the start of the trail near the statue of **St. Joseph the Journeyer**.

**Labyrinth:** West of Prairie Heights is a large labyrinth, the use of which lets you rediscover your own mystery of Faith. A brief information piece is available in the Great Room.

**Stations of the Cross:** North of the labyrinth are the 14 Stations of the Cross. Meditation booklets are available in the mailbox adjacent to the Stations. Please return the booklets after using.

**Memorial Garden:** In the center of the Stations of the Cross circle is Our Lady of the Prairie Memorial Garden. Pause for a moment at these stones and remember those who have passed. Memorial stones have been placed by family or friends. For more information see page 27.

**Mary Seat of Wisdom:** Since 1948, this statue of Mary

*Continued...*

## **SPECIAL PLACES** *continued...*

stood on the Marycrest College campus in Davenport. Today, all who come to Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat may pause to reflect on "the good, the true, and the beautiful" while visiting the statue and Wildlife Pond, just southwest of the circle drive in front of Prairie Heights. You will find two fire lanes (paths) that lead down to the statue and the pond.

**Our Lady of the Prairie:** This statue welcomes you at the base of the drive leading to the Prairie Heights building.

**Contemplative Sitting Area:** Overlooking the Wildlife Pond is a contemplative sitting area with benches. Artists, writers, and other guests find this a place of inspiration.

**Gazebo:** East of the Victorian House is a large screened-in gazebo, a place to enjoy the beauties of nature or even your coffee, lunch, or quiet in this natural setting.

**Prairie Heights Great Room:** Relax in comfortable chairs and enjoy the solitude. Switches to turn on the gas fireplace are on the wall to the right of the fireplace. In the cupboard, near the front door, are Bibles of various translations

**Breakfast Nook:** Enjoy your coffee, meals, or snacks in this setting just off the kitchen.

**Garden Level Great Room:** On the lowest level of Prairie Heights there are available for you a chapel, a selection of books, craft supplies, a place to read, relax, and enjoy the quiet of the wooded area. This is accessible by stair lift.

- **The Labyrinth** is an ancient sacred symbol. While walking the labyrinth, one enters into a mystery of the Circle of Life. Surrounded by nature, this is a place to pray, to heal, and to deepen awareness of life as a sacred journey.
- **The Cosmic Walk** is a 2 mile nature trail with 22 stone markers that tell creation's story taken from the book of Genesis and expanded with the insights of science.
- **Way of the Cross** invites guests to meditate on the 14 Stations of the Cross under the sky and amidst the trees.
- **The Wildlife Pond** offers a contemplative setting to sit and pray, reflect, sketch, paint, meditate or relax. Nearby is the statue of Mary, Our Lady Seat of Wisdom.
- **The Gazebo** is a screened meditation area large enough for several to enjoy – a great outdoor alternative for a group breakout session.
- **Fields of natural prairie grass and timber** of the Iowa countryside provide an ideal setting for walks and private reflection. Guests will also enjoy a variety of birds and wild life, including deer, wild turkey, pheasants and squirrels .
- **Benches and birdhouses** throughout make for a pleasant viewing experience.
- A golf cart is available for those unable to walk.





## FACILITIES

Our Lady of the Prairie has two main Victorian themed buildings, air-conditioned and with private overnight accommodations for 15 persons. The spacious grounds provide room for a number of unique facilities to promote renewal and healing including:

- Victorian House with staff facilities and one guest room
- Prairie Heights with wraparound porch and wooden rocking chairs is an all-purpose conference facility featuring:
  - o great room that accommodates up to 35 persons for a day-long program or meeting
  - o gas fireplace and breakfast nook
  - o windows with views of the woods/ prairie grasses
  - o full kitchen and dining facilities
  - o eight private upstairs guest rooms with bath between each two rooms
  - o a garden level featuring a chapel, a library and an apartment with mini kitchen
  - o 37-inch flat screen TV and DVD player
  - o wireless internet access—no password needed



## IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS AND EMERGENCY INFORMATION

- Wheatland Fire Dept. 911
- Power Company (R.E.C.): 1-800-728-1242
- Sheriff: 1-800-462-6530
- Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat: 563-374-1092

## SECURITY and SAFETY

**Front Door:** Please do not lock the screen door. Turn the deadbolt knob at night.

**Patio Door:** Turn the deadbolt knob at night.

**Back Porch Door:** Turn the deadbolt knob at night.

**Garden Level Door:** Keep locked at all times.

**Candles:** Please do not light candles in guest bedrooms.

## **BEFORE YOU LEAVE, PLEASE ...**

**Second floor bedrooms:** Remove the sheets and pillow cases from the bed and place them in the laundry baskets in the laundry room at the top of the stairway. Do not put bedspread, pillow sham, blanket and mattress pad in the laundry room, place on the bed. Do not remake the bed, with clean sheets. Place bedspread, pillow and sham back on bed.

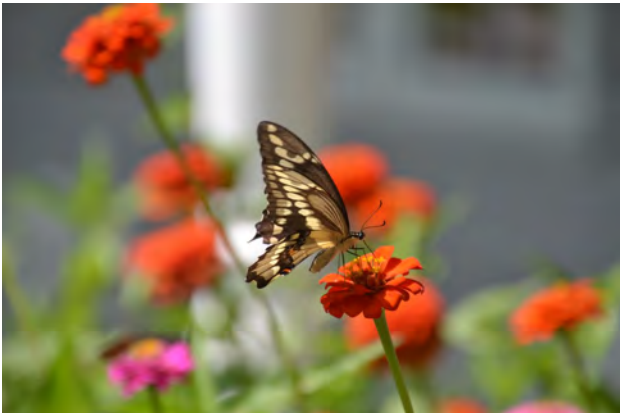
**Towels:** Put all used hand towels, bath towels and washcloths in a separately marked laundry basket in the laundry room.

**Garden Level guests:** Remove the sheets and pillow cases from the bed and place them in the laundry baskets in the laundry room on that level. Do not take to the upper level laundry. Place towels, etc. on the rack in the laundry room. Please place bedspread, pillows and shams back on the bed.

**Check to see that you have removed all personal items** from the desk, dresser, vanity drawers and bathroom. (Don't forget your cell phone charge cord!)

**Close all windows.**

**Check the kitchen** area to see that all heating units are turned off. Remember to take your unused food items that you brought for your personal use.



## **INDIVIDUALS**

Perhaps you would like a day to pray, write, read, hike, study nature, walk the labyrinth or simply relax in solitude.

Individuals are welcome to spend a day or several days with comfortable and quiet overnight lodging available for reasonable cost. Additionally, there are a variety of prairie sponsored programs offered throughout the year.

## **GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS**

Churches find The Prairie useful for staff meetings, clubs, guilds and Bible study groups. Other organizations use The Prairie for personnel orientation, renewal meetings and workshops. Up to 35 people can be accommodated for group events of one day.

Reserve a date and plan your own program or request a presenter from a provided list.





## The Our Lady of the Prairie Experience

- 200 acres of natural prairie grass and timber
- Abundant native wildlife every where you look
- Fresh Iowa country air
- Filtered water fresh from the well
- Prairie Greenhouse offers fresh greens all year long
- Vegetable garden provides a wide variety of naturally grown produce
- Delicious home cooked meals - locally and naturally grown whenever possible
- Fields of flowing prairie grass
- Paths wandering along the edge of the prairie, including The Cosmic Walk
- Pollinator strips along the lane to attract bees, birds and butterflies
- Peaceful wildlife pond
- Ancient reflection circles of the labyrinth, stations and memorial garden
- Birdsong welcoming the morning
- Restful bliss in private rooms
- Phenomenal sunrise and sunset
- Eco-friendly practices used for food service, laundry, lighting and cleaning



## TELEPHONE AND INTERNET

Telephones are located in the kitchen, the office and in the garden level entrance area. There is not a telephone on the second floor of Prairie Heights (bedroom area).

**To contact staff:** press intercom, dial 15 for the Victorian House kitchen and office area, 16 for Prairie Heights basement mudroom, 11 for giftshop, 13 for kitchen, 22 for annex office.

### **To answer incoming or intercom call:**

- incoming call—normal ring;
- Intercom call—two short rings.

Generally, when you hear the phone ring, you need not answer it as the call will be picked up by a staff member in the Victorian House. If staff member is not available to take the call, it will go into voicemail.

### **Answer the phone only if you are expecting a call.**

Most guests use cell phones to make calls from The Prairie. If you do not have a cell phone and need to make a long distance call, please use a calling card.

**Internet** is available on all floors. Open OLPR Guest to connect. No password is needed.



## PRAYER BEFORE LEAVING OR ENDING A TIME OF SOLITUDE

My God, it is time for me to return. I thank you for this quiet time apart, unburdened by my normal duties of life. This time alone has been renewing and recreating for me as body and spirit have been healed. Its rest has given a boost to my body. Its silence has been as a salve to my spirit.

This time apart from others has renewed within me a desire to be in communion with all those whom I love. Fire within me the desire to join them and all others on the crowded journey of life. I thank you, O Sacred One, for the graces of this time in solitude. Each time I withdraw to be alone, I learn more not to fear being alone. I thus prepare myself for that final moment when I shall pass through the desert of death, with its absolute aloneness, and come to absolute communion of life eternal with you.

My God, I treasure this time now ending. Help me, as I return to the flow of daily life. Prepare me for what I shall find; the good and the bad, mistakes and successes-whatever you have laid out for me. May this holy time of prayerful solitude fill me with the necessary energy to once again take up the challenge of finding holiness in the midst of my work, in the center of my home. Come, my Beloved, and accompany me as I return to the crowded and noisy crossroads of life. Amen.

(Edward Hays: *Prayers for the Domestic Church*)

## STEP INTO TRANQUILITY

Spend a day, a weekend, or a week, reflecting, meditating and appreciating the beauty of God's creation in a very special place deep in the Midwest countryside: Our Lady of the Prairie Retreat, near Wheatland, Iowa. Only 40 minutes from downtown Davenport yet far from the hectic pace of life, The Prairie offers people of all faiths an environment of quiet beauty conducive to:

- personal prayer and reflection,
- inner growth and nurturing the soul,
- group team building, creative thinking and decision making.

### Helpful Links

- Like us on Facebook
- Call 563-374-1092 for more info
- Email us [olpretreat@chmiowa.org](mailto:olpretreat@chmiowa.org) for more info
- Check [theprairieretreat.org](http://theprairieretreat.org) website for annual Prairie Sponsored Program Calendar, or Prairie Retreat General Info to plan your own personal or group retreat.

Whether you come alone or with a group, you'll find a welcoming environment designed to renew the human spirit.

