



# A NEW FOREST

Mary transplanted from California twenty years ago and has been an Austinite on and off ever since. With interests in music, the natural world, and a search for a new community, Mary found St. Martin's contemplative worship in a simple online search. "In the last several years, sea changes have happened in my networks," Mary explained, and, "I have an intention to develop new community life."

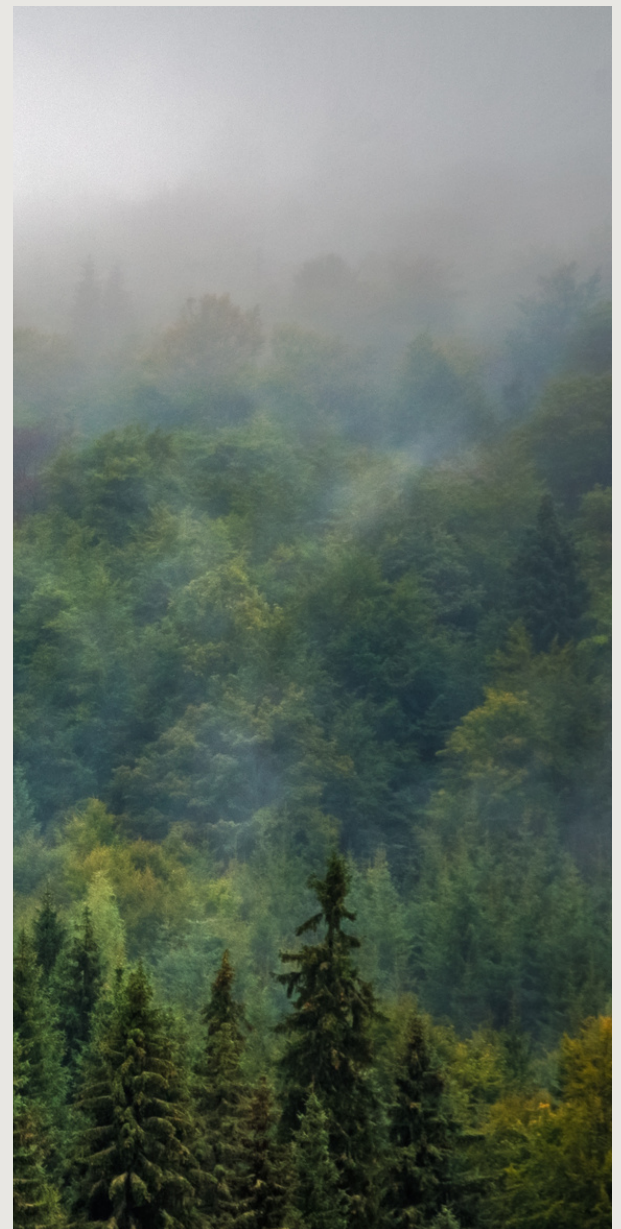
"I was drawn to intuitive contemplative prayer as a child," Mary continued. "The forest was my first contemplative school." When her family moved, she related, "I lost access to the forest and it took some years until I eventually arrived in a daily practice of remembering my spiritual self."

Mary's family life wasn't perfect in childhood, an experience with which many people can relate. Having childhood experiences that can't be expressed in words is normal, but those experiences become complicated and confusing when they are painful. Contemplative prayer offered Mary a sanctuary, relating, "[I] took spiritual refuge in the forest whenever possible, without language for a very stressful and confusing family life."

Mary believes that her liberation is connected to everyone else's liberation, especially including all of her ancestors, saying "I am living proof of the prayers of my ancestors..." And her journey continues to the present day...

Mary arrived at St. Martin's for contemplative worship one Saturday evening and hoped that she might be able to sit and be anonymous. "I was pleasantly surprised," she admitted, "to quickly settle and receive high quality spiritual nourishment." At St. Martin's Mary encountered:

- genuine welcome
- a clear and simple orientation
- a well-prepared space and structure



- clear focus on heart and meaning
- highly competent facilitation
- harmonious musical attunement rather than ego performance
- effective formal language and readings

Mary found a new forest in the contemplative worship space at St. Martin's, a space where prayer doesn't necessarily need words to explain the meaning of the moment. Her discernment continues, and she knows that her forest awaits her in so many ways, including on Saturday evenings at St. Martin's.

continued...

St. Martin's contemplative worship on Saturdays at 5 PM is in a trial period through the end of 2023, after which it will be assessed and evaluated. If Mary's new forest calls to you or someone you know, please join in and spread the word.

[saintmartins.org](http://saintmartins.org)

With enough participation and impact, contemplative worship at St. Martin's can continue into the new year leading to many deep encounters between God's people and the forest of spiritual life that always surrounds us.

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