

**Contemplative Retreat for Educators**  
*October 18 – Sunday, October 21, 2012*  
*The Garrison Institute, Garrison, New York*



The 2012 retreat provided an opportunity for 20 educators to devote three days to deepen practice and bring renewal and rejuvenation to their personal and professional lives. Much of the time on retreat was spent in focused, guided inquiry and in silence, including some silent meals.

Through meditation, mindful walking, yoga, and journaling, participants cultivated awareness and inquired deeply into the question, “what is living for me now?”

After many years of co-teaching retreats with Arthur Zajonc, Mirabai Bush led this retreat with Paul Wapner, Professor of Global Environmental Politics at the School of International Service at American University and author of *Living through the End of Nature: The Future of American Environmentalism and Environmental Activism* and *World Civic Politics*. Paul was a 2008 Contemplative Practice Fellow and is a longtime practitioner of Vipassanna meditation and Anasura yoga.

Mirabai and Paul introduced practices to cultivate capacities central to working in all facets of higher education—focused attention, deeper understanding, and greater kindness and compassion. Anna Neiman Passalacqua taught morning and afternoon yoga sessions and New York-based performer and Zen practitioner Aaron Shragge performed traditional and improvised pieces on the Shakuhachi flute as a focus for meditation on Saturday evening.



A highlight for many participants was a labyrinth walk, which occurred during the final segment of the 36-hours of silence. Paul guided the group through a ritualized, measured approach from the outside the institute to the grounds of the labyrinth. Once they set upon the path, he invited practitioners to take up a question for contemplation during their progress inward toward the center and open awareness on the winding way out.



To transition out of silence, participants engaged in a free writing exercise to process some of what they’d learned over the past day and half of silent practice before shared their stories with a partner in a deep listening practice.

The final evening of the retreat was given to conversation, as the educators spoke in small groups about the relationship of contemplative practice to teaching, learning and knowing. Sharing their experience and questions and offering their ideas to help one another, the participants found many points of

convergence and recognition. These supportive and stimulating conversations, many of which continued during breakfast on the final morning, are a wonderful feature of these contemplative gatherings.