

Finding God in the Wilderness

by Tasha Schroeder

As a result of his own life-changing experience of God in the wilderness, John Lionberger, a former agnostic and a 2001 M.Div. graduate, founded a ministry called Renewal in the Wilderness (RITW). Following the 4000+ year-old tradition of most of the world's religions, John takes people to God's natural places to seek a

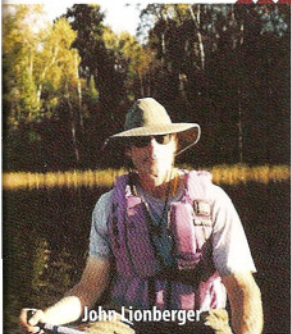
relationship with God that seem nearly impossible in more civilized settings.

Since 2002 nearly 250 people have accompanied John into the wilderness, and almost all have been deeply affected. "My hope is to help other people to have a similar, soul-opening experience of God that I had, when I took a dogsled trip in northern Minnesota. I went as an agnostic, strictly for the adventure, and I left knowing I'd been undeniably touched by God. It changed everything. I left a 25-year business career to come to CTS, to ultimately help others find what I found. And seeing how astonishingly similar the experience has been for people from very diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, I've come to believe that perhaps this wilderness spiritual experience is a universal 'language' we could all use to speak of God without shedding blood."

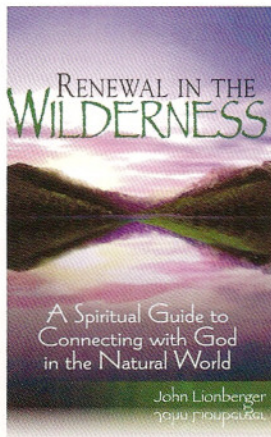
Asked by SkyLight Paths Publishing in Woodstock, VT, to write a book about the wilderness as a powerful spiritual conduit, *Renewal in the Wilderness: A Spiritual Guide to Connecting with God in the Natural World*, came out in June, 2007. It has received excellent reviews from *Publishers Weekly*, *Library Journal* and *Presence*, and has seven 5-star reader reviews on Amazon.

RITW has been featured in five newspaper articles in 2007, including two in the *Chicago Tribune*. And on January 6, 2008, John's ministry was featured on WTTW, Chicago's PBS station.

If you'd like to learn more about *Renewal in the Wilderness*, read the articles or view the WTTW feature, visit RITW's website: www.renewalinthewilderness.org. ●



John Lionberger



DON CLARK is Chair of the Board of Trustees at CTS and Nationwide Special Counsel for The United Church of Christ. Husband of Ellen, father of Bethany and Alex, he lives in Glenview, Illinois, and is the Moderator of Glenview Community Church, UCC. Don is also the former Chairman of the Board at the Adler Planetarium in Chicago.

Introduce us to Don Clark.

What can I say? Lawyer, life-long Chicago Blackhawks fan, caffeine of choice is Coca-cola.

If I asked your friends to give me Don Clark in a nutshell, what would they say?

Feel free to ask them.

Really?

They'd probably say that Don is dedicated to the Church, always busy, and that if you really want something done, ask Don.

What's something about you that people probably wouldn't guess?

Hmmm. I always look forward to events where I can wear one of my kilts.

Excellent! Now tell us how you became a friend of CTS.

I was asked to do legal work for CTS in the 1990s, served briefly on the Board, and was later invited by Susan to be general counsel for the Seminary. Now I'm back with the Board.

What do you think that CTS should celebrate about its past?

That it has always sought—often successfully—to define the frontier of progressive Christianity.

What are your hopes for CTS' future?

Broadly, that we be sufficiently self-aware as we continue the special ministry that is CTS. One of my concerns is that we not be self-congratulatory, not rest on our laurels, but rather hold ourselves to account always. Every day we have to challenge ourselves by our own mission, vision, and commitment statement. I want CTS to be the leading seminary for progressive Christianity. I want the best students to come here, and I don't want any worthy candidate to be turned away for a lack of finances.

Last question: What's the way to Don Clark's heart?

Tell me it can't be done. ●

