

Dear Friends and Family,

Big changes are taking place in my life and I want to share them with you, to invite your involvement and to ask for your support (no, I am not asking for money so it is safe to read on).

After thirty-eight years in La Grande, I realize that it is time for me to move on. I'm not sure where life is calling me but do feel that it is time for me to do something different. The past two years since I left my job at CHD has been an important time of settling and rejuvenation and has helped me realize my need for continued learning, meaningful work and connections with people. For whatever reason, I've not found enough of these here in what feels like a hermit lifestyle.

My current focus is on preparing for my July 10 black belt exam in aikido and on preparing to leave La Grande. In many ways, this feels like the same task: learning to flow with what wants to happen without grabbing or attempting to control. It is about learning to trust and letting go of security and attachments. On August 23, I will fly to Europe to participate in an international learning village. Before leaving, I intend to lighten my load by giving away most of my possessions. What I am not ready to let go of (mostly books and art work) will go into a small storage unit. The essentials that I take with me will be limited to the 25 pounds I can carry in a backpack.

When I leave, I will no longer have a home or an address or even a plan for where life will take me beyond November of this year. This is both exciting and terrifying. I feel a call to let go of the false sense of security and identity provided by a home base and by plans and to trust that life's next steps will unfold before me. Trusting in the abundance of opportunities for learning, service and connection and trusting that my needs will be met seems to be the theme of this next stage of my journey. In making this move, it is my intention to learn to be more open-hearted, to make myself more available for work in service to the world and to live more fully in a gift economy where I can give my gifts with generosity and gratefully receive the sustenance I need.

After the learning village experience in Slovenia, I am going to hike the Camino de Santiago de Compostela. This is a 476 mile trek through Northern Spain that has been the route of pilgrims for over a thousand years. While I have no religious interests, I am drawn to the sacredness of a pilgrimage and I am embarking with the hope and intention for a spiritual quest. The goal of this quest and the precise question that I am carrying are not entirely clear to me but I trust that they will reveal themselves through the process. And I really hope that by the time I arrive at Santiago de Compostela that I will have some clarity about where life is calling me next and how I can best share my gifts with the world.

I want to express my gratitude to all of you as I would not be who I am nor would I be at this place in my life without the support, influences and presence of each of you in my life. In some way, I will be carrying a piece of all of you with me and walking this pilgrimage on behalf of more than just myself. It is often challenging for me to stay connected with people who are important to me (perhaps part of that hermit nature) but it is my hope that this journey can be a way of deepening connections not retreating from them. My laptop computer does not fit within my self-imposed 25 pound weight limit so I will be relying upon public internet access to stay in touch. I doubt that I can maintain personal contact with

everyone but I do intend to post updates either on [my website](#) or via a group email. Please let me know if you want to be included.

And now for the requests... I want my pilgrimage to be a time of reflection and discernment particularly regarding what's next in my life and the gifts that I have to share with the world. Toward this end, I want to invite your input. I was inspired when I read about a person who opened a letter each day from his friends while on the camino. These letters provided support, encouragement and food for thought during his walk. I expect to take between 40 and 50 days on my pilgrimage and cannot imagine having that many friends who are willing to write but I will be grateful to anyone who is willing to contribute to my contemplation. If you have thoughts or questions, encouragement or challenges for me, please send them either by snail mail (1401 N Avenue La Grande, OR 97850) or in an attachment that I can copy to my kindle. I will save these to open one at a time along the camino and I really look forward to your contribution to my journey.

My second request is for suggestions or invitations for next steps in my journey. Without a home to return to, it feels like I will have radical availability and I want to be involved in meaningful work and in friendship. This could involve coaching, hosting conversations, supporting healthcare reform collaborations or who knows what else. If you have ideas for collaboration or for how I can be of service, I would love to hear from you (either by email or in one of those letters to be opened along the way).

This message has turned out to be long so if you've made it this far, thank you! I really appreciate your friendship and support and look forward to how our paths will cross in the future.

With gratitude,

Steve