

## *Spirit Journal - August 2021*

### **Preview**

Our late-summer issue covers:

- The start of registration for our 2021 One-Day Fall Workshop, November 13 via Zoom, featuring Phileena Heuertz on the topic of "three-centered awareness"
- Continuing registration for our Fall Retreat: *Weekend Immersion*, October 8-10
- An invitation encouraging you to share a reflection or other piece of your own writing in *Spirit Journal*
- A personal reflection from Jeffrey Ediger on *The Gathering Stillness of the Moon*
- News about other selected contemplative events and resources to support your journey
- *Insights* from Aldous Huxley, Maya Angelou, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Thomas Merton.

Please share your thoughts! Help *Spirit Journal* become an even more vibrant conversation by emailing the editor at the address provided at the end of the newsletter.

### ***Registration Now Open for One-Day Fall Workshop, November 13 via Zoom***

#### ***Deepening Spiritual Practice through Three-Centered Awareness, with Phileena Heuertz***

Three-centered awareness is crucial for experiencing Divine Presence; mind, heart, and body coming online and cooperating together. But too often, we experience shut-down in one or more of these centers. This limits our capacity for opening to Presence and receiving the integration and wholeness for which we long.



Are you curious about the deeper, subtle, life-changing dynamics of contemplative prayer? [Click here to visit our website for complete information and registration.](#)

## ***Registration Continues for Fall Retreat - Centering Prayer: Weekend Immersion, October 8-10***

**You're invited to participate in person at La Salle Manor Retreat Center or at home via Zoom.**

This retreat is a collaboration between the Contemplative Outreach Chicago and Connecticut Chapters. It will focus on Centering Prayer and the integration of consent in our lives. There will be communal Centering Prayer sessions each day. We will explore attentiveness to the wholeness of our being and open to the knowledge and presence resident in our bodies.

The retreat will be led by Alan Krema, coordinator for Contemplative Outreach Chicago, and by Mike Smoolca, coordinator for Contemplative Outreach of Connecticut. For complete information on the retreat, the presenters, La Salle Manor, and the in-person and Zoom registration options. please [visit our website](#).

## ***One Spirit . . . Many Voices***

Since our newsletter got its start in 2015, it's been intended as an *interactive open forum* in which members can share the experiences and insights that occur along each of our individual spiritual paths. Much like journaling, writing your own reflection can be a way to explore your inner landscape while connecting with others and inspiring them.

This month's issue includes a meaningful personal reflection from Jeff Ediger, and *Spirit Journal* has published dozens of personal essays and poems since 2015. We encourage you to enter the conversation, as well. You can write about any spiritual/contemplative topic or experience that has meaning for you or submit a drawing or work of art that stirred up something mystical in you. Here are a few possibilities:

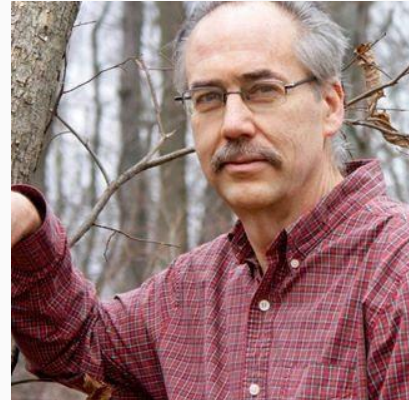
- The fruits of Lectio Divina or Visio Divina
- A book review or reflection on a book, passage or quote that resonated with you
- Unexpected arrivals of grace – stories about how the Divine speaks to us through ordinary experiences
- Nature as teacher
- Meditation Chapel - a global experience
- Centering Prayer as an 11th Step
- Gardening, art making, baking bread, etc. as a spiritual practice
- Poetry, haiku

Again, these are just suggestions – please write as the Spirit moves you! If you would like to submit something you’ve written or just explore an idea, please contact the newsletter editor, Jack Lloyd, at [news@centeringprayerchicago.org](mailto:news@centeringprayerchicago.org).

## ***The Gathering Stillness of the Moon***

by Jeffrey Ediger

If you are fortunate enough to live in a place where early morning silence is not drowned out by rush hour traffic, you know the depth of it. This silence is not flat, but is a pool which has been gathering all night. This well of early morning silence is a gift. Just as we wake from a good night’s sleep, filled with new energy, so has the day been prepared with a reservoir of silence to cushion the day’s noise--a place of respite against the rush of it. We pause, when we do, amidst the frenzy of the day, to drink a draft of silence.



I imagine we owe this gathering stillness to the moon. All night long, she collects the flow of it with her gravitational force. We know this because the moon is reflective. And all things reflective—mirrors, still water that runs deep, a pensive face collecting distance—must necessarily be silent. How else can they gather the reflection? A person steeped in reflection is a deep well of silence, a moon filling from within.

Unlike the moon, the sun is loud. Whoever has painted a room an excessively bright color knows this to be the case. Light is loud. And when it becomes too loud, we seek shade beneath a quiet tree or an umbrella. Silence gathers at the root of things, collecting in great pools at the base of hedges, trees, and bushes. And this is why I prefer fall and winter over spring and summer, both of which are entirely too loud.

Why does sadness cause us to become silent? For sure, there is the loud lament. But more often than not, when filled with sadness, we grow silent. In it, we find compassion. We sit in silence with a grieving friend or sick loved one because of it. The moon is such a friend, hovering over the earth each night, filling with compassion for its sadness. When one awakens with night terror, it is helpful to turn towards this face, from which flows compassionate silence. Which she offers freely.

© Jeffrey Ediger, July, 2021

## ***Events and Resources***

You may wish to participate in some of these local, regional, and online events:

### ***Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening Wisdom Practice Day, August 28 via Zoom***

Cynthia Bourgeault will lead the first hour of this Wisdom Practice Day, sponsored by Northeast Wisdom/Wisdom Waypoints. It is designed for anyone wanting to deepen into the experience of prayer and practice. Coming together in community, seeking inspiration and engaging in practices for awakening, participants will leave with a felt sense of deepening presence and how they can be of service in the world.

Working with Cynthia's book, *Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening*, participants will delve into both the tradition and method of this contemplative Christian prayer practice, learning and practicing together. After the first hour, the day will be guided by four seasoned facilitators, Jeanine Siler Jones, Heather Ruce, Nan Delach and Susan Latimer, who will continue the process of cultivating a Wisdom way of knowing through:

- Grounding in the Practices of a Wisdom Circle

- Instruction and practice of Centering Prayer Meditation
- Body centering and sacred gesture
- Mindful attentional practices/Inner Tasks
- The Welcoming Prayer

The event is scheduled for 9:00am-3:00pm Central, with a break for lunch, on Saturday August 28. To enroll, email [holly@aared.com](mailto:holly@aared.com). (Suggested donation range of \$30-80 to Northeast Wisdom/Wisdom Waypoints. You may donate online by [following this link, click on the yellow "Donate" button](#). Northeast Wisdom activities are supported entirely by donations.)

### ***This Fall at at Healing Gardens***

Healing Gardens, the lovely park-like contemplative center in St. Charles, offers two special fall activities:



- Enneagram Workshop, Level 1:  
Saturday September 11 - this event is fully booked and registration is now closed. Watch for additional future Enneagram workshops to be announced soon.
- Silent Saturday Morning: Saturday October 16, 9:00am-noon

Please visit the [Healing Gardens website](#) for more information or to register. There are several other events on the calendar and, in addition, the gardens are open now for anyone who needs a Nature "fix." To make arrangements, text 630-740-2597.

### ***Tuesdays with Merton - The Radio of Nature: Merton's Tuning Into God Outdoors, September 14 Online***

On June 27, 1949, Thomas Merton was allowed, for the first time, to venture outside the Abbey of Gethsemani's gated enclosure to walk in the woods alone. His writing and his spirituality changed forever as a result. Why? Perhaps, after being doused in words for years, suddenly he could share an expansive, silent space with God and just listen. This session will explore

what Merton found beneath the branches, on the hills, and in all of nature: a sense of transcendence.

**Sophronia Scott** will lead this session. She is a novelist, essayist, and leading contemplative thinker whose work has appeared in numerous publications. Her latest book, [\*The Seeker and the Monk: Everyday Conversations with Thomas Merton\*](#), received a Louie award in 2021. Sophronia's other books include [\*Love's Long Line\*](#), and [\*This Child of Faith: Raising a Spiritual Child in a Secular World\*](#), co-written with her son Tain. She holds degrees from Harvard and Vermont College of Fine Arts. Sophronia lives in Sandy Hook, Connecticut and is the founding director of Alma College's MFA in Creative Writing, a graduate program based in Alma, Michigan.



### ***Contemplative Outreach 2021 International Conference, September 16-19, In-person or via Zoom***

The conference, entitled *The Global Embrace: Our Widening Reach, Our Deepening Connection*, will take place at the Gateway Marriott, Denver, Colorado. Both in-person and Zoom attendance options are available.

The conference will include:

- Seven sessions of Centering Prayer
- Companionship: one on one, and small group sharing
- Conversation: learning how the Centering Prayer community is expanding and our contribution to the raising of consciousness of the planet
- Collaboration: Spirit-led listening to widen our reach within and beyond the Contemplative Outreach community
- Celebration: in profound gratitude for the gift of prayer and community

The conference begins at 4:00pm Thursday, September 16 with a welcoming reception, followed by Centering Prayer, dinner, and the opening session. It concludes on Sunday, September 19 at 11:00 am with Centering Prayer & Lectio Divina

For further information and registration, please [click here](#).

### ***Two October Online Events from Contemplative Outreach Atlanta***

The Atlanta chapter invites us to take part in two online events this fall:

- *Praise and Protect the Earth "Big Sit"* on Saturday, October 9
- *At the Edge of Waiting: Centering Prayer and Celtic One-Day Retreat* with Carl McColman on Saturday October 30

For more information and registration, visit the [Contemplative Outreach Atlanta website](#).

### ***From Contemplative Outreach of Colorado: Bob Mischke on the "Guard of the Heart" Practice, October 23***

This online workshop will teach the practice of “Guard of the Heart” (also referred to as “Watchfulness” or “Presence Practice”) and how it complements Centering Prayer, and the practices of the Welcoming Prayer and the Active Prayer Phrase. Participants will learn the three ways any afflictive thought or emotional disturbance can be instantly released as it arises.

According to Thomas Keating: “One practice to bring the effects of contemplative prayer into daily life is traditionally known as “Guard of the Heart.” This consists of letting go of every emotional disturbance as it arises and before we start thinking about it. This method is more sophisticated than dismantling the emotional programs for happiness because it deals with the whole of life. It expresses our ongoing intention to be with God in the present moment and sustains it.”

Bob Mischke, who has worked with Contemplative Outreach of Colorado for more than 25 years, learned this practice directly from Father Thomas. The workshop will take place

Saturday October 23, 10:00am-1:00pm Central. For further information, please visit the [Contemplative Outreach of Colorado website](#).

### ***Centering Prayer Groups, In-Person and via Zoom***

Participants who attend a Centering Prayer introductory workshop often decide to join an existing prayer group or form one of their own. The groups generally meet weekly or every other week to share their experience of Centering Prayer and growing relationship with God.

Many groups decide to view videos or read and discuss books by Fr. Thomas and others to deepen their individual understanding of their spiritual practices. Formats usually include a session of Centering Prayer and discussion and sharing. These small faith communities build trust and unity while encouraging and supporting members on their spiritual journey.

More than 40 Chicago-area prayer groups are listed on our [website](#). If you would like help finding a prayer group, please contact the facilitators' team leader at: [groups@centeringprayerchicago.org](mailto:groups@centeringprayerchicago.org).

While more and more prayer groups are returning to meeting in-person, here are four invitations to gather with Chicago-area Centering Prayer groups via Zoom. Listed below are the groups, times, and contact information.

- St. Clement's Centering Prayer Group every Saturday 9:30-10:30am. Contact Bill Epperly at [bill@integralawakenings.com](mailto:bill@integralawakenings.com)
- St. Katharine Drexel Church every Tuesday 8:30-9:30am. Contact Lori Dressel at [lorijdressel@gmail.com](mailto:lorijdressel@gmail.com)
- The Healing Gardens - Centering Prayer with Lectio Divina, last Friday of each month, 10:30am-11:30pm. Contact Deb Marqui at [deb@dmarqui.com](mailto:deb@dmarqui.com) or text/call 630-740-259.
- Permanent Zoom group (not associated with an in-person group) Tuesday 6:00 - 7:00pm. Contact Rose Magiera for link and phone number – [rmmagiera@gmail.com](mailto:rmmagiera@gmail.com)



Bill Epperly has also invited everyone to *Interspiritual Sundays* which gathers Sunday from 9:00-10:00am. You may contact Bill at [bill@integralawakenings.com](mailto:bill@integralawakenings.com) and he'll be happy to share more information with you.

### ***Offerings in the Contemplative Outreach Meditation Chapel***

The national website of our parent organization features an Online Meditation Chapel that is very easy to use and provides the opportunity to see, hear and join in silent prayer with others from all over the world. You must first register to attend the meetings in the Chapel. You can do that by using the [calendar](#) link. Once you know what chapel your desired meeting is in, use the [chapel](#) link.

**Meditation Groups** – Groups meet via Zoom at all hours of the day and night and are open to anyone. *There is no cost/fee to attend, charging is prohibited.* A friend writes: “I have been attending meditation in the virtual Keating Chapel and had a lovely experience. The facilitator was very good!” For further information, visit the [calendar](#) or [chapel listing](#).

**Healing Together: A Gathering of Consciousness** – In silence we focus on an intention for peace and healing in 2020. The format is an opening prayer, a short reading, two 25-minute sessions of silent prayer with a short break in-between and closing prayer. These sessions are scheduled every Thursday from 11:00am to 12:00pm Central Time (US & Ca) in the Thomas Keating Chapel with Mary Lapham. You can contact Mary at [marylapham2@gmail.com](mailto:marylapham2@gmail.com).

**Please let us know about any additional events and resources you're aware of. Write to:** [news@centeringprayerchicago.org](mailto:news@centeringprayerchicago.org)

## ***Insights***

*The doctrine that God is in the world has an important practical corollary—the sacredness of Nature, and the sinfulness and folly of man's overweening efforts to be her master rather than her intelligently docile collaborator.*

- Aldous Huxley

*In the flush of love's light, we dare be brave. And suddenly we see that love costs all we are, and will ever be. Yet it is only love which sets us free.*

- Maya Angelou

*There is no way to happiness. Happiness is the way.*

- Thich Nhat Hanh

*If, in trying to do the will of God, we always seek the highest abstract standard of perfection, we show that there is still much we need to learn about the will of God.*

- Thomas Merton

## ***Your Turn***

Please write in to contribute your ideas or to comment on any aspect of *Spirit Journal*. Let us know if you are aware of an upcoming event you think others should know about, or send us an inspirational quote you'd like to share, or information about a book, website, podcast, or video you recommend. You can contribute by emailing the newsletter editor at [news@centeringprayerchicago.org](mailto:news@centeringprayerchicago.org).

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