



# CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH CHICAGO

## Vision for 2021 and 2022

[Note: We hope and intend to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all our efforts, so this document is actually a summary of where we feel we are being led, rather than a "to do" list. We are not defining outcomes that we feel we must achieve, but rather offering the vision as an invitation that may suggest opportunities for others to engage with the work of Contemplative Outreach. If you have an interest in working with us, or if you have a comment, please contact Alan Crema at [coordinator@centeringprayerchicago.org](mailto:coordinator@centeringprayerchicago.org).]

## Overall Chapter Vision

Support the process of transformation in Christ, both in ourselves and in others, through Centering Prayer and related contemplative practices

Strive to expand awareness and participation in our contemplative activities – enlarging both our volunteer leadership group and general membership and placing increased emphasis on diversity and inclusion

Align with and support the vision and guiding principles of our national parent organization, Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. (COL)

### Support the Process of Transformation in Christ

#### **Focus on the Fundamentals: Teaching and Facilitating**

1. Expand and strengthen the teaching of Centering Prayer and associated practices in our area.
2. Increase offerings of Introduction to Centering Prayer with a six-week follow-up for people new to the prayer and for those who want a refresher.
  - With online offerings, we can expand beyond our geographic boundaries.
3. Host online gatherings for Centering Prayer group facilitators, in conjunction with Contemplative Outreach Ltd. facilitator programs, for spiritual enrichment and support.
  - We have a good start on this, and we will continue to support our facilitators.
  - We want to be open and welcoming to our facilitator group and include new people interested in facilitating or co-leading a Centering Prayer group.

#### **Create an Expanded “Curriculum” of Relevant Programming**

1. Offer a more complete menu of resources to support the process of transformation in everyday life and build community.
2. Continue to host an annual in-person fall workshop.
  - This is a tradition for Contemplative Outreach Chicago and an important way to build community.
  - We are currently re-thinking and re-designing this event for the post-COVID era.
3. Continue offering an eight-day Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat annually in partnership with Contemplative Outreach of Wisconsin, to be held in person, safety allowing.
4. Continue working to develop the Wisdom Way of Knowing into Contemplative Outreach practices.
5. Engage issues of our contemporary lives, both personally and communally, within the context of a Centering Prayer practice.
  - Offer workshops that hold an issue in a contemplative knowing and loving heart; issues such as climate change, poverty, and racism.
  - Specifically, hold a series of contemplative workshops that engage with systemic and cultural racism. (We have a start on this, having completed workshops on Howard Thurman's teachings and anti-racism in early 2021)
6. Explore opportunities to offer additional high-quality contemplative programming, for example:
  - a series of workshops on the Christian mystics
  - a series expanding on the topics covered in our two recent Living Flame series
  - a series on inter-spiritual topics

### **Increase Reach and Resources through Collaboration**

1. Collaborate to create additional opportunities to support transformation.
  - Leverage opportunities that become possible through collaboration with other Contemplative Outreach chapters and with the Contemplative Outreach Ltd. functions. (During the pandemic, we have offered Zoom workshops in collaboration with several other chapters and encouraged participation in online offerings from Contemplative Outreach Ltd.)
  - Work with other chapters on logistics, programming co-sponsored events, and other new ideas.

2. Continue and expand our practice of collaborating with organizations outside of Contemplative Outreach that offer complementary experiences, such as the International Thomas Merton Society and the Chicago Theological Seminary.

## **Expand Involvement and Leadership**

**Host regular online gatherings for all members to share resources and support.**

1. These events will provide opportunities to share information about intentions, plans and activities and listen and receive feedback from members.

**Be more proactive in inviting members to volunteer to get involved on the chapter leadership team to encourage more capacity in the functioning of the leadership.**

1. Focus on making sure that service on the leadership team is a spiritual experience.
2. Invite potential leadership volunteers to think about their own interests and perhaps discern and lead a new program focus for our chapter.
3. Identify a new chapter coordinator by August 2022. (In the meantime, we can look to identify someone to serve as co-coordinator, which would be a big help.)