

Spirit Journal - October 2021

Preview

Here's what you'll find in this month's issue:

- An invitation from Alan Krema to be part of our 2021 Fall Retreat on November 13 via Zoom
- Biographical information about this year's Fall Workshop presenter, Phileena Heuertz
- Information about a very special event coming up in January with Michael Battle - registration is now open!
- An article by Ingrid Forsberg on how her Centering Prayer group has adapted and persevered during a year of Covid
- A listing of selected contemplative events and resources to support your spiritual journey
- *Insights* from Thomas Keating, Diana L. Hayes, Joseph Campbell, and Phileena Heuertz.

We need your involvement - please share your reactions and reflections with us to help make *Spirit Journal* an even more vibrant conversation! If you would like to submit something you've written or just explore an idea, please contact the newsletter editor at news@centeringprayerchicago.org.

I Hope You'll Consider Attending Our 2021 Fall Workshop on Three-Centered Awareness - Nov. 13 via Zoom

by Alan Krema

Let me explain why I hope you will take the time to learn more about three-centered awareness. There has been a strong and fruitful development in our contemplative prayer

environment in recent years, that has arisen from paying attention to the embodiment of our being in relationship to our spiritual journey. To enhance the use of the Welcoming Prayer, which has been a part of Contemplative Outreach for over three decades, many contemplatives now engage in daily living practices which bring awareness into the body as we engage with the details of our life.

[On Saturday, November 13, we will be hosting a three-hour online Zoom workshop with Phileena Heuertz on three-centered awareness and the spiritual journey.](#) 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 we long for. During the workshop, Phileena will guide us into practices and experiences which will enhance our spiritual journey experience with embodied awareness.

In Centering Prayer, we let go of thoughts as we find ourselves engaged with them. Often the thoughts seem like they are controlling us. Generating emotions and sentimental stories and feelings, our thoughts are like reactive needs that we must service with more and more energy until we feel consumed by them. We are taught to simply return to the sacred word and consent to the presence and action of the divine within us.

There are sensations associated with this that are present without thought and focus. Intention and consent can be sensed as an opening up, a spaciousness, or an embodied presence. This can be felt as a receiving of grace which flows into us and radiates from us. Thoughts will block this flow since they require discrimination and possession. Once we think about embodied presence, the flow is restricted.

Sometimes we find that the energy associated with certain thoughts cannot be easily let go of. This requires some processing or we will lose ourselves in reactive behavior. Putting our awareness into our body and allowing our somatic sensations to hold these thoughts is a very useful way to observe oneself and process our thought energy. There have arisen a variety of practices and tools we can use to stay in body awareness while we engage our daily activity. Our thinking mind is essential to our functioning and can be used in service

of our greater being rather than addicting us to likes and dislikes.

The Wisdom Way of Knowing taught by Cynthia Bourgeault has provided such life practices and we have explored this work many times over the last several years. A related tool to process the energies of our lives is Focusing or Bio-Spiritual Focusing (BSF). We will be offering a workshop on BSF in the winter of 2022.

Phileena Heuertz is another well-known presenter with important things to say about three-centered awareness. She spoke at our recent Contemplative Outreach Global Embrace conference and her presentation can be viewed [here](#) (she begins at 24:30 minutes into this video).

We invite you to join us for this three-hour Zoom workshop. [Click here for complete information and a chance to register.](#)

About Fall Workshop Leader Phileena Heuertz

Phileena Heuertz spent her early adult life in social justice work among the world's poor. For nearly 20 years she served in more than 70 countries building community among victims of human trafficking, survivors of HIV and AIDS, abandoned children and child soldiers and war brides.

Author, spiritual director, yoga instructor, public speaker and retreat guide, Phileena is passionate about spirituality and making the world a better place. Phileena leads contemplative retreats for non-faith and interfaith groups across the nation and around the world. She is a sought-after speaker for universities, seminaries, faith communities, and conferences. In 2012, Phileena co-founded [Gravity](#) to support the development of consciousness by making contemplative practice more widely accessible.

Phileena's work includes public speaking, teaching, and writing on contemplative spirituality, facilitation of contemplative retreats, and spiritual direction. She holds a Masters of Christian Spirituality from Creighton University's department of theology and is

a trauma-informed certified spiritual director in the Ignatian contemplative evocative method, with an emphasis on three-centered awareness.

Named “Outstanding Alumni” by Asbury University and one of Outreach magazine’s “30 Emerging Influencers Reshaping Leadership,” Phileena believes that contemplative spirituality is crucial to authentic, creative, liberating social change. She is a board member emeritus for Duke Divinity School’s Center for Reconciliation and Richard Rohr’s Center for Action and Contemplation. Phileena is known for her provocative theological narrative, [Pilgrimage of a Soul](#) and contemplative classic, [Mindful Silence](#).

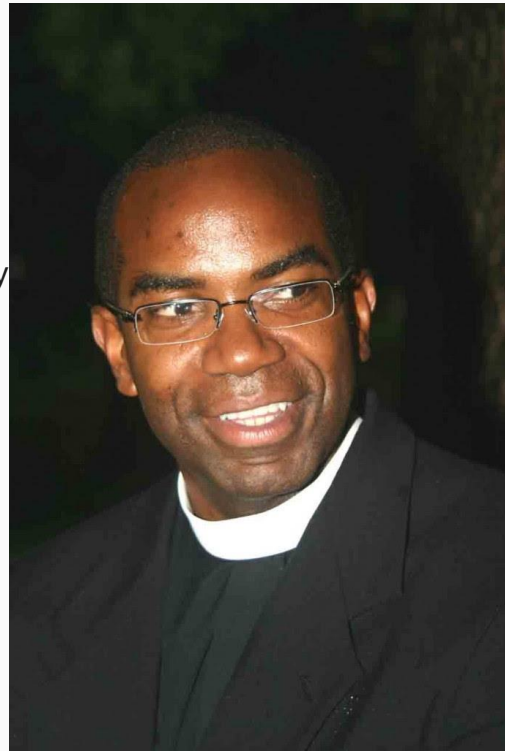
Some of you may have seen and heard Phileena Heuertz when she had a chance to speak at the recent Global Embrace Conference, which brought together Centering Prayer practitioners from all over the world via Zoom. (See Al Krema's article, above, for a link to a video of the presentation.)

[Click here to visit our website for complete information about the Fall Workshop and a chance to register.](#)

Registration Is Now Open for a Special Event Coming Up in January

On Saturday morning **January 22, 2022**, Contemplative Outreach Chicago and Contemplative Outreach Atlanta will join together to present *Releasing an Enslaved Spirit*, a unique three-hour Workshop on Communal Contemplative Spirituality, led by Michael Battle. In this online workshop, it is our hope to bring together people from diverse backgrounds who share an interest in contemplation.

Rev. Michael Battle is the author of 11 books and is the Herbert Thompson Professor of Church and Society and Director of the Desmond Tutu Center at General Theological Seminary in New York.



In his PeaceBattle Institute he works on subjects of diversity, spirituality, prayer, race and reconciliation. He has also served as chaplain to Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Congressman John Lewis, the House of Bishops and, in 2008, was chaplain to the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops.

[We hope you will join us for this event - please click here for complete information and a chance to register.](#)

Reflecting on a Year of Centering Prayer in the Midst of Covid

By Ingrid Forsberg

During one of our Centering Prayer group's meetings in June, 2021, I suggested that we spend time talking about our response to Covid during the past 15 months. The goal was for everyone to have an opportunity to express their feelings before we began to return to in-person meetings, hopefully in the Fall.

To get the conversation started, I sent everyone a few questions in preparation for our discussion.



1. Recalling your initial reaction to the pandemic restrictions, what stands out to you as the most difficult restriction to accept or follow?
 2. Recall that when we were told we could no longer meet at our usual location, one member of the group got us hooked up to a free group phone call for our meeting. A few months later, we started using Zoom. What are your thoughts about the use of phone and Zoom session for Centering Prayer?
 3. Do you recall any time during the pandemic when you became more fearful, sad, depressed, etc? How did you handle those emotional changes?
 4. What was your response to being at home for church and without the social gatherings that are a large part of your church life? Did you experience any fears or anxiety about the eventual return of those in-person gatherings?
 5. Do you have any specific comments about the role of Centering Prayer in your life that was different during the pandemic than before the pandemic? How about now, anticipating that we will begin to gradually return to being together in-person?
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6. Outside of Centering Prayer, what in your day-to-day routine has been different during the pandemic than before the pandemic?

Since these questions were only intended as conversation starters, our group used them as a launch point for a broader conversation, selections from which I have reprinted here with permission. It is my hope that this will inspire other groups to undertake similar conversations in order to help process the effect the pandemic has had on all of us, and to assess the potential impacts that resuming in-person sessions may have on your Centering Prayer practice.

- The sessions we had by phone were hard to get used to. It is difficult when you cannot see the body language of the person speaking. I felt disconnected while on the phone when we were so used to being together in-person for so many years.
 - When we started using Zoom, everyone liked being seen and seeing others. I felt better with interactions and did not feel as “removed” as by phone. Everyone developed a strong attachment to Zoom and still like it even as we begin to discuss moving back to in-person meetings.
 - Four of the members of our group do not work, while three do. Whether working or not, all of us were so glad to have our Zoom weekly connection, as work and church cut back on their live interactions and did not have the activities, programs or study sessions that most of our group members were used to.
 - We talked about returning to our churches. Some said that perhaps parishioners had become fearful. They are worried that Covid may keep people and programs from returning to pre-Covid levels.
 - Those connected with church via YouTube, or other computer-based recording of the services, found that it was working well for them. Especially those who worked online. Many of us are wondering what the next months may bring when we begin to gather together.
 - We decided that coming together once a month for Lectio Divina (which we do the first Monday of every month), was a good way to restart our live meetings.
 - When we met live, we began with our 30 minute prayer time and concluded with a discussion of our reading for the week. With Zoom this was not ideal. We then changed the order so that we had our discussion first and then our prayer time.
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Some mentioned that being on Zoom during prayer time was fine and some thought it was too distracting.

- Many wanted to gradually return to in-person meetings and others thought that it may be best to continue in a hybrid format. Mobility and transportation have become increasingly difficult for some of our members, and they like not having to miss a meeting or struggle to attend – especially in bad weather.
- We noted that some of us had fears related to changes in the habits we had developed over the past year. There were concerns that changing to in-person meetings would be only temporary, and some of us would rather not go through that again!
- It was also mentioned that going back to physical contact – hugs, hand shaking, etc – was a concern and most of us wanted to avoid it for now.

In summary, it seems that for our Centering Prayer group a hybrid approach of meeting at times online and other times in-person may be our best bet for the 2021-2022 year. Attendance at online meetings has been minimally different as compared to when we met in person. Our discussions and Centering Prayer time together have not changed significantly.

What did change was our ability to modify some areas which we have grown to be comfortable with. This includes, for example, ending our centering time with everyone saying the Lord's Prayer on their own, and having less flexible time to chat prior to and after our scheduled time together.

What about your Centering Prayer group? I would love to know the adjustments you have made or plan to make, and your view of returning to in-person gatherings. Maybe you, too, have settled on a hybrid approach. Send me an email (ingridf23@hotmail.com) with your information and I will report back your replies.

Events and Resources

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

***From Contemplative Outreach Atlanta:
At the Edge of Waiting: Centering Prayer and Celtic Spirituality
with Carl McColman - October 30 via Zoom***

The Celts had a mystical sense of God's abiding presence that was expressed through the veneration of holy wells and other sacred sites, stories of remarkable saints who lived in deep harmony with nature, and a profound spirituality with roots in the ancient wisdom of the desert mothers and fathers.



This one-day Zoom retreat will celebrate Celtic spirituality in light of the practice of Centering Prayer — which also has roots in the desert and remains a profound doorway into the ordinary mystical life.

Presenter Carl McColman, is the author of numerous contemplative books, including *An Invitation to Celtic Wisdom*, *The Big Book of Christian Mysticism* and *Eternal Heart*. Carl co-facilitates a Centering Prayer group in Decatur, GA and is a commissioned presenter of Centering Prayer introductory workshops.

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

***From Shalem Institute:
Howard Thurman and the Writing of Jesus and the Disinherited,
with Lerita Colman-Brown - Register by October 27***

In this one-day online retreat with audio teaching, guided meditation, reflection questions and invitations into silence, Lerita Coleman Brown invites you into intentional quiet space to reflect on Howard Thurman's life and book, *Jesus and the Disinherited*.



Lerita Coleman Brown, PhD, is a spiritual director, author, Professor Emerita of Psychology at Agnes Scott College and past director of the Science Center for Women at Agnes Scott. She also is a graduate of Shalem's *Nurturing the Call: Spiritual Guidance Program* and speaks and writes about contemplative spirituality in everyday life.

Participants will be able to access the Retreat Day any time from September 8 – November 10, but must register by October 27. For more information and a chance to register, please visit [Shalem Institute's website](#).

***From Contemplative Outreach of Southeast Wisconsin:
Unfolding the Advent Journey, a Weekend Retreat with Shawn
Kafader - December 9-12 in Racine Wisconsin***

This in-person advent weekend retreat will explore the familiar characters of the Advent story from a contemplative perspective. How can these people of old invite us into a deeper contemplative stance in our advent journey? Together we will look at the invitations of the prophets, angels, shepherds, sages, the innkeeper and Herod, Joseph, Mary, and Jesus as patterns for a contemplative advent journey.

The Rev. Dr. Shawn Kafader is an ordained non-denominational Christian minister, Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, Certified Expressive Arts Therapist and Certified Art for Healing Facilitator. Shawn has engaged in various contemplative practices for over

30 years. He is a commissioned presenter with Contemplative Outreach Ministries where he has offered many workshops and extended retreats.

Complete information and registration are at the [Contemplative Outreach of Southeast Wisconsin 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.

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
 - St. Katharine Drexel Church every Tuesday 8:30-9:30am. Contact Lori Dressel at 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 or text/call 630-740-259.
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- 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

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 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.

Please let us know about any additional events and resources you're aware of. Write to: news@centeringprayerchicago.org

Insights

*For human beings, the most daunting challenge is to become fully human.
For to become fully human is to become fully divine.*

- Thomas Keating

This is our calling as Christian faithful: to recognize the Christ in everyone. And to reach out a hand of hope, to speak a word of love, to sing a song of happiness, to share a tear of joy or pain, to speak a word of praise, to murmur a prayer, to stand together against those forces that would divide us, isolate us, and block our flow toward home.

- Diana L. Hayes

The privilege of a lifetime is being who you are.

- Joseph Campbell

Contemplative spirituality is anything that helps us wake up and see more clearly who we are and who God is.

- Phileena Heuertz

Your Turn

Please write in to contribute your ideas or to comment on any aspect of *Spirit Journal*. For example, you are invited to submit something you've written on a spiritual topic, or to let us know about an upcoming event, or send 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.
