

Spirit Journal - May 2022

Preview

This month's *Spirit Journal* includes:

- A look back at *Notes of Rest*, the "musical-textual retreat," that took place on May 14 via Zoom, including a reflection by Alan Krema and links to videos for those who missed the live event
- A Memorial Day suggestion: Pray for peace
- Invitations to upcoming events from our good friends at Healing Gardens in St. Charles and Contemplative Outreach chapters in Atlanta, Southeast Wisconsin, and St. Louis
- Information about available Centering Prayer groups, in-person and online
- *Insights* from William Menninger, St. John of the Cross, Larry Yang, and Cynthia Bourgeault

Please share your reactions and reflections with us to help make *Spirit Journal* a two-way conversation. Submissions are very welcome! If you would like to send us something you've written or just explore an idea, please contact the newsletter editor at news@centeringprayerchicago.org.

Reflecting on Notes of Rest

The *Notes of Rest* workshop on May 14 delighted many of those who attended. In fact, 100 percent of those who answered a follow-up evaluation survey gave the workshop the top rating, describing their overall reaction to it as "very positive." The comments written by survey participants indicate that many found the event very meaningful and felt that it opened their eyes to new contemplative possibilities.

The workshop was led by Julian Davis Reid and sponsored by Contemplative Outreach of Chicago in collaboration with CO chapters in Atlanta and Colorado'

If you were unable to attend, we invite you to watch the workshop on video [here](#) and the follow-on lecture [here](#) on our new YouTube channel.

In the following reflection, Alan Krema tries to convey something of what *Notes of Rest* meant for him.

Notes of Rest: An Innovative Contemplative Workshop



by Alan Krema

On Saturday, May 14, Contemplative Outreach chapters in Chicago, Atlanta, and Colorado sponsored *Notes of Rest*, a workshop which brought us from our inner room of Centering Prayer and into an embrace of a musical connection with African American spirituality.

Musician-theologian Julian Davis Reid facilitated our experience in *musica divina* – an emerging Presence of the divine in our group experience of Julian's *Notes of Rest* workshop. After an initial period of Centering Prayer, we all came from the inner room of resting in God and entered into prayer as relationship with a form of particular and personal sharing in Black American song.

We were enabled, through our opening to the presence of the Spirit, to connect to the same source of our Being that is the spiritual source for our Black American

brothers and sisters. This source is felt in the “rest” of contemplation and is authentic in the emergence of the notes from Julian, who freely shares the Black experience with us all. In the case of the majority of our Contemplative Outreach participants, this is an opening to shared experience in a form that white, privileged spiritual seekers cannot ordinarily engage in.

Julian brings us to rest in the divine participation of the Word vibrating into musical notes, and we can resonate with the Word as it makes flesh in each of us. We are transformed in our own small way into a glimpse of union with God’s human family. Our prayer is relationship. Our sense of personhood is intermingled into the flowering of all human persons. In this case, the Black American person with whom we share this prayer.

We entered into *Notes of Rest* as we came from our familiar form of Centering Prayer, of resting in God, and we found our inner room full of everyone else with whom we are in relationship. Our experience of the divine indwelling trinity is really a sense of shared personhood. This was expressed by the Very Reverend Michael Battle during our January workshop *Releasing an Enslaved Spirit*, when he described an African approach to interpersonal experience: “I am because we are” (or “I am because you are”). This universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity is what African spirituality calls “Ubuntu.”

After Julian completed our prayer experience of *musica divina*, he held a session of teaching and discussion about the background and theology of his ministry. This was the time to allow the mind back into this experience, yet hold what we were being taught in awe and wonder of how the place of stillness and rest within each human brother/sister can never be destroyed, even by violence, oppression, and death.

For me, this experience recalled the teaching of Howard Thurman, from whom all white majority people can learn the beautiful love God has for each human person, even, or perhaps most especially, for the disinherited and oppressed. Julian’s sharing of his innovative practice with us allowed me to share in this love as a resonant and vibratory awareness in my body as we opened to the *Notes* washing over and through us.

This was one of the clearest expressions we have felt in our chapter of our vision and prayer for our community, which is that “We embrace transformation in Christ, both in ourselves and others, through the practice of Centering Prayer.”

I encourage you to share this experience by watching the recording of “Notes of Rest” on our new YouTube channel [\[link\]](#). I strongly encourage you to engage in the Centering Prayer session before Julian’s musica divina. You may also enjoy watching the lecture Julian presented after the workshop [\[link\]](#). These are free offerings with your [donations gratefully accepted](#) for Contemplative Outreach as well as Julian’s ministry.

A Suggestion: This Memorial Day, Pray for Peace



As May winds down toward Memorial Day, we are called upon to remember those who have gone to war to defend our country, reflecting on their courage and sacrifice. This holiday is also a good time to pray for peace in Ukraine, throughout the world, in every community here at home, and in our own hearts. May your contemplative journey lead you to the peace that passes understanding.

Upcoming Events of Interest

Here are some events and workshops you might like to attend.

From Contemplative Outreach Atlanta

We Gather Together - Releasing the Enslaved Spirit - Big Sit June 18

Join Contemplative Outreach Atlanta for an inspiring morning of Centering Prayer, Lectio Divina, and Taize' chant inspired by Howard Thurman, Michael Battle and Desmond Tutu. This event is free and is being held on Zoom. Donations are welcome.



[Click here for information and registration.](#)

From Healing Gardens in St. Charles

Enneagram Workshop Level 1 - Saturday, June 18 with JoAnne McElroy, MA, Life Coach/Spiritual Director

Gain a greater understanding of yourself using the Enneagram - a powerful, spiritual tool for transformation that will help you overcome your inner barriers and realize your unique gifts. Register early as the attendance is capped at 14 participants. The workshop will be held outside at Healing Gardens. (If inclement weather, the workshop will be taught inside.)

Healing Gardens also offers Silent Saturday Mornings on June 4 and August 13.

[Click here for information and registration.](#)

From Contemplative Outreach of Southeast Wisconsin

Six-Day Advanced Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat - July 24-30, Benet Lake, Wisconsin

Centering Prayer retreats immerse participants in the practice of Centering Prayer as taught by Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. This two track retreat will allow the participants to come together for Centering Prayer, Lectio Divina, and meal times. The retreat will provide an atmosphere of silence,



solitude and community. The Advanced Intensive and Post Intensive prerequisite is an experience of an Intensive Retreat or the equivalent. The retreat will take place at St. Benedict's Abbey and Retreat Center and will be led by Ann Koerner, CSA and Kathryn Ann Kobelinski, SSND.

[Click here for information and registration.](#)

From Contemplative Outreach of St. Louis

Six-Day Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat - August 21-26, Belleville Illinois

Join Contemplative Outreach of St. Louis for this retreat on Sunday, August 21st to Friday, August 26th at King's House Retreat Center in Belleville, Illinois.



An Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat is an opportunity for practitioners of Centering Prayer to deepen their contemplative journey in the contemporary world. It

is a six-day experience of integrating contemplation and action through silence, solitude and community. The retreat director will be Rev. Matthew Flatley.

[Click here for full information and registration.](#)

Centering Prayer Groups In-Person and Online

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:

- North Park Covenant Church, Monday 7:15pm. Contact Sarah Hillabrant, (773) 509-1095, yoopergirl37@gmail.com
- 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 loridressel@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.
- 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

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 2022. 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 & Canada) 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

Wisdom is the supreme activity of the intellect, and love is the supreme activity of the will. Herein lies our imaging of God.

– William Menninger

Contemplation is nothing other than a secret, peaceful, loving inflow of God. If given room, it will fire the soul in the spirit of love.

- St John of the Cross

We can describe prayer as opening to the vulnerability of asking sacred questions, and meditation can be experienced as creating the tender, open, and humble space for receiving the sacred answer.

- Larry Yang

Remembrance of God is not a mental concept; it exists deeply embodied as a vibration, a homing frequency to which we can become increasingly sensitively attuned.

- Cynthia Bourgeault

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.

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SOLIDARITY • SERVICE

Contemplative Outreach