

Spirit Journal - January 2023

Preview

Kicking off a new year, the theme of this issue is *Invitations*

- First, Jack Lloyd invites you to active involvement in all of Contemplative Outreach Chicago's programs
- We offer a final chance to register for *Simple Presence* with Alan Krema, which takes place this Saturday
- In collaboration with three other Contemplative Outreach chapters, we invite your participation in a very special online workshop on Howard Thurman on February 4
- Carolyn Goddard extends an invitation to her February 13 workshop, *Reflection on Discernment*
- We provide information about two Introductory Centering Prayer Workshops: the first will be in-person this Saturday at Holy Family Parish, Inverness, and the second will take place via Zoom in February
- We share an announcement about an online Centering Prayer Summit taking place this weekend, featuring Cynthia Bourgeault, Carl McColman, and many others
- We provide Information about available Centering Prayer groups, in-person and online
- *We share Insights* from Juliana Cesano, Richard Rohr, Alan Krema, and Martin Luther King Jr,

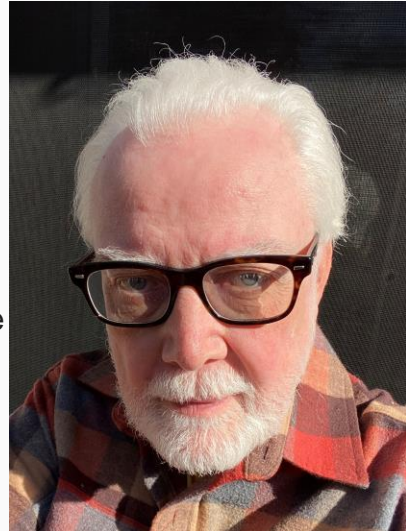
Finally, we invite you to help us make *Spirit Journal* an even more interactive forum in 2023. Your suggestions are very welcome! If you would like to send us something you've written or just explore an idea, please contact the newsletter editor at news@centeringprayerchicago.org.

You're Invited

by Jack Lloyd

As an eight-year volunteer with Contemplative Outreach Chicago, I want to take a moment to appreciate that a consistent commitment to service is one of the key things setting this group apart from other organizations I've known. We exist to provide information, inspiration and support to those who practice Centering Prayer and follow the contemplative path. If you have suggestions or feel that we could do a better job, please be sure to let us know.

(coordinator@centeringprayerchicago.org)



The theme of this issue of *Spirit Journal* is *Invitations*. As you read on, please consider joining us for one or more of the workshops, events and prayer groups you will learn about. The underlying message is this: If you haven't already, please accept our invitation to be an active member of Contemplative Outreach Chicago. We need your support and we welcome your friendship.

I do want to highlight one particular event that is coming up next month. On Saturday February 4, we'll join several chapters from other parts of the US to present an online workshop entitled, *Howard Thurman: An Active Contemplative*. Dr. Lerita Coleman Brown, a wonderful speaker and a leading expert on Howard Thurman's life and work, will explore his personal journey, his awareness of the power of silence, and his singular contribution to the struggle against social injustice.

Yesterday was Martin Luther King Jr. Day and, in reading through MLK's wonderful *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* (1963), I was struck by how it echoes and reinforces many of the key ideas found in Thurman's classic book, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (1949). Brilliant and deeply contemplative, Thurman had a huge positive impact on our nation's history by helping to shape and inspire the nonviolent civil rights movement.

See below for more information on *Howard Thurman: An Active Contemplative* along with a registration link. I hope to see you there!



Last chance - Registration closes at noon Friday

Presented by

Alan Krema

Saturday, January 21

10:00 AM to 12:00 PM (US/Canada Central), via Zoom

In *Simple Presence*, the divine Presence becomes an invitation for our community to listen deeply to the Spirit's movement and action within.

The event will offer a communal prayer experience dedicated to contemplation of the Vision Statement of Contemplative Outreach: "*We embrace transformation in Christ, both in ourselves and in others, through the practice of Centering Prayer.*"

[Read more](#)

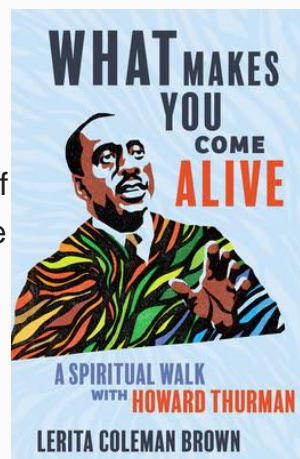
Howard Thurman: An Active Contemplative, with Lerita Colman Brown

Saturday, February 4th, 9:00 - 11:30 AM CST on Zoom

Sponsored by the Contemplative Outreach Chapters of
Atlanta, Chicago, Colorado and Washington DC/Maryland

We are pleased to host Dr. Lerita Coleman Brown sharing her insights on Howard Thurman for a workshop punctuated with Centering Prayer.

We will bask in the wisdom of contemplative, spiritual leader, and mystic-activist Howard Thurman. In part one, we will examine his growth and development as a young contemplative and his attitudes about the healing power of silence. Part two will focus on his use of the contemplative life to stir resistance to social injustice and help restore God's Beloved Creation.



Howard Thurman models for us the words of one of his mystic mentors, Meister Eckhart, "You can only spend in good works what you have earned in contemplation." Vitality and radical trust as essential tools for social change emerge from "Centering Down." Dr. Coleman Brown's newest book about him [What Makes You Come Alive](#) will be released February 7, 2023.

Presenter: Lerita Coleman Brown, PhD, Professor Emerita of Psychology, Agnes Scott College, is a spiritual director/companion, writer, retreat leader, and speaker. She earned her BA from UC Santa Cruz and PhD from Harvard University.

Lerita completed the Spiritual Guidance Program at the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation and promotes contemplative spirituality, the living wisdom of Howard Thurman, and uncovering the peace and joy in one's heart on her website, leritacolemanbrown.com and other social media platforms. She appears in the



documentaries, *Back Against the Wall: The Howard Thurman Story*, and *The Black Church: This is Our Story, This is Our Song*. Her book, *When the Heart Speaks, Listen—Discovering Inner Wisdom* was published in 2019. Her newest book, *What Makes You Come Alive: A Spiritual Walk with Howard Thurman* will be published in February. Lerita is a most grateful heart (28 years) and kidney (17 years) transplant recipient and survivor of several other medical ordeals.

[More information and registration.](#)

**Carolyn Goddard's *Reflection on Discernment*,
Monday February 13 via Zoom**



Carolyn writes:

Discernment is an essential aspect of contemplative life, a way of opening ourselves up to the Divine Presence and being guided toward a way of life that manifests that Presence in our lives. The process differs from decision-making, which is the method offered to us by our culture.

Drawing on the metaphor of tilling soil, planting a seed and watching for growth, we will reflect on one method of discerning and living a more receptive life. Being in community with one another will also deepen our commitment to living contemplatively.

I hope you will join us.

The session will begin with Centering Prayer, and there will also be time for individual reflection as well as questions during the discernment discussion. Materials for this presentation are drawn from books by Sr. Mary Margaret Funk, Henri Nouwen and Contemplative Outreach's booklets on Discernment.

The workshop is limited to 25 participants, so please register soon.

Presenter: Carolyn Goddard first encountered Centering Prayer in 1986, and her involvement deepened in 2000 when Thomas Keating came to Nashville. Since then, she has lead introductory Centering Prayer workshops as well as sessions on Centering Prayer as an 11th Step practice, lectio divina and the welcoming prayer. She has also facilitated support groups and serves on the Contemplative Outreach of Middle Tennessee Leadership Team. Currently Carolyn writes for CO's Word of the Week program and facilitates weekly Prayer Chapels as part of that program. She has a BA from Vanderbilt University and a Masters degree in Religious Education from Loyola in New Orleans. Her two children are adults and live in Nashville, and she and her husband retired in December of 2021.



[Click here register](#)



Introductory Centering Prayer Workshops

If you're new to Centering Prayer or would like to deepen and reinvigorate your practice, please consider participating in one of these workshops in early 2023. Introductory workshop presenters are specially trained and commissioned in teaching this short course. The program explores the place of contemplative prayer in the Christian tradition, the conceptual background of Centering Prayer, psychological processes, and insights into establishing Centering Prayer as a way of life.

We offer two workshops to accommodate those who are ready to return to in-person gatherings as well as those who prefer an online experience. Either workshop will introduce you to the method of Centering Prayer and let you experience this prayer of silence. Centering Prayer is a form of Christian prayer rooted in the ancient contemplative tradition. Its purpose is to foster a deeper intimacy with Christ through silence and stillness. There will be opportunities for discussion as well as invitations into prayerful presence.

January 21, 9:00 AM-3:00 PM
In-Person at Holy Family Parish, Inverness, Illinois

Presenters: JoAnne McElroy, MA is a spiritual director who enters the personal encounter of spiritual direction with earnest care, intention and deep listening. She holds a Master of Arts in Contemporary Spirituality and a post-graduate Certificate in Spiritual Direction from the Institute of Pastoral Studies at Loyola University of Chicago. Her contemplative approach to spiritual direction incorporates the arts, nature and centering prayer, finding God in the ordinary places of life. Practicing Centering Prayer for over ten years, Joanne became a commissioned presenter in 2018 and is now a member of the Circle of Service for Contemplative Outreach Chicago. JoAnne's *specialties include* Celtic Spirituality, Centering Prayer, and Women's Spirituality.

Bill McElroy has a Master's degree in Spirituality and Spiritual Direction from the Institute of Pastoral Studies at Loyola University of Chicago. He has served as a lay minister and spiritual leader at the parish, diocesan and national level

for the past three-plus decades. Bill takes a contemplative approach in his work as a spiritual director, listening for the many ways God speaks to us through silence and nature. He is a commissioned presenter of Centering Prayer, which he has practiced for over 20 years. He was the Founding Convener of Illinois Men As Learners and Elders, a men's spirituality organization founded by Richard Rohr, OFM.

For more information and registration for the in-person workshop, please contact Mary Whiteside: mwhiteside@holyfamilyparish.org

February 27 and 28, 6:00PM – 8:00 PM

Online via Zoom

*(A complete four-hour Introductory Workshop, presented
over two consecutive evenings)*

Presenters: Alan Krema is a Commissioned Contemplative Outreach presenter of Centering Prayer and Welcoming Prayer. He is a Wisdom student of Cynthia Bourgeault and facilitates groups based on the Wisdom Way of Knowing. He has completed the Living School program at the Center for Action and Contemplation. Alan served from 2016-2022 as chapter coordinator for Contemplative Outreach Chicago and is enrolled in the Shalem Institute program for Group Spiritual Leadership.

Sandra Janowski is a retired Social Worker, Addiction Counselor and Community College Adjunct Instructor. In 2009 she completed a two year program in Spiritual Companionship and was commissioned by the Institute of Spiritual Companionship. Starting in 2016 Sandra became a member of the Chicago Chapter "Circle of Service" and has served as the Coordinator of Facilitators since 2018. In 2021 she was commissioned by Contemplative Outreach as a Centering Prayer Presenter. Currently she hosts a weekly Centering Prayer group on Meditation Chapel and co-hosts a group at St Simon's Episcopal Church. Sandra will be co-leading a Seven Day Silent Retreat at Sienna Center July 23 to July 29, 2023. She has three children, four granddaughters, and three great-granddaughters.

To join us online, please email Sandra at sandyandkali@sbcglobal.net.
Free will donation: \$20 suggested. [Click here to donate.](#)

From Closer Than Breath

Online Centering Prayer Summit - Jan. 21 and 22

Our good friend Carl McColman, who did such a great job leading our Fall Workshop in late October, asked us to let you know about a wonderful online event he'll be part of, coming up on January 21 and 22: a "Centering Prayer Summit."

The keynote speaker is Cynthia Bourgeault, and other speakers in addition to Carl include Adam Bucko, Phileena Nikole, Mary Dwyer, Fr. Carl Arico, Colleen Thomas and others — eight speakers over two days, and the program will be recorded so registrants will have lifetime access to the presentations.



There is discounted early bird registration through December 31 (in January the price goes up).

[More 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 five 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 loriidressel@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 Meditation Chapel

Meditation Chapel is an independent, nonprofit global platform with which Contemplative Outreach Ltd. partners to encourage groups and individuals in a life of contemplative practice. Therefore, the global website of our parent organization features this Online Meditation Chapel, which is very easy to use and provides the opportunity to see, hear and join in silent prayer with others from all over the world.

Registering for Meditation Chapel – You must first register to attend the meetings in the Chapel. You can do so at this link: <https://meditationchapel.org/getting-started/>. Once registered, you will receive the chapel links and can then check the [calendar](#) to pick one or more groups convenient for your schedule..

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.* A friend writes: “I have been attending meditation in the virtual Keating Chapel and had a lovely experience. The facilitator was very good!”

Healing Together: A Gathering of Consciousness – In silence we focus on an intention for peace and healing. 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 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

*Consciousness is one, so the uplifting of one is the uplifting of all.
We do this for all beings.*

– Juliana Cesano

There is a deep relationship between the inner revolution of prayer and the transformation of social structures and social consciousness. Our hope lies in the fact that meditation is going to change the society that we live in, just as it has changed us.

– Richard Rohr

We are invited to open ourselves to that within us which may bear Christ into our world. As we live our centering prayer practice, we listen to the Spirit within. How are we called to move and what will we enter into?

– Alan Krema

Was not Jesus an extremist for love: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." So the question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love? Will we be extremists for the preservation of injustice or for the extension of justice?

– Martin Luther King Jr.

Your Turn

Please write in to contribute your ideas or to comment on any aspect of *Spirit Journal*. For example, you are most welcome 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.

SILENCE • SOLITUDE



SOLIDARITY • SERVICE

Contemplative Outreach