

Spirit Journal - April 2023

Preview

This issue focuses on strengthening and broadening the contemplative community, with:

- Information about *Ubuntu and Contemplation*, a very special workshop coming up on May 13 with Michael Battle
- A short primer on Ubuntu by Michael Battle, drawn from his 2009 book, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me*.
- Your first chance to sign up for our our Seven-Day Summer Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat at the Siena Retreat Center, scheduled for July 23-29
- A listing of additional workshops and events of potential interest to you, from multiple Contemplative Outreach chapters and other groups
- Information about available Centering Prayer groups, in-person and online
- *Insights* on community from Thomas Keating, Simone Weil, Ram Dass, and Michael Battle

Please help us create the next edition of *Spirit Journal*. 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.

Ubuntu and Contemplation:
How an Indigenous African Philosophy
Maps Our Spiritual Path to Global Community



Zoom Workshop with Michael Battle

Saturday May 13, 2023

9:30AM-12:30PM Central

Sponsored by the Contemplative Outreach Chapters of Chicago, Atlanta, Colorado, Maryland/Washington, and New York, along with Metanoia Journey (Austin) and Closer Than Breath

Emerging from the ancient cultural traditions of sub-Saharan Africa, the deeply communitarian philosophy known as Ubuntu challenges Western habits of mind in ways that complement and complete the experience of contemplation. In this workshop, we hope to bring together people from diverse backgrounds who share an interest in contemplation. Together we will learn about Ubuntu as we pray through, think about and practice how to release the natural unity the Holy Spirit constantly offers the world. Grasping the message of Ubuntu is a big step toward the ability to love our neighbors as ourselves.

[More information and registration.](#)

Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me

by Michael Battle

Since we started talking about this workshop, many people have asked, “So, what is Ubuntu, exactly?” The following paragraphs come from Michael Battle’s 2009 book, Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me. We hope that these excerpts can begin to build an appreciation for Ubuntu, and that you will choose to join us on May 13 to learn more.

Ubuntu is an African concept of personhood in which the identity of the self is understood to be formed interdependently through community. This is a difficult worldview for many Westerners who tend to understand self as over and against others or as in competition with others...



Ubuntu is the interdependence of persons for the exercise, development, and fulfillment of their potential to be both individuals and community... On a social scale, Ubuntu implies more than just a nonracial, non-sexist, and non-exploitative society. Rather it is a touchstone by which the quality of a society has to be continually tested, no matter what ideology is reigning. Ubuntu must be incorporated not only in the society of the future but also in the process of the struggle toward that future...

So, while Ubuntu may have an unfamiliar sound to Western ears, probing its deeper meanings promises to help (us) understand five important points:

1. Self-identity is not optimally formed through competition.
2. Community is elusive and requires skill to see it.

3. Ubuntu expands our horizons.
4. Ubuntu deepens our spirituality.
5. The development of a "communal self" requires practice...

Rather than reinforcing competitive ways of knowing self, Ubuntu offers a way of discovering self-identity through interdependence. As such, it is possible to argue that my very salvation is dependent on yours - radical stuff for Western ears to hear, yet vital to the survival of the earth...

Ubuntu teaches us that the only true way to know self is in community...In our individual consciousness we cannot see ourselves as primarily white people, black people, Irish people, women, men, low income, gay, conservative. Ubuntu reorients our vision. In our individual consciousness, we must learn to see self in the other -- the greatest other being God. When we go into our closets and pray alone, we do not talk to ourselves -- we would truly be crazy then -- no, we acknowledge a community already present with us. We acknowledge a relatedness that only some have eyes to see. Our relatedness is in Christ.

(The book *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* is available directly from [Michael Battle's website](#) or from Amazon and other booksellers.)

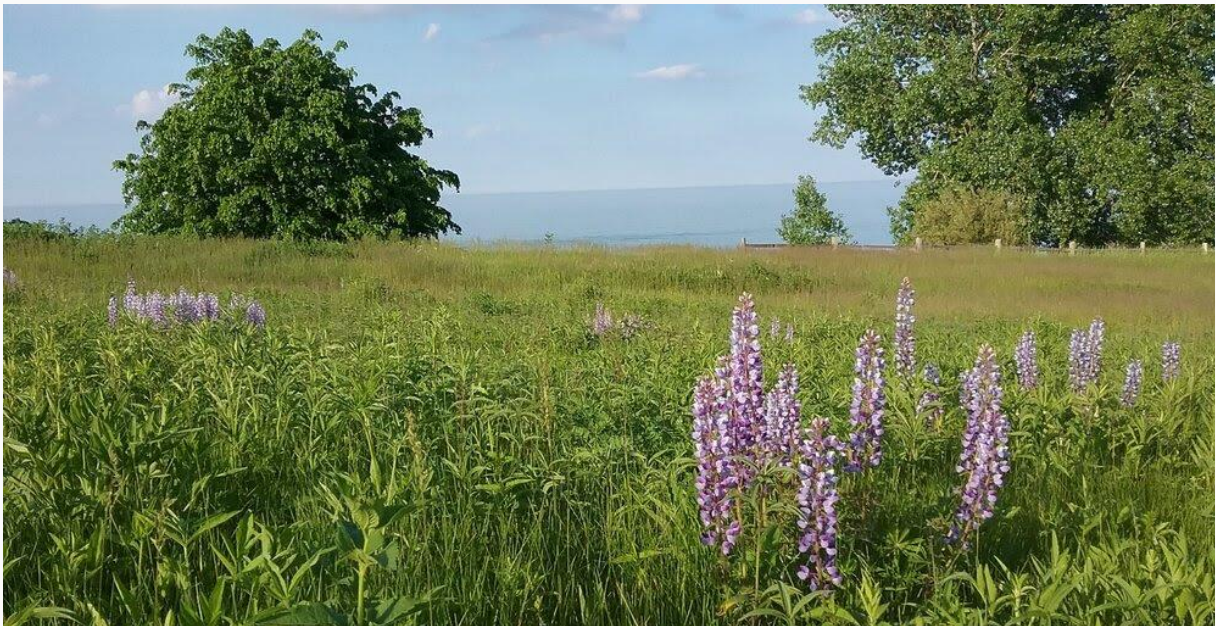
About Michael Battle: The Very Rev. [Michael Battle](#), Ph.D. is a featured keynote speaker and leader of many clergy and lay retreats. Some readers may remember his very inspiring workshop from January 2022, *Releasing an Enslaved Spirit*. He is the Herbert Thompson Professor of Church and Society and Director of the Desmond Tutu Center at General Theological Seminary in New York. Through 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 Episcopal House of Bishops and, in 2008, was chaplain to the global Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops.

Michael has published eleven books, including *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* (2009) and his latest: *Desmond Tutu: A Spiritual Biography of South Africa's Confessor*. He has an undergraduate degree from Duke University, received his

master's of Divinity from Princeton Theological Seminary, a master's of Sacred Theology from Yale University and a Ph.D. in theology and ethics, also from Duke University. He was ordained a priest by Archbishop Tutu in 1993.

[More information and registration.](#)

Seven-Day Advanced Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat July 23-29, Siena Retreat Center, Racine



Registration is now open!

Join us at the beautiful Siena Retreat Center in Racine on the shores of Lake Michigan (90 minutes north of Chicago). Presented by Contemplative Outreach Chicago, this extended retreat will immerse participants in the practice of Centering Prayer. 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 **Intensive Retreat** provides an opportunity to deepen the practice of Centering

Prayer in an atmosphere of profound silence and community support. There are up to six 30-minute Centering Prayer periods daily. This prayer is supported with viewing a selection of the Spiritual Journey video series by Fr. Thomas Keating. Soul friending with the retreat guides can be scheduled. Prior attendance at a weekend retreat is required. An established practice of Centering Prayer for at least six months is highly recommended.

The **Post-Intensive Retreat** provides an opportunity to deepen the practice of Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina in an atmosphere of profound silence and community support. There are up to seven 30-minute periods of Centering Prayer daily. Previous participation in an Intensive Retreat is a prerequisite for the Post-Intensive.

[More information and registration.](#)

Other Contemplative Workshops, Retreats and Events of Interest

From Metanoia Journey

Ongoing Sunday Morning "Centering Prayer/Lectio Divina" Service - Online

Each Sunday morning, we gather online as a community to practice Centering Prayer together, "resting in the presence of our Creator," beyond words, images and concepts. We practice this for 20 minutes at the beginning of the service, and then transition to Lectio Divina (Latin for "divine reading"), where the facilitator will read a scripture passage multiple times to us in our resting posture, allowing the Spirit to bring new meaning and understanding to our lives through these ancient words.

[More information and registration.](#)

From Contemplative Outreach of Southeast Wisconsin

A Unique 12 Step Centering Prayer Retreat, May 4-7, Siena Retreat Center in Racine

"First Things First - Faith in Recovery" will focus on recovery and the power of story, in the silence of Centering Prayer.

This retreat will explore the essential principles that formed the first steps of The 12 Step program of recovery now known as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). As we view and discuss the engaging interplay between Bill W. and Dr. Bob, we see how the lives of two desperate men, their families and friends, and an historic convergence of events forged the foundation of faith integral in their recovery and in the formation of AA's foundational first three steps.

Through viewing, discussion, journaling, and reflection we see how these essential principles formed spiritual practices in their lives and established a program of recovery grounded in faith. During our time together, may the voice of our stories contribute to the integrity of recovery's indispensable first fruit of spiritual awakening.

[More information and registration.](#)

From Closer Than Breath

Discovering the Inner Mother - May 6 via Zoom

Regardless of your relationship with your own mother or as a mother, longing to be a mother or grieving the loss of a mother, we are invited to connect with the Inner Mother. In this workshop, we will explore the feminine dimension of God as an ever-present energy within, one we can channel through practices of presence and self-observation to transformatively love ourselves.

The workshop will be facilitated by Jane Moods, a writer, yoga teacher, and spiritual companion formed under the tutelage of Cynthia Bourgeault and Richard Rohr.

[More information and registration.](#)

From the International Thomas Merton Society

Tuesdays with Merton Webinar Series, plus an In-Person Conference in June in Notre Dame Indiana

ITMS's ongoing *Tuesdays with Merton* webinar series continues on May 9 at 7:00 PM Central with a session entitled *Spirituality, Sustainability, and Social Justice*. From August 12, 1966 through February 18, 1968, Thomas Merton and Rosemary Radford Ruether engaged in a vibrant exchange of nearly 40 letters. This talk builds on this existing exchange by placing passages from Merton's and Ruether's broader bodies of work into conversation. The presenter is Jim Robinson, a member of the Religious Studies Department at Iona University, where he serves as Director of the Thomas Merton Contemplative Initiative and Associate Director of the Deignan Institute for Earth and Spirit. For more information on this and other upcoming Tuesday evening presentations, [click here](#).



Additionally, ITMS has announced its 18th annual General Meeting: *Sophia Comes Forth, Reaching*, in-person, June 22-25 at St. Mary's College in Notre Dame Indiana (about two hours from Chicago). This event features multiple speakers and workshops on a range of Merton-related topics. [Complete information here](#).

From Contemplative Outreach of Atlanta

We Gather Together: Just Mercy Big Sit - June 10 via Zoom

Join us for a meaningful morning exploring the theme "Just Mercy." This Big Sit incorporates two 20-minute silent Centering Prayer sessions with Lectio Divina (sacred reading four times), Taizé chant, and stories about Just Mercy for our reflection. We will be inspired by Amos: "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." Amos 5:24

[More information and registration](#).

From the Contemplative Outreach of Central Iowa

Toward Emptiness: an Eight Day Post-Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat, July 14-21 in Rock Island Illinois

This Post-Intensive Retreat will consist of continuous periods of Centering Prayer

from before sunrise until the dinner hour, with breaks for meals. Attendees may participate in as much prayer as they are called to. Short pauses for entering and leaving the silence will be offered every 30 minutes. There will be no teaching and no reading during this immersion in silence. Veteran retreat leaders Chris Frantsvog and Paul Witmer look forward to hosting you for this journey into deep silence.

[More information and registration.](#)

From the Contemplative Outreach of St. Louis
Eight Day Centering Prayer Retreat, August 4-11 in Eureka Missouri

This retreat offers an in-depth experience of silent prayer for those who already have an established practice of Centering Prayer of six months or more. It is an opportunity for deeper union with God through communal sharing of silence and stillness. For those making their first week-long silent retreat, the “Intensive” track will offer periods of silent prayer as well as presentation and discussion of videos by Fr. Thomas Keating. The simultaneous “Post-Intensive” track, for those who have already completed an Intensive retreat, includes more periods of silent prayer instead of the videos.

The retreat leader is Fr. Bill Sheehan, who has been an integral voice for Centering Prayer even since the earliest days of the movement. Over the past four decades, he has continually provided his wisdom and presence to the Centering Prayer community.

[More information and registration.](#)

From Contemplative Outreach Ltd.
Online Living Flame Program

The national Living Flame Service Team (LFST) is offering a one-time only event to celebrate the 30-year anniversary of the Living Flame program!

This foundational program has been implemented in chapters across the United States and abroad (Iceland). As host of Living Flame I this fall, the LFST is offering the program on Zoom to individuals and to small chapters or groups of five or less, globally.

The Living Flame Program is a seven-day offering of in-depth spiritual study and enrichment presented over seven months by commissioned presenters of Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. It is designed to heighten the awareness of the dynamics of Centering Prayer in the context of the spiritual journey. Participation in this program is for the entire series that will include presentations on seven topics supporting the practice of Centering Prayer. The online program begins this September and will end in April 2024.

A brochure describing the Living Flame program is available [here](#). The number of participants will be limited to 40 "screens," so please act now if you're interested participating. [To register, click here.](#)

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:

- 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 and Lectio Divina, last Friday of each month, 10:30am-11:30pm. Contact Deb Marqui at 630-740-2597 or deb@dmarqui.com
- St. Mary of Emig Centering Prayer Group Tuesday 6:30 – 7:30pm. Contact Rose Magiera for link and phone number – rmmagiera@gmail.com
- North Park Covenant Church, Monday 7:15pm. Contact Sarah Hillabrant, (773) 509-1095, yoopergirl37@gmail.com
- Contemplative Worship, every Wednesday, 5:00pm. Contact Jenny Russel at – jir8546@yahoo.com
- St. Michael's Catholic Church, Schererville, Indiana, Monday, 6:00 PM. Contact Peggy Kolarik, peggy.kolarik@att.net, 219-322-1886
- Northern Illinois Zoom Centering Prayer Group, every Saturday 9:30 – 10:15am. Contact Anne Smith 815-245-4088 or Kathy Putnam 815-568-7641, Katiarel@aol.com
- Contemplative Outreach of NYC & Beyond - Brief prayers, 20 minutes of silent meditation, followed by lectio divina. The full program lasts about 45 minutes. Contact: Jane Coakley at coakley53@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!”

Centering Down: Meditations with Howard Thurman for the BIPOC

Community – Join Colleen Thomas and Leslie Greer in the virtual Meditation Chapel for a contemplative meeting place for those identifying as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color). We will reflect on the various writings and teachings of Howard Thurman. Our time together will include a 20-minute Centering Prayer sit, Lectio Divina, and faith-sharing. Every Monday, 9:30am

Central: <https://meditationchapel.org/mary-of-magdala-chapel/>

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 -

Above all ... silent prayer binds the community in a common search for transformation and union with God. The presence of Christ is ministered to each other and becomes tangible in the community.

- Thomas Keating

To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul. It is one of the hardest to define. A human being has roots by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of a community.

- Simone Weil

Community is when human beings come together in the shelter of each other. We are a community of beings acknowledging the dual intention of working on ourselves as an offering to others, and working with others as a way of working on ourselves. Our lives are training sessions to turn ourselves into instruments of true kindness and compassion.

- Ram Dass

Ubuntu teaches us that the only true way to know self is in community... We acknowledge a relatedness that only some have eyes to see. Our relatedness is in Christ.

- Michael Battle

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.



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