

Spirit Journal - February 2023

Preview

Our February issue includes:

- The initial announcement of *The Way of the Mystic: St. Teresa's Life and Teaching*, a Zoom workshop with Juliana Cesano, which will take place on Saturday March 25
- A reminder that this Saturday, Contemplative Outreach of Maryland and Washington is offering the online workshop, *Conversations with Howard Thurman*
- Information about an Introductory Centering Prayer Workshop via Zoom February 27-28
- A link to the newly available YouTube video of the recent workshop *Howard Thurman: An Active Contemplative*, with Lerita Coleman Brown
- An announcement of the first-ever online Living Flame program being offered by Contemplative Outreach Ltd.
- Information about an in-person 12-step Centering Prayer retreat this May in Racine
- A save-the-date notice for our six-day summer Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat scheduled for July 23-29
- An invitation to a Lenten morning of meditation on Saturday February 25 from the Christian Meditation groups at St. John of the Cross, Western Springs
- A beautiful, very meaningful pre-Lenten reflection and poem by Linda Jackim
- Information about available Centering Prayer groups, in-person and online
- *Insights* from Howard Thurman, Oscar Hammerstein II, Ian Marcus Corbin, and Gerard Manley Hopkins

Finally, we invite you to 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.

***Announcing - The Way of the Mystic:
St. Teresa of Avila's Life and Teaching***



Presented via Zoom by
Juliana Cesano

of the Theosophical Society in America

Saturday, March 25

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

One of Christianity's inspiring saints, Teresa of Avila, brought to the world the experience of the ecstatic love for God in a most unique way. The journey within of this passionate mystic of the 16th century conveys with clarity and depth the path of surrendering the lower to the Higher.

Teresa's ascetic approach is accepted as a classical exposition of the contemplative life, and her spiritual writings are among the most widely read to this day. Her recognized masterpieces on the progress of the soul toward God through prayer and contemplation include *The Interior Castle* and *Exclamations of the Soul to God*.

This workshop will begin with 20 minutes of Centering Prayer and will then explore Teresa's life and her teachings. Ahead of her time, neither illness nor the persecution of the Inquisition were able to extinguish the inner fire of this courageous woman.

(Above portrait of St. Teresa painted by Frei Jual de la Miseria in 1576.)

Presenter: Juliana Cesano is a third-generation Theosophist and has been actively involved with the Society's work for over 25 years. Originally from Argentina, she spent two years volunteering at the International Theosophical Society's headquarters in Chennai, India, before becoming a staff member at the Theosophical Society in America, which is located on a beautiful campus in Wheaton, Illinois. Juliana is an international speaker, the manager of the Quest Book Shop, and the Membership Education Director for the Theosophical Society in America.



(The Theosophical Society is dedicated to promoting the unity of humanity; fostering religious and racial understanding by encouraging the study of religion, philosophy, and science; and furthering the discovery of the spiritual aspect of life and of human beings.)

[More information and registration.](#)

From Contemplative Outreach of Maryland and Washington
Conversations with Howard Thurman

This Saturday, February 18, 9 am - 12 pm ET on Zoom

A half-day retreat, showing a video interview with Howard Thurman, followed by a discussion hosted by Benedicte Vibe Christensen, the COMW Chapter Coordinator.

In the film Thurman explains his own experience with prayer and meditation and how it reflects the “hunger of the heart” that needs to be nourished. The retreat will include periods of Centering Prayer. This film and discussion are free of charge, COMW gratefully [accepts donations](#).

[Selected Books, Audios, and Videos by or about Howard Thurman](#)

[Click here for registration.](#)



Introductory Centering Prayer Workshop



If you're new to Centering Prayer or would like to deepen and reinvigorate your practice, please consider participating in our Introductory Workshop later this month. 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. There will be opportunities for discussion as well as invitations into prayerful presence.

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.](#)

Now Available on YouTube

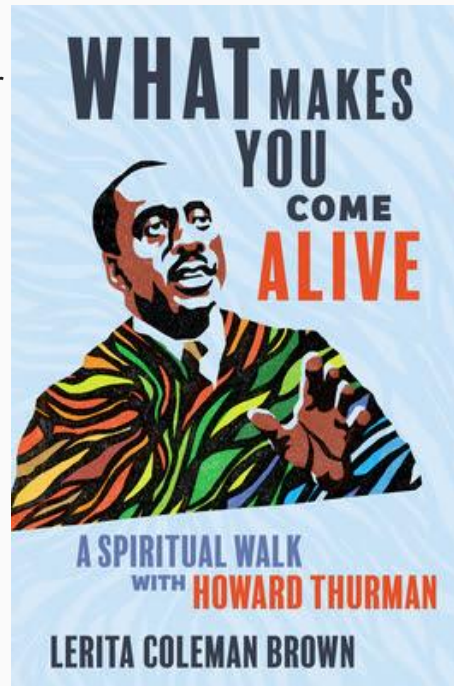
***Howard Thurman: An Active Contemplative,
with Lerita Colman Brown***

If you missed Dr. Lerita Coleman Brown's very insightful recent workshop on Howard Thurman, or if you did participate and would like to review it, it's now available on YouTube. Just click [this link](#) to view it at your convenience.

In the workshop, Lerita shares her deep knowledge of Howard Thurman's life, work, and contributions. The event was sponsored by Contemplative Outreach chapters in Atlanta, Chicago, Colorado, and Maryland-DC.

You may also be interested in Dr. Brown's new book on Howard Thurman, [What Makes You Come Alive](#), published earlier this month.

According to a review in *Library Journal*: "Brown's vibrant portrait is sure to pique curiosity into Thurman's writings and open meaningful conversation about what the relationship between spirituality and social action can be today."



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.](#)

From Contemplative Outreach of 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.](#)

Save the Dates!

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

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.

More information will be coming soon - for now, please save the dates.

From St. John of the Cross Parish Christian Meditation Groups ***Lenten Morning of Meditation - Saturday, February 25, Western Springs***

This event will feature *Mary Magdalen and Attention of the Heart*, a video presentation by Cynthia Bourgeault, Episcopal priest, writer, teacher of prayer in the contemplative Christian tradition, and internationally acclaimed retreat leader. The morning will include periods of meditation.



All are welcome. Free will offering appreciated. Reservations requested but not required. Facemasks optional. Saturday, February 25, 2023, 9:30am - 12:30pm; Registration/hospitality 9:00am.

Contact: Betsy—708-246-8315 or wccmchgo@gmail.com

A Lenten Reflection and Poem

Please Don't Take Away the Ashes

by Linda Jackim

It was the summer of 2016. During the second to the last day of my directed retreat I was invited to reflect on the word “passion.” Rather than rely on my own definition I consulted Google. It said “passion can be described as *a strong feeling of enthusiasm or excitement for something or about doing something.*” That definition triggered a memory in me.

In late January 1978 my month-long immersion experience at St. Clare House of Prayer was drawing to a close. Soon I would embark on a long- anticipated journey to Bayfield, Wisconsin.

The next three months would be yet another immersion experience. This time ministering to the Native American community living on or near the Redcliff Reservation. These months would conclude my apostolic novitiate year, a period of time intended to integrate mission, community and prayer.

Upon my arrival at St. Francis Parish I received a warm welcome from Sisters Cathy, Anne and Cyrinus. At the time we didn't have many young sisters let alone anyone who was willing to go to an isolated area like Bayfield. I was experiencing what many in religious life called an “initial fervor.” I was excited about everything and enthusiastic about being on mission. I was the youngest in the house, Cyrinus was the oldest and Cathy and Anne were someplace in the middle. Cyrinus held numerous leadership positions within the congregation including local superior and



Novice Mistress. She had a strong personality, possessed an aura of authority and was a get down to business kind of person so there was no doubt I'd hit the pavement running. And so I did.

When it came to house chores, Cyrinus suggested I clean the living room. It was a large room with floor to ceiling windows and a fireplace. The view of Lake Superior was breathtaking. I had no experience with fireplaces. I thought they should be swept clean like every other space and that is exactly what I did. One day Cyrinus approached me and commented on the great job I was doing keeping this room clean and tidy. Then she said in a soft and gentle voice, "I'd like you to do one thing for me. Please, when it comes to the fireplace, don't take away the ashes." She proceeded to explain that the ashes remembered the last fire and they helped to start a new fire. As time went on, I learned other things like how to position logs, the difference between tinder, kindling and combustible material and the importance of creating space between all these materials so the fire could breathe. I learned, in the absence of a bellow, to use my breath to deliver short, rapid bursts of air to ignite the fire. My greatest lesson came by way of the admonition: "please don't take away the ashes."

This Ash Wednesday I intend to wear ashes for as long as I can stand them. I want to feel them smeared on my forehead and the gritty particles as they fall on my nose, behind my glasses and maybe even taste them when I finally eat late in the day. And maybe I'll even allow myself to fall asleep with the dirt on my face as a reminder of those among us living on the streets and in tent communities who don't have the luxury of washing their face or of sleeping in a safe, warm bed. I need to be reminded that life isn't perfect, clean or tidy and neither am I. Second Timothy 1:6 urges us to *"fan into flame the gift of God which is in you."* We welcome that gift each time we sit in silence consenting to the presence and action of the Divine within. On this Ash Wednesday 2023 let's not be too quick to wash away the ashes. After all they are more than dust and the remains of a fire. They tell a story and they remember.

We meet in prayer. +

ASHES

Please, don't take away the ashes.

Let them lie in this space.

You see

they are more than particles of dust

and

much more than the remains of a fire.

They have a story

and

they remember.

Once they were nothing more than red hot embers

falling through the cracks of a cradle

crackling and spitting

darting about like fireflies in the night.

Before that . . .

their energy could be fanned into flame by a single breath.

And in the beginning . . .

they were crusty, splintered logs,

tinder with sharp, jagged edges resembling shards of glass.

They remember their first encounter with fire,

the moment they were consumed by its intensity,

the instant they were transformed into LIGHT itself.

Yes,

the ashes have a story

and

they remember who they were before the LIGHT touched them.

Do you remember?

Poem by Linda Jackim, July 15, 2016

+ In memory of Cyrinus Flaska, OSF

Feast of St. Bonaventure

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 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.
- 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 -

Don't ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.

- Howard Thurman

You gotta have a dream, if you don't have a dream, how you gonna make a dream come true?

- Oscar Hammerstein II

The main things that are needed are silence and trust—and not just for the would-be prophets among us, but for all of us.

- Ian Marcus Corbin

Nature is never spent; / There lives the dearest freshness, deep down things.

- Gerard Manley Hopkins

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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Contemplative Outreach