

Spirit Journal - June 2023

Preview

This issue includes:

- An invitation to take part in our our Seven-Day Summer Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat at the Siena Retreat Center, July 23-29 (please register by June 15, if possible)
- Information about an 11th-step Forgiveness Retreat offered at Healing Gardens on Saturday June 17
- The first announcement of our 2023 One-Day Fall Workshop coming up in September, featuring Susan Lincoln and Craig Toungate
- A moving reflection on Ubuntu, written by Kit Snyder from Contemplative Outreach of Colorado
- A listing of 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* from Alan Watts, Karen Armstrong, Thomas Keating, and Thomas Merton

Please help us create the July 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.

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



NOTE: If you plan to attend this retreat, please register with a deposit by June 15, if possible.

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.

A note from Father Carl Arico on the power of an extended retreat:

Coming Home: Reflections on the Practice of Annual Retreats
by Fr. Carl J. Arico

There is something very powerful that takes place when you enter into the embrace of a prayerful community. You get into a rhythm that moves you out of your external attractions into an inner space of awareness. When you do not have to worry about being in charge and all your needs are being taken care of, you find yourself surrendering to an inner grace that makes you aware of the subtle

movements of the body and the spirit. It is like a gentle spiritual massage, or like naturally relaxing into a dance when the music carries you along. This is all aided by the rhythm of the schedule, the Scripture readings, Centering Prayer, soul friending, and the silent meals. You are ever-so-gently being formed by the silence. All these experiences are a manifestation of the two-armed embrace of God, who is affirming on the one hand and purifying on the other. It is an experience of 'coming home'.

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.](#)

11th Step Forgiveness Retreat, Saturday June 17 at Healing Gardens in St. Charles

Forgiveness is at the core of living a peaceful life. It's something we all yearn for, yet something we often find difficult or nearly impossible to do. The half-day retreat will discuss what forgiveness is, what it isn't, and what stands in the way of our forgiving of others, and most importantly, our forgiving of ourselves.

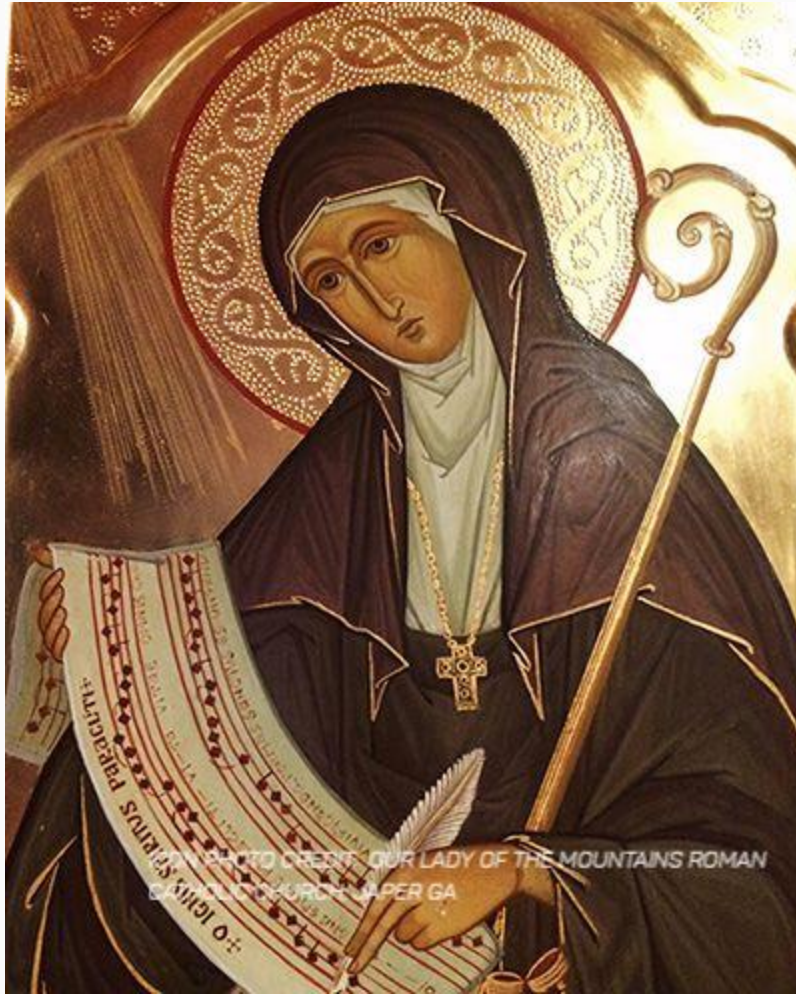


The workshop will be limited to 14 participants.

Presenter: Pamela Verner LCSW. Pam has spent many years working within the addictions recovery field and working with individuals on later stage recovery and trauma. Throughout her years of practice with clients and her years of living life, she has experienced the gifts that come from forgiveness—forgiveness of others and forgiveness of self. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and a Master's Degree in Social Work and is the author of a recently published memoir *Breathing into the Light: One Woman's Journey Embracing the Sacredness of All Life*.

[More information and registration.](#)

The Annual Fall One-Day Workshop: In-Person, Saturday September 16 at St. John of the Cross, Western Springs



Embodying The Mystic: St. Hildegard of Bingen

A one-day contemplative retreat with music, breath, sound and movement

Presented by

Susan Lincoln and Craig Toungate

Sponsored by Contemplative Outreach Chicago and WCCM

Come awaken your inner mystic in a restorative one-day retreat using breath, sound, movement, and music. Join Susan Lincoln and Craig Toungate as they

guide us on a magical experiential journey, inspired by St. Hildegard of Bingen, the Aramaic Lord's Prayer, and the wisdom of nature.

Susan and Craig have written and recorded inspirational heart-connected music together for 30 years. They were on the staff of The Journey School in New Orleans for 10 years, based on Jean Houston's Mystery Schools where they created music and dance to explore spiritual and mystical cultures. They were inspired by the Aramaic Lord's Prayer to create an original song with movements, which they have offered in classes for over 30 years. Susan and Craig have opened shows for many well known spiritual speakers and authors including Julia Cameron, Carolina Myss, Bradford Keeney, Greg Braden, Jack Kornfield, and many others.

After a three-year hiatus, Contemplative Outreach Chicago is delighted to return to our tradition of offering a one-day, in-person contemplative workshop each fall - this year in collaboration with our friends at WCCM (World Community for Christian Meditation) at St. John of the Cross.



Registration is open now, with special early bird pricing!

[More information and registration.](#)

Reflections on Ubuntu

by Kit Snyder

I have been spending some time reflecting on the workshops led by Michael Battle last month, as he taught about the African concept of Ubuntu.

Last Sunday was “Trinity Sunday” at the church I attend. Rev. Battle talked about how this idea of God as Three makes Ubuntu a metaphor of God’s relational being. The three manifestations of God are as Father (or Mother), Son and Holy Spirit. These three are co-dependent on one another in order to be One. God’s energy is communal and interdependent.

Ubuntu is based on communality – the idea that we cannot be human on our own. We cannot be human without God, but we also can’t be human without other humans. We become human through our relationships with one another. We need each other; we are interdependent. To be completely self-sufficient is to actually be sub-human.

Ubuntu is summed up as this, “I am, because we are, and we are, because I am.” In his teachings, Father Keating talks a lot about our “world view.” As we are formed into individuals, we carry with us all of the events, words, images, feelings and, especially, people around us. Ubuntu holds Father Keating’s same idea. The quality of Ubuntu extends to all humanity as a necessary “All.” WE are because we ALL are. None of us are expendable or unworthy.

When I think about all of the people who join with Contemplative Outreach through its chapters, classes, and programs, on Zoom or in person, I find myself wishing that more of us could get to know one another in a more intimate, friendly way. How do we form a connection over the miles between us?

I like to remind myself that we are all breathing the same air. We are all drinking the same water, and we all share the same attraction called love. We are breathing the air that Jesus breathed, the air that the Buddha breathed. We are connected in ways we’ve never imagined.

As I sit here typing, I am breathing your breath and God’s breath and sending wishes for a blessed summer.

(Kit Snyder is the coordinator of Contemplative Outreach of Colorado.)

More Contemplative Events That May Interest You

NEW! [Click here](#) to download a nationwide calendar of events now through March 2024

From Contemplative Outreach of Colorado

Creating Space for Change - Practical Exercises for Activating Your Nervous System's Ability to Calm and Heal Itself

In hour-long zoom sessions Monday through Thursday for four weeks, this ongoing program will provide practical exercises for activating your nervous system's ability to calm and heal itself. Daily instruction will vary, but will cover:

- Yoga exercises that help calm your nervous system
- Exercises for promoting neutral observation
- TRE - Tension, stress or trauma exercises
- Centering Prayer

Presenter: Eric Peter is a practitioner and certified Level 11 instructor of the Trauma Release Exercises. Eric studied directly under Dr. David Berceli Ph.D., and has been teaching TRE to individuals, groups and organizations for several years. As a former active duty infantry Marine, he was initially inspired to serve fellow soldiers, friends and family members suffering from the effects of trauma from combat. Eric offers a unique and practical perspective in the recovery of trauma and the management of everyday stress from his rich practice of yoga and contemplative prayer.

[More information and registration.](#)

From Contemplative Outreach of Northern Virginia

By Their Fruits You Will Know Them, with Julie Saad, This Saturday June 10

This Zoom workshop we will take a deeper dive into Thomas Keating's teaching about the transformation we experience with a regular practice of Centering Prayer, in other words, the fruits of Centering Prayer. Topics will include the unloading of the unconscious, our basic core of goodness, dismantling the emotional programs for happiness, restructuring of consciousness, the transforming union, and interior silence.

Presenter: Julie Saad has been a student of Father Thomas Keating, and active with Contemplative Outreach, since 1994. She served on the Governing Board for Contemplative Outreach for 6 years (ending Dec '22) and is currently the coordinator of the Contemplative Living Experience Program in Denver, CO.

[More information and registration.](#)

From Closer Than Breath

Christian Mystic Summit - June 18-22

Explore the wisdom of the Christian Mystical Tradition and deepen your connection with the Divine. This free five-day online

Summit brings together nine contemplative teachers to explore the depths of the Christian Contemplative Tradition. The keynote speaker is Carl McColman.

[More information and registration.](#)



From the International Thomas Merton Society (ITMS)

Tuesdays with Merton Webinar Series, plus an In-Person Conference June 22-25 in Notre Dame Indiana

ITMS's ongoing *Tuesdays with Merton* webinar series continues. For information on 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 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 ten invitations to gather with 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@dmargui.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
- Metanoia Journey (Austin, Texas) - Sunday morning "Centering Prayer/Lectio Divina" online service. Sundays, 8:30-9:30am Central. [Register here](#).

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 Geer 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 -

Institutional Christianity has hardly contemplated the possibility that the consciousness of Jesus might be the consciousness of the Christian, that the whole point of the Gospel is that everyone may experience union with God in the same way as Jesus himself.

- Alan Watts

Basically, I don't think we need any great figure to come along. We know what to do. The golden rule, that's all it is. All the traditions teach the same. Instead of waiting for some lead, just go on, just start practicing. And perhaps start demanding it from our politicians and religious leaders, too.

- Karen Armstrong

Whatever the circumstances, there is a Christian way of responding to them. Nowadays, when there are vast social problems which need Christian solutions, the signs of the times have to include not only our own immediate environment, but the broader world: the neighborhood, city, or nation, in which we live — indeed the whole world and the future of the human race. Relying on the Holy Spirit, we must choose how to respond to the signs of the time out of our Christian tradition.

- Thomas Keating

Instead of hating the people you think are war-makers, hate the appetites and disorder in your own soul, which are the causes of war. If you love peace, then hate injustice, hate tyranny, hate greed – but hate these things in yourself, not in another.

- Thomas Merton

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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