

Spirit Journal - December 2023



Adoration of the Shepherds, Gerard van Honthorst, 1620

Dear Friends of Contemplative Outreach Chicago - We wish you a peaceful and very Merry Christmas and all blessings in the New Year.

Thank you for being an important part of our growing contemplative community!

Preview

In this issue:

- The first announcement of an online workshop we will be co-sponsoring in February with Contemplative Outreach of Colorado: *Crisis Contemplation - Healing the Wounds of the Village*, with Barbara Holmes
- A reminder that you are invited to apply for the Alan Krema Scholarship - will 2024 be your year to take advantage of this opportunity?
- Notice of important contemplative events coming up in 2024 from *Closer Than Breath* and *Contemplative Outreach of Colorado*
- A listing of in-person and online prayer groups
- Christmas *Insights* from Eric Sevareid, G.K. Chesterton, Charles Dickens and Pope John XIII

We invite you to get involved in 2024 - please help make *Spirit Journal* a vibrant, two-way conversation. 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. Your participation is always welcome!



Crisis Contemplation: Healing the Wounds of the Village with Barbara Holmes

***Feb. 3 via Zoom, 10:00AM - 1:00PM Central
From Contemplative Outreach of Colorado and Chicago***

In Crisis Contemplation, the Rev. Dr. Barbara Holmes will address two entry points into contemplation which have seldom been addressed: contemplation during crisis, and how we contemplate as community.

Engaging deeply with both history and current events, Holmes will address the emergence of crisis contemplation, especially through the lenses of BIPOC peoples. Dr. Holmes will be exploring existing communal contemplative experiences. As she looks into types of crises (pandemics, earthquakes, and systemic abuses), she examines the resulting traumatic wounds which manifest across generations.

In the second half of the presentation, she will shift toward a village response to crises, addressing communal formation, belonging, resistance, and resilience. A deeper look at healing through memory and story, culture and ritual, will lead to a final chapter on envisioning different futures through liminality and bio-spiritual resurrection.

Recording Note: This event will be recorded. All registrants will receive a copy of the Zoom recording within two weeks of the event.

About Rev. Dr. Barbara A. Holmes

Dr. Holmes is a spiritual teacher and writer focused on African American spirituality, mysticism, cosmology and culture. She is President Emerita of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities (2012-2016). She also served as Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Memphis Theological Seminary (2005-2010). She holds the title of Professor Emerita of Ethics and African American Religious Studies at that seminary. Currently, she is a core faculty member at the Center for Action and Contemplation founded by Fr. Richard Rohr.

Holmes was called to ministry while working as a corporate lawyer for the J.C. Penney Corporation, and was ordained in the Latter Rain Apostolic Holiness Church in Dallas, Texas. Today, she has privilege of call in the United Church of Christ and recognition of ministerial standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Dr. Holmes grew up in New Haven, Connecticut, and was a member of Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church.

Dr. Holmes has earned the following degrees: a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and a minor in Theatre Arts from the University of Connecticut; a Master of Science in Education from Southern Connecticut University; a Master of Divinity degree from Columbia Theological Seminary; and a Doctor of Philosophy in Religion (Ethics) from Vanderbilt. Also, she earned a law degree from Walter F. George School of Law, at Mercer University and practiced law in Miami, Atlanta, Macon and Dallas. She specialized in civil litigation, corporate, and appellate practice. She says, "My life is committed to the struggle for justice, the healing of the human spirit, and the art of relevant and

radical creativity."

[More information and registration](#)

An Invitation to Apply for the Alan Krema Scholarship

Is 2024 is the year for you to take advantage of the Alan Krema Scholarship? The Scholarship is designed to support the development of wisdom leaders who will work to enhance the modern contemplative movement. If you feel a calling to develop your abilities to contribute in this way, we may be able to help you defray some of the costs of retreats, workshops, or courses of study you feel will help you continue to grow spiritually.

This new scholarship program is named in honor of Alan Krema, who stepped aside about a year ago after six extraordinary years as coordinator. Alan remains a valued and very active member of our core volunteer group.

If you feel you could benefit from financial support to help with the cost of undertaking a program of study and reflection, we urge you to [click here for detailed information](#) and a chance to apply for the inaugural Alan Krema Scholarship. Good luck!

Additional Contemplative Events of Interest

From Closer Than Breath

***2024 Centering Prayer Summit - January 20-21,
Online***

The summit marks a significant milestone, celebrating 40 years of Contemplative Outreach's spiritual work of sharing the gift of Centering Prayer. A two-day journey exploring the depths of Centering Prayer, contemplation, God, and the future of contemplative community, the summit features twenty speakers, including Cynthia Bourgeault and Michael Battle.

[More information and registration](#)



From Contemplative Outreach of Colorado
***Contemplative Prayer and African Christian
Mysticism, with Michael Battle - March 23, live
and via Zoom***

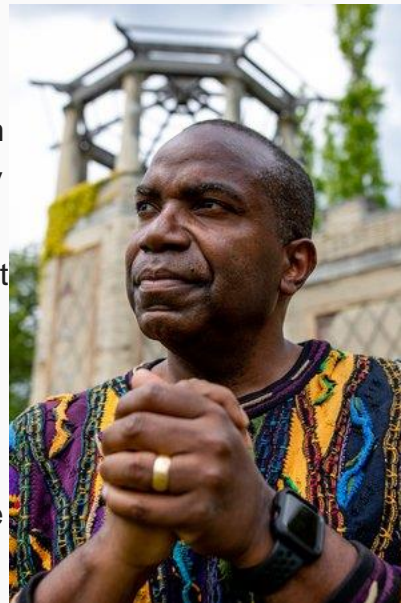
The essence of African Christian mysticism (founded in the desert tradition of monasticism) is not taught but caught. Such mysticism is a whole way of life. It is not an esoteric doctrine or a predetermined plan of ascetic practice. It is important to understand this, because there really is no way of talking about the way of prayer, or the spiritual teaching of God's life.

African Christian mystics did not try to systematize the way to God; instead, they relied upon the experience of a lifetime of striving to re-direct every aspect of body, mind, and soul to God. There was no Protestant or Catholic dichotomy of salvation based upon grace or work because salvation was caught up in how the community is so much more than the sum of individuals striving for heaven. And yet, personal prayer and personal salvation could be better understood through interpersonal prayer and interpersonal salvation.

This is summed up today through the contemporary lens of African Christian

mysticism known as Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me. In short, African contemplative prayer is not only an activity undertaken each day, but also a life continually turned towards God.

Presenter: The Very Rev. Michael Battle, Ph.D. was ordained a priest by Archbishop Desmond Tutu in 1993. Battle's clergy experience, in addition to his academic work, makes him an internationally sought after speaker, teacher, writer and spiritual leader. In 2010, Battle was given one of the highest Anglican Church distinctions as "Six Preacher," by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams. A distinction given to only a few who demonstrate great dedication to the church that goes back to 16th century England and Thomas Cranmer. Battle has published eleven books, including his latest: *Desmond Tutu: A Spiritual Biography of South Africa's Confessor*. Battle's PeaceBattle Institute works on subjects of diversity, spirituality, prayer, race and reconciliation. In addition, Battle has served as pastor and spiritual director to thousands of clergy and laity. He has also served as chaplain to Archbishop Tutu, Congressman John Lewis, the Episcopal House of Bishops and the Lambeth Conference of Anglican Bishops. In addition, Battle has served as vice president to the grandson of Mahatma Gandhi, Arun Gandhi's Institute for Nonviolence. Battle and his wife, Raquel, were married by Archbishop Tutu and are parents to two daughters, Sage and Bliss, and a son, Zion. All of whom were baptized by Archbishop Tutu as well.



[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 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
- 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, Katiairel@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

Christmas is a necessity. There has to be at least one day of the year to remind us that we're here for something else besides ourselves.

- Eric Sevareid

Christmas is built upon a beautiful and intentional paradox; that the birth of the homeless should be celebrated in every home.

- G.K. Chesterton

I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year.

- Charles Dickens

Mankind is a great, an immense family... This is proved by what we feel in our hearts at Christmas.

- Pope John XXIII

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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SOLIDARITY • SERVICE

Contemplative Outreach