

Spirit Journal - October 2023

Preview

Please join us in prayer for peace on earth. This October issue includes:

- Alan Krema's reflection on the workshop he will be presenting next month - *Centering Prayer: A Path to Spiritual Connectedness* - available in person and online
- Information about an upcoming Introductory Centering Prayer workshop, October 28 at Healing Gardens
- The first announcement of an important new initiative we're undertaking to support the development of contemplative leaders - the Alan Krema Scholarship
- A thought-provoking message from our friend Julian Davis Reid - *A Time to Rejoice, a Time to Reflect*
- A listing of contemplative workshops and events of potential interest to you, from several Contemplative Outreach chapters and other groups
- Information about available Centering Prayer groups, in-person and online
- *Insights* from William Blake, Abn Al-Qadir al-Jilani, Thich Nhat Hahn, and Rami Shapiro

Please get involved and help create the next edition of *Spirit Journal*. 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!

Communal Presence – Embracing Non-Dual Consciousness in Our Lives and Our Communities



by Alan Krema

I invite you to join us November 18 for a workshop called, [Centering Prayer: A Path to Spiritual Connectedness](#). We will engage in the prayer and open to the “divine presence and action within” as a form of communal presence. We will open our Selves to our ultimate reality and transcend the capacity of the mind. We will open to both the transpersonal and the transrational.

Centering Prayer, the prayer of consent, enables us to pray as Jesus prayed, in silence and solitude, opening to participation in the divine nature. We heighten awareness of God's presence within by continually letting go of the “will” of our thoughts, deepening our relationship to the divine, and opening to the much wider circle of life. As we go inward, releasing the egoic self, we simultaneously reach out in union with all the relationships in our lives.

Thus, going inward in consent leads to an outward flow of loving embrace. Centering Prayer is a *Path* of contemplative practice which bears fruit in my life as an embrace of *Wisdom* experience as taught by Jesus, known to his followers as

“Moshel Meshalim,” [the Wisdom Master](#). We cultivate this process in a regular practice of Centering Prayer and we find the process of release and embrace fills the activity of our daily life.

Jesus was also called The Single One, or “Ihidaya.” In the Gospel of Thomas, logion 22, Jesus says, “When you are able to make two become one, the inside like the outside, the outside like the inside, the higher like the lower.... Then you will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.”

I welcome you to participate in this union as we join in communal Centering Prayer meditation. We will embark on the making of the two greatest commandments into a single one: “Love Your God with all your heart, and soul, and strength.... And love your neighbor as your Self” (Mk 12:28-30). These two will become one in us as we deepen our relationship with our true reality in the prayer we will share in during this conference.

***Centering Prayer:
A Path to Spiritual Connectedness***
Saturday, November 18 – 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
In-Person in Wheaton or Online via YouTube
Sponsored by Contemplative Outreach Chicago
and the Theosophical Society in America

[More information and registration](#)

An Introductory Centering Prayer Workshop
Saturday October 28 - Healing Gardens, St. Charles



Introductory Centering Prayer workshops are held throughout the year at a variety of sites. The presenters are specially trained and commissioned in teaching this short course which covers the essentials of the practice and the history and conceptual background of Centering Prayer. If you are new to Centering Prayer or would like a more thorough grounding in the practice, please consider attending this workshop - it will be limited to 10 participants.

Presenter: Deborah Marqui, LCSW and owner of Healing Gardens at Stone Hill Farm, will teach the workshop. She is a commissioned presenter of Centering Prayer and has been practicing for more than 25 years. A cancer survivor, Deborah attributes her healing to the restorative power of nature and the simple prayer practice of Centering Prayer that keeps her centered and grounded in the present moment.

[More information about this and other events at Healing Gardens](#)

***An Invitation to Apply for the Inaugural Alan
Krema Scholarship***

Contemplative Outreach Chicago is delighted to announce the start of a new scholarship program named in honor of Alan Krema, who stepped aside about a year ago after six extraordinary years as coordinator. Alan remains a very active member of our core volunteer group, and will be leading a new workshop next month (see above).



The Alan Krema 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.

Alan himself is an excellent example of a contemplative leader who has continuously invested in developmental activities that enable him to help others gain insight. A long-time practitioner of Centering Prayer, he has studied for years with Cynthia Bourgeault and is a Wisdom Waypoints Wisdom facilitator and guide. He is also an alumnus of the Center for Action and Contemplation Living School and has recently completed the Shalem Institute's two-year program: *Transforming Community: Leading Contemplative Prayer Groups and Retreats*.

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!

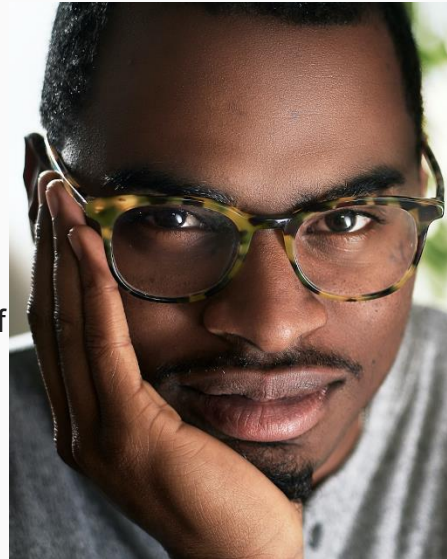
A Time to Rejoice, a Time to Reflect

by Julian Davis Reid

(Readers may remember Julian Davis Reid from his Notes of Rest workshop, presented by Contemplative Outreach of Chicago, Atlanta, and Colorado in May of 2022. Here, he invites us to rejoice with him in the growing success of his ministry, and to reflect on the essential role of

community in empowering individuals to thrive.)

Greetings, Contemplative Outreach! I wanted to take some time to rejoice with you in the goodness of God about how new ventures can start in our lives and bear much fruit. *Notes of Rest* has grown from being a seedling of an idea to now being offered regularly in many far-flung places, including a virtual class offered at Atlanta's Candler School of Theology. The Lord's steadfast love endures forever!

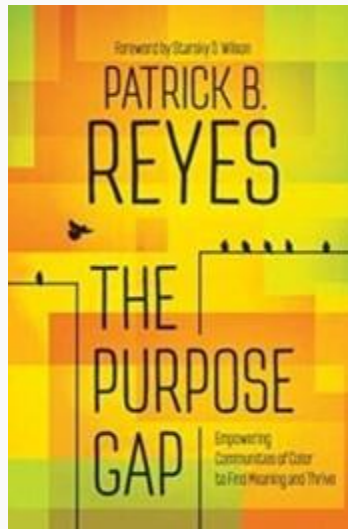


Given that I am celebrating how far *Notes of Rest* has come in the last few years, I thought it a good time to reflect on the nature of success. It is a complicated notion. On one hand, I have been blown away by the goodness of God towards me with the growth of this ministry in particular and in my work writ large as an artist-theologian. There are a lot of gigs coming up around the country and online, and every day I try to rejoice with my wife Carmen at the wonders God has shown us on this unfolding journey (that now includes our infant daughter Lydia, oh yes!). The networks of people that have seen me to this point have just been amazing. **You all are a part of that.** Thank you for your encouragement!

But on the other hand, I know that many feel consistently like utter failures. For many, especially folk of color (let alone Black men), that community does not exist consistently or at all.

Dr. Patrick Reyes talks in his book, [The Purpose Gap](#), about how communities of color often can't thrive like others because of structural barriers to our growth and development. The systems of oppression in this country are designed for most folk of color to fail in achieving big life dreams. And what's worse, it's also designed for a few (like me) to have tons of opportunity poured into us in order to see us thrive, which can justify the status quo. (See, **Julian** *made it*. *Why do we need affirmative*

action anymore?)



I take Reyes' critique to heart. The Purpose Gap was a challenging read because it argued that simple platitudes like "you can do it" don't speak to the reality of those destined to die socially, mentally, and/or physically. To be sure, I am thankful that my work has grown and that so many continue to sow seeds. But I also remember the brothas in my life who are dead, cut down by violence. Rodney, Grayson, Neville - I say their names. I remember the brothas I worked with in prison as a chaplain back in 2017. Some of them may be behind bars for most of my daughter Lydia's life.

I mention these people because I know that for my work to be truly successful, the forgotten have to be seen anew. Individualism tempts me to reduce my thriving to me. But the communal orientation of *Notes of Rest*, of Black life, and of God, resists such reduction. This may remind some of you of the wonderful workshop Michael Battle presented last spring on Ubuntu, the ancient, radically communitarian African spiritual philosophy. We never thrive alone, and we never rest alone. We always rest because others make it so, and we thrive when our communities thrive. And so, the challenge to me in my work is to encourage myself, you and others to spread wide the possibility of rest, of thriving, of flourishing.

There are thousands of people who have very few sources of honest, specific encouragement in their lives. They walk around beaten down and tensed up. The symptoms of this can be defensiveness, cynicism, or perfectionism. Perhaps you or someone you care about number amongst them. I am a witness to the faithfulness of God made evident in community. Communities thrive when people invest beyond simple platitudes, so I want to do that for others, I want to do it for you. If there are ways I can practically help you or someone you know thrive, I want to help as best I can.

May we have eyes to see and ears to hear the discouraged and to help them with practical investment move towards God's dreams for them. Thank God Jesus looked past our faults and saw our needs, encouraging us in following him even when we turn around, stop in our tracks, or call for his death.

*I believe that I shall see the goodness of
the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord.
Be strong, and let your heart take courage.
Wait for the Lord! - Psalm 27:13-14*

Abundantly,

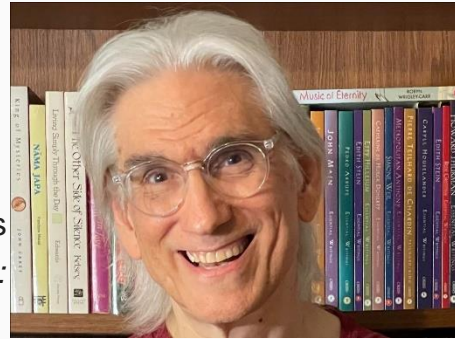
Julian

(In this [short video](#) from PBS, Julian's mentor from his undergrad days, Casey Gerald, born on the wrong side of the tracks, explains the problem of sharing American Dream success stories. And here are links to [Julian's website](#) and [Substack](#) newsletter.)

Additional Contemplative Events of Interest

***THIS EVENING - From the Theosophical Society in America
Livestream at 7:00 PM, Oct. 19, or view on YouTube at your convenience
Christian Mysticism with Carl McColman***

Carl McColman, who presented Contemplative Outreach Chicago's Annual Fall Workshop last year, is a spiritual director, retreat leader, and internationally known speaker and teacher on mystical spirituality and contemplative living. In this conversation with Richard Smoley, editor of *Quest: Journal of the Theosophical Society in America*,



they discuss the many aspects of mysticism, contemplation, and the ways that mystical Christianity can restore the radical wisdom teachings of Jesus as an authentic, perennial tradition of inner liberation and transformation. They also explore Carl's views on the future of organized religion, and the present state of spirituality in America.

[More information and free link](#)

***From Contemplative Outreach of Atlanta
We Gather Together - Peace Big Sit
November 11, 9-11 AM Central via Zoom, FREE***

Join CO Atlanta for a morning of prayer including Lectio Divina, two Centering Prayer sessions, Taizé chanting, song, and inspiration from luminaries on the theme of Peace. This Big Sit will lead us into an exploration of Peace in scripture, song and prayer. The event is free and open to everyone.

[More information and registration](#)

***From Contemplative Outreach of Colorado
The Contemplative Adventure
- Spirituality Encounters Science
November 11, 11 AM - 2 PM Central via Zoom***

This will be a hybrid presentation being conducted both in person at The Center for Contemplative Living in Denver and online via Zoom videoconference.

It seems that our contemporary world is obsessed with certainty and results. Who won the game? Who won the election? When will I get there? When will the project

be completed? Am I cured? What is the correct answer? Is there a heaven and will I get there?

What might be an unintended consequence of our obsession with certainty and endings? Might it be that we are not fully present to what is happening in the now. As Anthony de Mello insightfully says, “We go through life asleep!” Might this sleepwalking towards certainty and results creep into our practices of contemplation and meditation?

Contemplation and meditation are intended to foster mindfulness – a fuller awareness of all that arises in the present moment. However, it seems our transactional cultural and religious worldviews often lead us in the opposite direction – away from mindfulness towards mindless sleepwalking. Building on Teilhard de Chardin’s teachings on evolution and Thomas Keating’s teachings on contemplation, the workshop will explore a rarely traveled terrain, the synthesis of science and spirituality.

Presenter: Rick Klein believes that science offers insights to help us awaken from mindless sleepwalking. Rick gives talks and workshops on contemplative spirituality. He is a teacher of Centering Prayer and has presented workshops on science and spirituality, compassion, and mysticism at the Center for Contemplative Living and other locations throughout Colorado.

[More information and registration](#)

***From Contemplative Outreach of Maryland and Washington DC
Centering Prayer and Interspirituality
November 18, 8-11 AM Central via Zoom***

This retreat Netanel will explore the roots of Centering Prayer as a receptive meditation practice in Christianity, and explore its applicability to the interspiritual milieu in which we live today.

Presenter: Miles-Yeppez, professor of Religious Studies at Naropa University and co-founder of Charis Foundation for New Monasticism and Interspirituality, which is

dedicated to the emergence of a newly conceived contemplative life in dialogue with all of the world's great wisdom traditions. He is an artist, philosopher, religion scholar, and spiritual teacher. Currently, Netanel lives in Boulder, Colorado, where he is Chair of Religious Studies and Director of the Keating-Schachter Center for Interspirituality at Naropa University.

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, 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

If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.

- William Blake

Dear Friend, Your Heart is a polished mirror. You must wipe it clean of the veil of dust which has gathered upon it, because it is destined to reflect the light of divine secrets.

- Abn Al-Qadir al-Jilani

Jesus Christ is not an entity that you have to look for outside yourself; Jesus Christ is within you. He is the eyes that we need not to be blind anymore. Our practice is always to get out of our blindness, to have the kind of eyes that can see things as they are.

- Thich Nhat Hahn

*Enveloped in Your Light, may I be a beacon to those in search of Light.
Sheltered in Your Peace, may I offer shelter to those in need of peace.
Embraced by Your Presence, so may I be present to others.*

- Rami Shapiro

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.



Contemplative Outreach