

Spirit Journal - June 2024

Preview

In this June issue, you'll find:

- Your invitation to this summer's Intensive/Post-Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat - later this month at the Siena Retreat Center
- Information about an online contemplative community offered by Old St. Pat's
- An invitation to this summer's John Main Seminar, from the World Community for Christian Meditation
- Information about another Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat coming up in July in Rock Island, Illinois
- Notice of an Introduction to Centering Prayer workshop at Healing Gardens in late July
- A link to the 2024 Contemplative Events Calendar, which lists online and in-person events through December
- A moving Father's Day Reflection from Johanna Ash
- A "help-wanted" notice: Can you help us build an effective social media presence?
- An opportunity to apply for the Alan Krema scholarship
- A listing of in-person and online prayer groups you may wish to join
- May *Insights* from Simone Weil, Elizabeth Bruenig, Martin Scorsese, and Alice Walker

Please get more involved with Contemplative Outreach Chicago and help make *Spirit Journal* a lively interactive forum. 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.



From Contemplative Outreach of Southeast Wisconsin

***Two Track Retreat:
Intensive and Post Intensive***

**June 23-29
Siena Retreat Center
Racine, Wisconsin**

Centering Prayer retreats immerse participants in the practice of Centering Prayer as taught by Contemplative Outreach, Ltd.

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. Persons new to long retreats (4+ days) are encouraged to choose the Intensive Track, which includes watching a daily video followed by discussion. Persons with experience in long retreats may choose the Post Intensive Track, which includes additional prayer periods.

The retreats take place at the lovely [Siena Retreat Center](#) on the shore of Lake Michigan in Racine, approximately 90 minutes from Chicago. These extended retreats are offered every summer, sponsored by our friends at CO of Southeast Wisconsin in even-numbered years like this one and by CO Chicago in odd-numbered years.

Retreat Staff:

Ann Koerner, CSA, Commissioned presenter, Experienced Retreat Director, Masters-Christian Spirituality.

Christine Bender, Commissioned Presenter, Experienced Retreat Director, Interest in Wholistic Healing.

Carol Ann Meverden, Commissioned Presenter of 11th Step, Assisted with several retreats.

[More information and registration](#)

Please contact Ann Koerner if you have questions: 262-282-8622, akoerner45@gmail.com

A Contemplative Community Online, Hosted by Old St. Patrick's Church, Chicago

Take a moment out of your day for a rendezvous with God in a hospitable and inclusive community. This online program is offered by Old St. Patrick's Church, Chicago, where Centering Prayer has been practiced for decades.



The program offers an opportunity to transform your heart and mind through spiritual practice. From Monday to Saturday, this virtual chapel provides nine different opportunities for prayer and reflection.

Whether you choose to participate occasionally or regularly, have an established meditation practice or are just beginning, are affiliated with a church or are spiritual but not religious, you are welcome.

Each chapel session includes a 20-minute period of silent meditation, a short reading for prayerful reflection, and an opportunity for simple faith sharing. There is no cost or obligation to participate. Simply complete a brief registration form. Once registered, you will receive an email with information on how to join any of the chapel sessions throughout the week. Feel free to come as often or as little as you like.

Throughout this summer, the chapel will focus on deepening our practice of Centering Prayer and the Welcoming Prayer, using both the written and video resources of Contemplative Outreach.

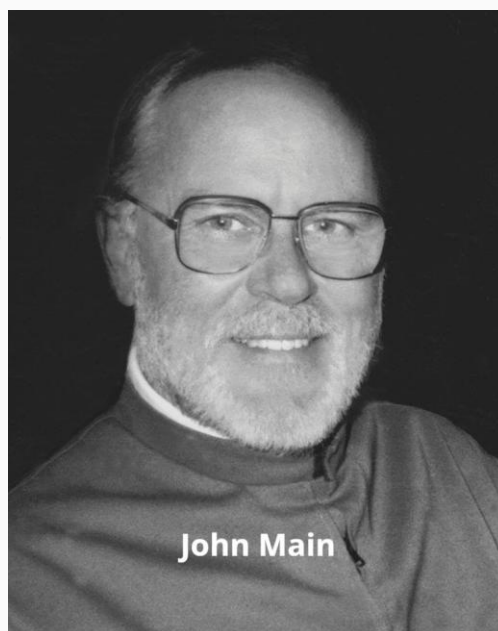
[More information and registration](#)

From WCCM

The 2024 John Main Seminar: Widen Your Tent

In-person in New Harmony, Indiana or Online, July 8-13

There are two leading networks that bring together and support Christian contemplatives: Contemplative Outreach and the World Community for Christian Meditation (WCCM). WCCM's John Main Seminar has been an annual event since 1984, when it was established to honor the memory of John Main (1926-1982) and develop the influence of his teaching in new fields and dialogue with the modern world.



This year's John Main Seminar will be held in-person and virtually in New Harmony, Indiana, July 8-13. Each day will weave together silence, prayer, and meditation, with small groups and discussion.

Last September, our annual fall workshop was presented at St. John of the Cross in Western Springs in collaboration with our good friends, the WCCM-affiliated community that practices there. They have extended to us the invitation to attend the John Main Seminar, which is open to all.

Presenters: Jason Gordon, Archbishop of Trinidad and Tobago, and Laurence Freeman, monk and teacher, Director of WCCM.

[More information and registration](#)

From Benet House Retreat Center, Rock Island Illinois

Surrender and Intention

An Eight-Day Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat, July 21-28

This is an opportunity for more extensive periods of Centering Prayer to deepen the personal practice of contemplative prayer. The Post Intensive Retreat focuses on complete silence for the duration of the retreat with no educational component presented. The Intensive Retreat has several days teaching components. All meals are silent with no conversation. A minimum of one-year regular practice of Centering Prayer is a prerequisite to attend.

Retreat Staff:

Dick Jensen is an everyday mystic, teacher, and listener who has been involved with Centering Prayer for over 25 years as a practitioner and certified presenter for Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. He is a member of the Board for Centering Prayer of the Mississippi Valley and is involved with Centering Prayer as an 11th Step Practice.

Carol Mizeur has been a Centering Prayer practitioner for over 30 years. She has served Centering Prayer as Group Facilitator and as Chapter Coordinator for Mississippi Valley Centering Prayer. She loves to share the prayer with anyone who is interested.

[More information and registration](#)

or email retreats@smmsisters.org

From Healing Gardens in St. Charles

Introduction to Centering Prayer

Saturday, July 27

Do you know someone who would benefit from a concise but thorough half-day introduction to Centering Prayer?



Many people wish we could meditate, but don't know if we're doing it right or get bored after a few sessions. We mean to use meditation, but just don't get around to it. In this workshop, a method of meditation that can't be done wrong will be explained and practiced. You'll be amazed at how easy it is and find that you CAN meditate on a daily basis.

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.

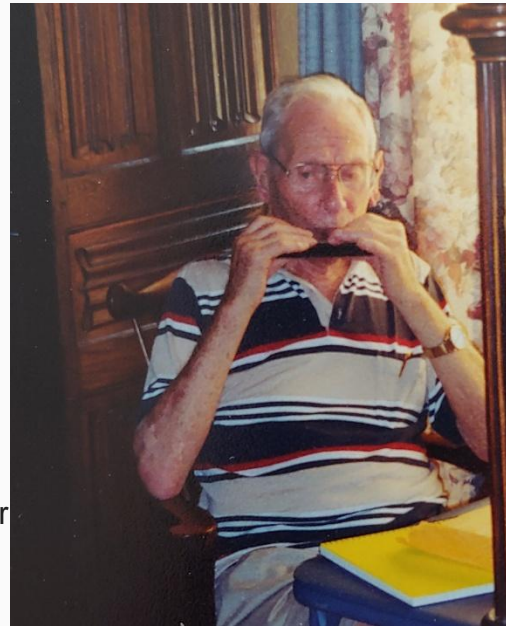
[More information and registration](#) for this and other events at Healing Gardens. The introductory workshop will be limited to 10 participants.

R. M. Rilke and My Dad

by Johanna Ash

My Dad was a remarkable man. Of course, most of us probably say this about our dads, but Pap really was.

I didn't really like him as a child. He was of the old school- stern, severe even. Dinners were spent with him reminiscing about his life. We six kids were not to talk, no questions, perfect table manners, ask to be excused. Dinners seemed to go on forever. Dinners were the time we had to develop our relationship with him as our Dad. We were all adjusting to our new lives in America having immigrated from Holland in 1955.



There were six kids under age ten. The youngest had her first birthday on the ship coming over. There was no one we knew or anyone who spoke Dutch. It took a while for all of us to adjust. The United Presbyterian Church in Washington, DC had sponsored us. We were living in rented houses. Pap had a job with the National Bureau of Standards as a lab technician. His Dutch degrees had not been accepted for other work in the sciences, which was his background. Mama was miserable those first years. She tried all sorts of part time jobs, since she had two preschoolers. All our family, all our relations and friends were in the Netherlands.

Papa was a survivor of two different German work camps. Once his Army unit was captured. The second time he was out past curfew gathering wood from the park, which was the only source of heat. His second release was from France where the Red Cross was able to get him hospitalized for starvation and diphtheria. He traveled north to his parents because there was food there. Mama was at home in a neighborhood where there was no food. She was surviving by eating dried tulip bulbs. If you ate only 2 a day, you would not be poisoned by them.

By 1954, many of the houses built after the war had been flooded by the extreme floods of 1950-1952. Families were sharing housing and jobs were scarce. It was a very difficult decision to make...to ask for immigration. There was not the dual citizenship there is now. Personal pride and necessary self-reliance were involved. Travel was extremely expensive and the telephone call across the Atlantic was costly as well. There was a great sense of finality. Many uncertainties were accepted.... trust in God and His mercy. Trust in His goodness. My parents saw no other options but to migrate with their six children and leave beloved family behind, hoping we would all be able to visit as time passed.

As we all got older and more experienced at living in America, my perceptions changed. My relationship with my dad became less intense. One of my favorite memories of that time was a Spring afternoon. I was lounging about on the sofa after helping weed the strawberry plants and green beans. I was tired and just letting my thoughts drift in and about and out. Pap came in from the chicken coop and peeked around the corner to see who was there. I told him "I really don't feel like doing anything. Just laying here thinking." And he answered in Dutch, "That's fine, sweetie. Sometimes that is exactly what you need to do." It was a surprise hearing that from my dad. I remember him still, 25 years after his death. Before that conversation with me as a teenager, I never considered a spiritual side of him. He was active in the church and enjoyed attending worship, but he never spoke of it.

Anyway, fast forward about twenty years. I was now finishing my Bachelor of Science degree at University of New Mexico. One of my courses was psychology and among the people in the textbook was R. M. Rilke. His famous quote was there in the book:

*Be patient towards all that is unsolved in your heart.
Try to love the questions themselves.
Do not now seek the answers which cannot be given because you*

would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually without noticing it live some distant day into the answers.

I was so excited to see this validation of confusion at the time that I shared it with my parents. They were not familiar with it either and we had a very spirited conversation.

Years later I was finishing my first teaching job here in Albuquerque and would be married to my second husband and relocating to Dallas. My first marriage had ended four years earlier after my husband became an abusive alcoholic. As an engagement gift my father sent me this same quotation on special deer hide he had worked himself. A friend gave Pap the raw hide and Pap tanned it in the extra bathtub and wrote the quote in beautiful calligraphy. He finished it off with a picture of a dogwood bloom. It was a most special, cherished gift. I recently had a custom frame built for it. I often wonder what was going through his heart and soul as he created that for me. It surely meant a lot to him to want to share his energy with me that way. Somehow, I understood his effort to mean that we were both survivors.

Sometimes we make a choice for no obvious reason, and in the choosing , recognize that no matter what, we can cope, and grow under any circumstance. My parents chose to leave the Netherlands. They wanted and felt they needed the challenge of moving to a different culture and country. There was no alternative for them. A family joke remains that my mom wasn't even sure which Washington we would end up in...Washington DC or Washington state. Even while my mom may have been terrified at the prospect of pretty much raising six kids in a foreign country, my parents met that challenge. Their faith in God was reflected in the family motto:

The courage and strength to meet life with open willing hands.

That motto was on a small postcard and framed next to the front door. It was on

construction paper in Pap's calligraphy.



My deep faith in God is a combination of these two sayings. I asked Pap once, while my toddler sons played nearby, why he never spoke of his spirituality and his relationship with God. He ever so humbly answered that he had no need to expound on his faith. The connection he had with God was so deep, so strong, so proven in God's goodness it was enough. Pap lived into the answers to his questions. I know I will, too.

The 2024 Contemplative Events Calendar

To learn about more upcoming workshops and retreats, download and peruse this recently updated [annual calendar](#). It provides a comprehensive listing of in-person and online programs we're currently aware of - now through December. *Special note:* The Living Flame 2 program is being offered online starting on September 7.

Volunteer Opportunity: Social Media Volunteer Needed!

As you may know, volunteers do 100 percent of the work that keeps Contemplative Outreach Chicago going. Our dedicated volunteers have many talents, but there's one gap that's pretty glaring: We don't have anyone to take on the role of creating and growing our social media presence. This diminishes our ability to share our message with the broadest possible cross-section of folks who might be interested in Centering Prayer and other contemplative practices, and might benefit greatly.

If you have some social media talent and skill and can devote a few hours a month to getting the word out about our programs, please contact the editor at news@centeringprayerchicago.org to discuss this opportunity. Thank you for considering helping out in this way!

An Invitation to Apply for the Alan Crema Scholarship

This month, we are delighted to be disbursing funds to our very first scholarship recipient, Rosemary Armita, who'll be starting a program of spiritual director study at Siena Retreat Center.

The Alan Krema Scholarship is designed to support the development of wisdom leaders who will work to enhance the modern contemplative movement. Applications are open - 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.

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!

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:

- *New* - Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina every Thursday, 9:30-10:15am. Contact Bob Gorman at rbrtgorman@protonmail.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
- 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

Grace fills empty spaces, but it can only enter where there is a void to receive it, and it is grace itself which makes this void. The imagination is continually at work filling up all the fissures through which grace might pass.

- Simone Weil

If the lives of prisoners are as valuable as Jesus suggests, then everything must change.

-Elizabeth Bruenig

Violence is not the answer, it doesn't work any more.
The nature of human beings must change.
We must cultivate love and compassion.

— Martin Scorsese

The thing I believe. God is inside you and inside everybody else. You come into the world with God. But only them that search for it inside find it. And sometimes it just manifest itself even if you not looking, or don't know what you looking for. Trouble do it for most folks, I think. Sorrow, lord.

- Alice Walker

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
