

## ***Spirit Journal - September 2024***

### ***Preview***

Welcome to autumn! In our September issue, you'll find:

- A summary of some of the interesting things we learned from the member survey you may have responded to earlier this year
- Detailed information about our first ever "hybrid" Annual Fall One-Day Workshop - participate online or add an optional in-person session - coming up soon on November 2
- Information about an online Introductory Centering Prayer Workshop this Saturday - free from Contemplative Outreach of Colorado
- An invitation to an expanded Enneagram workshop taking place at Healing Gardens on Saturday September 21
- Information about an in-person workshop on Teresa of Avila, offered by our friends at St. John of the Cross, Western Springs, on September 21
- An invitation to a BIPOC speaker series being offered by Awakenings, a growing contemplative community based in Houston.
- Information about a weekly online gathering of young contemplatives
- A link to the 2024 Contemplative Events Calendar, which lists online and in-person events through December
- A listing of in-person and online prayer groups you may wish to join
- September *Insights* from Cole Arthur Riley, Thomas Merton, Carl McColman, and Howard Thurman

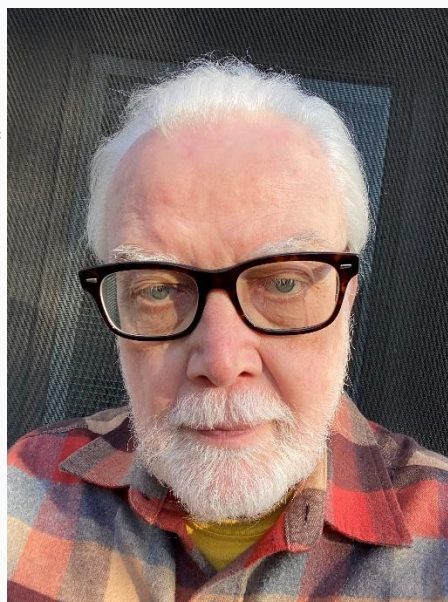
Please get more involved with Contemplative Outreach Chicago by helping to make *Spirit Journal* a lively interactive forum. If you would like to send us something you've written or just explore an idea, please contact the newsletter editor at [news@centeringprayerchicago.org](mailto:news@centeringprayerchicago.org).

***Thanks for the Good Advice!***

by Jack Lloyd

Earlier this year, Contemplative Outreach Chicago conducted a survey of our members. This was our first survey since 2020, and it taught us a lot about how things have changed since then. If you are one of the 74 people who took the time to complete the survey, thank you very much!

For the most part, people who chose to respond tend to be very engaged with the practice of Centering Prayer. Three-quarters report practicing daily, two-thirds have been doing so for more than five years, and 59 percent are active members of prayer groups. While this may indicate deeper engagement than would be found among the broader membership, we were very pleased to receive guidance from such a committed group.



One of the most interesting findings of the new survey was that there is now a stronger preference for online workshops than for in-person events. Seven out of ten say they would be likely to attend our online events, while just under half say they would be likely to attend in person. This finding directly impacted our planning for this year's "hybrid" Fall Workshop, which is described below. It combines an online event we hope will attract many participants with an optional, smaller-scale in-person gathering. This is an attempt to directly address the member preferences revealed in the survey.

The survey also asked members to identify topics they would be interested in exploring. The top choices are Mystics (97 percent) and Interspiritual Topics (81 percent). Again, these preferences are reflected in our Fall Workshop plans. In addition, about half of the respondents say they would like to learn more about the Welcoming Prayer practice, more than one-quarter say they would be likely to sign up for the Living Flame 1 program, and 20% are interested in servant-leader training. We'll be working to respond to these interests in the coming months.

These are just a few examples of the many insights gained in our 2024 member survey. Whether or not you participated in the survey, please feel free to send additional advice and suggestions at any time to [coordinator@centeringprayerchicago.org](mailto:coordinator@centeringprayerchicago.org).



## **2024 Annual One-Day Fall Workshop!**

**Saturday November 2, 2024**

**Online Workshop with Carl McColman**

**Optional In-Person Gathering with Alan Krema at St. Leonard's Ministries**

The Annual Fall One-Day Workshop is a Contemplative Outreach Chicago tradition that goes back to 2012, but this year, we're trying something new – a “hybrid” Fall Workshop. Our recent member survey revealed that many of you like to attend events in-person, but even more prefer to attend online. So, here's a chance to choose the option that works best for you.

### **The Online Event:**

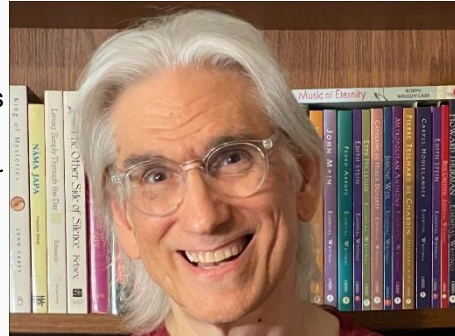
**Interfaith Healing Practices:  
Tools to Inspire Hope Amid Chaos**

**Presented in Collaboration with**

## the Theosophical Society in America

1:00-3:00 PM Central / Saturday November 2

We live in a time of deep social, political, and spiritual division, and it's easy to feel hopeless with the constant news and social media. But there is hope! Mystics throughout the ages have provided inspirational teachings and practical tools to heal our hearts and society from within.



In this interspiritual and interactive workshop, just three days before a contentious election, we will explore the Christian mystical practice of Centering Prayer to find inner peace and healing. We'll also practice Buddhist techniques like Loving Kindness and Tonglen meditation to grow our capacity for love and compassion. These powerful practices can transform both ourselves and the world.

Mystics from all traditions teach that we hold God's compassion and power within us, allowing us to embody the light and love that can change the world. Join us for a transformative workshop that explores timeless practices and insights from history's greatest spiritual guides.

Registrants will receive on-demand access to recording(s) that can be viewed for two weeks following the conclusion of the program.

**Carl McColman** is a spiritual writer, contemplative teacher, and renowned workshop leader based in Atlanta. His books include *The New Big Book of Christian Mysticism*, *Eternal Heart: the Mystical Path to a Joyful Life*, and *An Invitation to Celtic Wisdom*. His forthcoming book, *Read the Bible Like a Mystic*, will be published in 2025.

[More information and registration for the online event.](#)

**Note that the in-person option (below) includes the online workshop; do not register for both or you will overpay.**

### The Optional In-Person Event:

**Consent to the Communal Presence  
and Action of God Within**

**Live Workshop in the Morning, Tour of St. Leonard's Ministries,  
Lunch, and Communal Viewing of the Online Workshop**

**9:00 AM-3:00 PM Central / Saturday November 2**

For those who would prefer to gather in person, we offer this option. The morning session will be an in person contemplative prayer experience with our local members at the St. Andrew Chapel on the campus of St Leonard's Ministries in Chicago.

Led by Alan Krema, it will consist of three movements: Welcoming Prayer, Centering Prayer, and Communal Holding of our Societal Wounding. We will end our morning prayer with a ritual of Wisdom Sharing.



After our morning session, we will tour St Leonard's facility; one of the most successful programs in our country to support and embrace the return of the formerly incarcerated to sacred citizenship. [You can read about St. Leonard's here](#). Lunch will be served.

Then, in the afternoon, we will return to the chapel to view the online presentation by Carl McColman on a large screen, in community.

***Note: If you would like to join us at St. Leonard's, please act quickly – capacity for the in-person gathering is limited to 30 people.***

**Alan Krema** is a long time student of Thomas Keating and Cynthia Bourgeault. Alan has attended Wisdom Schools since 2010. He facilitates Wisdom practice groups focused on Centering Prayer, Welcoming Prayer, the Wisdom Way of Knowing, the Gospel of Thomas, and the Gospel of Mary Magdalene.

Alan emphasizes the engagement of current issues with the embodied Wisdom of contemplative practice. He is actively engaged with Wisdom Waypoints and Contemplative Outreach and has introduced a variety of teachings from the Wisdom Way of Knowing lineage into the practice and prayer gatherings of Contemplative Outreach.

Alan is an alum of the CAC Living School and the program for facilitating Contemplative Retreats from the Shalem Institute.  
He lives in the Chicago area.

[More information and registration for the in-person option.](#)

**Note that the in-person option includes the online workshop; do not register for both or you will overpay.**

*From Contemplative Outreach of Colorado*

**Free Online Introductory Centering Prayer Workshop**

*This Saturday - September 14*

Our friends in Denver are offering a free online introduction to Centering Prayer this Saturday. If you or someone you know would like an opportunity to learn the method of Centering Prayer, experience it in a guided setting, and be able to ask questions and share experiences with the presenters, click here:

[More information and registration](#)

*From Healing Gardens in St. Charles*

**Enneagram Workshop: The Ongoing Journey of Self-Discovery**

*Saturday, September 21*





Whether you are new to the Enneagram or have been a student for many years, this expanded workshop invites you to explore the gifts of the Enneagram and dive deeper into the insights of each type through self-reflection, curiosity and compassion.

The Enneagram is a powerful tool for self awareness, acceptance and transformation that is an ongoing learning experience. Learn your type, discover your strengths and self-limiting habits and explore the ways they impact your life. Take an honest look at yourself. This workshop will cover topics beyond typing through invitations to find all types within you, your relationship to others and ways to delve deeper into the journey.

Workshop will be held both inside and outside at Healing Gardens. Please dress for the weather and bring a sack lunch. Snacks and drinks will be provided. If inclement weather, the workshop will be taught inside. Register soon for this popular workshop!

**Presenter:** JoAnne McElroy, MA, Life Coach/Spiritual Director

[More information and registration for this workshop and other events at Healing Gardens](#)

*From the World Community for Christian Meditation*

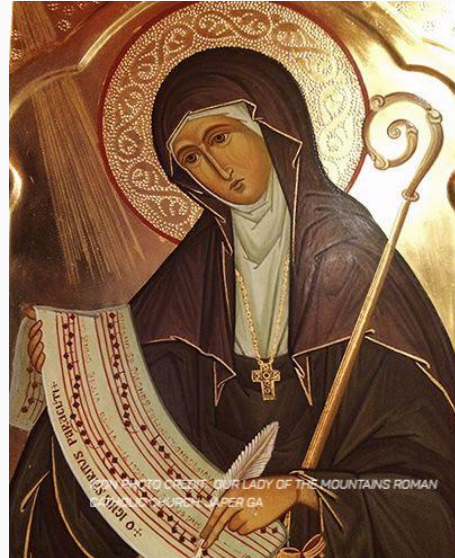
**Teresa of Avila - Mystic and Reformer**

*Saturday, September 21 in Western Springs*

Teresa was a Spanish mystic and nun who founded the Discalced Carmelite order with the help of St. John of the Cross and papal approval. In the process she suffered persecutions from the Inquisition. Her autobiography and spiritual writings (*The Way of Perfection*, *Interior Castle*) are classics in Christian spirituality.

**Speaker:** Professor Bernard McGinn Professor Emeritus at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. Prof. McGinn has written extensively on spirituality and mysticism.

This in-person event will be held at St. John of the Cross Church in Western Springs. The morning will include periods of meditation and discussion.



[Download more Information](#)

*From Awakenings*

**The BIPOC Speaker Series**

*Online - Next Session: September 29*

We are pleased to call your attention to a growing contemplative community based in Houston that we've recently gotten to know: [Awakenings](#).

One of Awakenings' offerings, the BIPOC Speaker Series, is a transformative initiative dedicated to providing a platform for BIPOC Contemplative teachers and thought leaders. (BIPOC = Black, Indigenous, People of Color) The series aims to amplify diverse voices within the contemplative community and create a space for sharing wisdom, stories, and practices that enrich our collective spiritual journey.

Open to everyone, the BIPOC Speaker Series is a virtual event that features a variety of



BIPOC contemplatives who have been profoundly shaped by their spiritual practices. Each session offers participants the opportunity to:

- Hear personal stories and insights from BIPOC teachers and thought leaders
- Understand the unique impact of contemplative spirituality on their lives
- Learn a short practice that can be easily incorporated into daily life

The next session in the ongoing series is scheduled for September 29 and will feature Cameron Johnson; Felicia Murrell will follow on October 27th.

[More information and registration](#)



# The Spiritual Journey Series



*Join us!*

**Saturdays | 10:30am/EDT | begins July 13**

a weekly online gathering  
for young contemplatives (under 50)

For more information use the QR code above or [click here](#).

## ***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.

#### *Book Review*

#### ***Reflections on Lazarus Awakening***

by Joan Scheib

*(Joan Scheib is a member of the Circle of Service for Contemplative Outreach Chicago and a Spiritual Director.)*

Joanna Weaver is a very articulate writer. In *Lazarus Rising* (Waterbrook Press, Colorado Springs, CO, 2011), she is able to weave a scene for us based on the Biblical story of Lazarus' rising and awakening, thus giving us time to ponder and apply the story's lessons to our lives.

We, at times, ask ourselves, "where we fit in the heart of God." (p.7) The story of Lazarus unfolds for us the love of Jesus for his friends and the family of three - Mary, Martha, and Lazarus - as well as Jesus' love for us.



To set the background to the story of Lazarus, I'd like to share the other story about this family in the Bible. I hope you are familiar with the story of Jesus invited by Martha to a Jewish feast dinner at her home. Martha, frustrated that Mary is not helping her with the preparations for the feast, asks Jesus to intervene and ask Mary to help her. Instead, He takes time to tell Martha, for that specific situation where Jesus was teaching the disciples present a lesson, "Mary chose the better part." (Weaver, Joanna, *Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World*, Waterbrook Press, 2000). For Mary chose to put her activities aside for the important moment at hand, **slow down, open her heart, sit and listen to Jesus' teaching**. Martha was always serving Jesus and others, which is another activity important for spiritual growth, and what Jesus also calls us to do.

Throughout my life, I have tended to be more active and focus on helping others, sometimes to the detriment of my own health and time to myself. Currently, though, I have developed a morning routine - beginning with prayer, and if time permits, indoor exercise - before beginning my daily activities. I do attend one chapel prayer meditation group that practices both Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina. There are numerous

options available on the [Contemplative Outreach Ltd. website](#).

In the Mary and Martha story, we do not learn much about Lazarus. “And yet when Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was ill, they said, ‘**Lord, the one you love is sick.**’” (p.7) This story, recounted in John 11, tells of God’s love, and offers a lesson to us to reach out, open our hearts, and accept that love. I have sometimes felt that I am not doing enough to warrant the love of Jesus; but I remind myself that He took my sins - pride, worry, anger - and laid them on the cross. This is such a hard concept to understand, and yet I have accepted it, along with the abundant blessings of grace, mercy, and love poured out. He is saying to me “**stop trying to understand it and start accepting it. Just let me love you.**” (p15)

Joanna Weaver writes: “‘This sickness will not end in death,’ Jesus reassured the disciples in John 11:4, and He whispers the same hope to you and me today. Go ahead and fill in the blank with your situation. ‘Lord, the one you love is \_\_\_\_\_,’ diagnosed with cancer, facing bankruptcy, losing a marriage - the list can go on and on. But not one of those problems is too big for God! This sickness, this heartache, this life-altering situation will not end in death, Jesus promises. Instead, if we respond to His invitation and leave the tombs of our sin and even our doubt, our lives will declare the truth of His next statement: ‘**It is for God’s glory.**’ **We just need to awaken and respond to Jesus’ call.**” (pp. 30-31)

**How can we love Jesus more than we do now?** In Psalm 27:8, it reads, “My heart says of you, ‘Seek his face!’ Your face, Lord, I will seek.” (p.38) Why then do we hold back, not fully trusting in God, or answering His call? We sometimes do not have a clear signal, with all the static noise of life in this world, and the static noise of our mind at work keeping us from focusing on what is important. This noise is causing His message to be muffled. Centering Prayer, sitting in silence, helps us to hear God’s voice more clearly. The practice allows us “**To be still**” allowing the silence to envelop us, and let go of all those things that hold us back, that keep us in a graveyard, so to speak.

As Lazarus realizes the miracle and his blessing of living a longer life, he chooses to walk out of the grave when called. We too have the choice to listen to God’s call and to keep our focus on the “Face of the Lord.” Weaver continues to unfold this calling throughout the book. It is to let go of the false self, as stated so beautifully in the last sentence of the St. Francis Prayer, “it is in dying [to self] that we are born to Eternal Life.” And how wonderful is that for us to ponder!

I end with this thought-provoking quote from Elisabeth Elliot: “Heaven is not *here*, it’s *There*. If we were given all we wanted here, our hearts would settle for this world rather than the next. **God is forever luring us up and away from this one, wooing us to Himself and His still invisible Kingdom, where we will certainly find what we so**

**keenly long for.”** *Keep a Quiet Heart*, (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant, 1995). (p.167)

### ***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](mailto: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](mailto:rbrtgorman@protonmail.com)
  - Centering Prayer Group every Saturday 9:30-10:30am. Contact Bill Epperly at [bill@integralawakenings.com](mailto:bill@integralawakenings.com)
  - St. Katharine Drexel Church every Tuesday 8:30-9:30am. Contact Lori Dressel at [lorijdressel@gmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:rmmagiera@gmail.com)
  - North Park Covenant Church, Monday 7:15pm. Contact Sarah Hillabrant, (773) 509-1095, [yoopergirl37@gmail.com](mailto:yoopergirl37@gmail.com)
  - Contemplative Worship, every Wednesday, 5:00pm. Contact Jenny Russel at – [jir8546@yahoo.com](mailto:jir8546@yahoo.com)
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- St. Michael's Catholic Church, Schererville, Indiana, Monday, 6:00 PM.  
Contact Peggy Kolarik, [peggy.kolarik@att.net](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:marylapham2@gmail.com).

**(Please let us know about any additional events and resources you're aware of. Write to: [news@centeringprayerchicago.org](mailto:news@centeringprayerchicago.org))**

### ***Insights***

*To be human in an aching world is to know our dignity and become people who safeguard the dignity of everything around us. To protect everything may seem like too great a call. But we will not survive without it.*

— Cole Arthur Riley

*The way to find the real 'world' is not merely to measure and observe what is outside us, but to discover our own inner ground.*

- Thomas Merton

Contemplation is not 'completed' until you rise from your repose; and, nourished and refreshed by the silence and the resting in God's presence, are capable of responding to the universal call to bring new creativity — and healing, hope, and love — to the world.

- Carl McColman

*Listen to the long stillness:  
New life is stirring  
New dreams are on the wing  
New hopes are being readied:  
Humankind is fashioning a new heart  
Humankind is forging a new mind  
God is at work.  
This is the season of Promise*

- Howard Thurman

### ***Your Turn***

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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](mailto:news@centeringprayerchicago.org).



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