



Consd News

THE NEWSLETTER OF CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH OF NORTH SAN DIEGO

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Neuroscience and Spiritual Practices Conference

Most of us know in our hearts, and we openly say to each other that “we have changed” since our beginnings in Centering Prayer practice. Some of us wondered and seized the opportunity to learn how we changed beyond noticeable outward signs. In early October, several curious centering prayer practitioners traveled north with interest and anticipation to attend a conference titled Neuroscience and Spiritual Practice, held at the Claremont School of Theology.

The conference brought together people of different religions, professional callings, and academic preparations, for the overall purpose to explore responses and changes that occur in the brain and neuro-system during and after contemplative prayer and other spiritual practices. This was accomplished through a variety of modalities. Individual presentations, panel discussions, question and answer periods, and small group methods incorporating members of the audience were utilized to help shed light on the multifaceted topic. Although many neuro-scientific studies have been conducted and published on the subject of neuro-system changes that occur during Buddhist practices, few studies have been completed on Christian practices. Additionally, the conference proponents stated that none were published for Jewish and Muslim practices. This gathering met to discuss the significance of each practice mentioned here. Our own Fr. Thomas Keating represented Christian Contemplative practice, and described centering prayer in his own inimitable way. You could hear a pin drop through his entire description as people hung onto each thought. Following that he led the entire audience of several hundred people in a 20 minute CP session. We noted that even though many people had probably never done a CP “sit”, everyone in the audience remained completely silent (Our group said we knew “the Holy Spirit was with us the whole time”).

Each of four religious practices that were represented and presented (Christianity, Buddhism, and in their seats throughout the entire time. Judaism and Sufi/Muslim) incorporated information and insights from two sources: a designated religious leader’s perspective, and then from a neuroscientist’s perspective. The science information was often complex and included visual evidence of brain changes seen during contemplation via procedures such as EEG s (electroencephalograms) or PET scans (positron emission tomography). Several of the neuroscientists who participated in this conference also practiced some form of contemplation. They freely stated that they personally experienced their own transcendence beyond an original pure science- focused discipline when noting changes that occurred from contemplative practices. Most firmly supported the thesis that the resultant changes in brain and nervous system can, and often do change individuals in positive physical, cognitive, emotional, and social / interpersonal ways.

Specific discussions, presentations, and opportunities to engage with the presenters in this information laden conference are too numerous to mention in our limited space. One thought in conclusion settles on a sentence that appeared in the welcoming letter to all participants, setting the tone for this important meeting. The sentence reads “.... many of us gathered here are interested in a very basic and vital thing: how this subject matter may help us transform our embodied minds in ways that lead to a more just, compassionate, and peace filled world.”

Blessed peace
~Pat Worret

Presenter Training

How does one describe a beam of sunlight shining through a prism and dancing and sparkling in a thousand different pieces? This is the question I am asking myself as I sit here to write about my multi-faceted week at Mercy Center in Burlingame attending a Centering Prayer Outreach Presenter's Training.

When Sue and Chris Hagen, coordinators of CONSD, first invited me to attend, I hesitated. I was not sure I wanted to use up a week of my vacation time for 'training.' What a mistake that would have been! A week at Mercy Center alone would have been worth the time. There are acres of wooded hiking trails, bubbling brooks, moss-covered boulders and amazing old trees to enjoy. Hiking in and among this beauty brought back many very happy memories of a carefree childhood playing in the woods of Rhode Island. What healing balm for my spirit!

The training itself was a time of deepening understanding and commitment to our Centering Prayer practice and of connecting with fellow contemplatives from the Bay area and points beyond. Blessed Silence was a relief from the cubicle-computer world that is my daily fare.

Each day started with an hour of Centering followed by a silent breakfast. Our work began at 10 a.m. and work it was. We had two funny, inspiring, delightful women from CO in New Jersey as our trainers, Anne Mazza and Therese Saulnier. Each segment of an Introductory

Workshop was presented by the 'pros' and then we were placed in small groups and each of us took turns doing a practice presentation. Gales of laughter rang out as each group became better acquainted throughout this process, overcame the 'practice jitters' and bonded in a very special way. Another hour of Centering preceded dinner, followed by an evening presentation, then silence until 10 a.m. the next morning.

Meeting fellow contemplatives from all walks of life, some who visit maximum security prisons regularly, others who are clergy from several different denominations, nuns, priests and regular folks like me gave me a sense of connection to Centering Prayer Outreach and to the contemplative journey. I have seldom encountered such unity amidst that much diversity.

One of the highlights of the week was a totally unexpected and unique experience. Mercy Center has large labyrinth on the property surrounded by very old sprawling trees and wonderful landscaping. It was unseasonably warm that week and a fellow group member and I decided to go for an evening walk together. As it happened there was a full moon that night; as we strolled the walkways, we came upon the labyrinth bathed in moonlight. We walked the labyrinth in the stillness of the night and the light of the full moon walking, back and forth, back and forth. What a gift! Actually, every aspect of the week was a gift! I went only expecting 'training'. I received the training, but did not expect that the Light of God's love would come to me through a prism, touching me in a thousand different ways and leaving an indelible memory on my heart.

~Corinne Helena

Reflections on Cynthia Bourgeault's Presentation at St. Bart's

Cynthia Bourgeault, Episcopal priest, and author challenged and enriched our understanding of our Centering prayer practice in her talk, "Centering Prayer: Inner Awakening and Experience of the Heart." Her ability to communicate the transformative power of this simple prayer is a reflection of her own faithful practice, purification of heart, and gifts given by the Spirit to enrich the community. Indeed, we were blessed! Cynthia stated "In the gospels, there is never a healing that is also not an empowerment. Christ's invitation ... Abide in Me... is a revolutionary path that quickens something in us that wants to live. Jesus is asking us to release our grip on all the things that are holding us in our smaller selves. "Centering Prayer, the inner gesture of our spirit that is

receptive, non-defensive, and expresses our consent as open undifferentiated availability to God is a crucial practice in becoming whom we are meant to be." Cynthia likened the softening and gently letting go of thoughts in a period of prayer to an emptying of self and "putting on the Mind of Christ." "Kenosis" is the name for this gesture of letting go, which is more like a "letting be." This emptying of self is what Christ did especially in his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane... a holy act of accepting death, a letting go, rather than a clinging to life. The cornerstone of life is to live in kenosis. The false self is always clinging and suffering. There is a profound relationship between letting go and divine creativity. Centering Prayer, awakening the heart, is the gateway to the true self.

~Diane Langworthy

Emulsion

On Saturday, October 25th, the Living Flame participants joined for a day titled “Refinement of the Centering Prayer Process” led by former chef and now seminarian, Matthew Flatley. It was a day, he wrote on one of the handouts, to refine and “redefine ... our intention to consent to God’s presence and action within us.” He labeled our intention as the “‘heart and soul’ of Centering Prayer (and) Contemplative Prayer.”

Matthew described himself as someone who jumps into a project with both feet; as a chef he said he was the one covered in flour with dough in his hair. As a teacher we could sense spiritual flour and dough, so to speak, overflowing from him as he skillfully and lovingly led us through the day. He offered encouragement for the journey: “The false self doesn’t stand a chance in Centering Prayer,” and “Our ordinary level of awareness has no way of knowing what is going on in the spiritual dimension,” and “When you think you are getting worse, you are getting better!”

He also explained the dynamics of Centering Prayer and how it moves toward contemplation, “when the Holy Spirit meets our humble efforts and takes over,” and leads us to the place where Mother Teresa said, “I listen – God listens.” And he gave us some suggestions/ingredients to help us refine our practice in the hope of becoming “more and more refined by the practice.” One of these was creating a “vestibule:” spiritually and physically creating a sacred space to enter into Centering Prayer through spiritual reading and environment among other things. He also encouraged us to be aware of including our bodies/posture into the receptive process. With a humble sense of humor he shared some of his personal stories and struggles with us throughout the day, giving us real meat to chew on.

The day was so rich these few words can only give you a small taste. I find I am still digesting it; rereading my notes and reviewing his handouts many times in the past weeks and I even found myself exploring some of his concepts even further. Matthew peppered the day with cooking references. The term “emulsion” was one that stayed with me. It describes the blending fat and liquid as in making mayonnaise. “Emulsion” became a metaphor for the contemplative state; the suspension of my ordinary self within the extraordinary love of God where I no longer feel myself as separate, but transformed into a new creation within a united whole.

With a little internet surfing I found out that making an emulsion requires agitation, but not too much, “too much agitation, (as in any relationship), will backfire and cause it to separate.” I see this agitation as the unloading of my false self, a journey that is unsettling but sometimes can seem painfully slow. The agitation breaks apart the separate elements into smaller and smaller pieces for better blending. “The tinier the droplets the creamier and more stable the emulsion.” Again I see, as I consent to the process, the droplets of my false self become tinier while the relationship becomes “creamier and more stable.” Another important part of a successful emulsion is the emulsifiers – ingredients that help bond the fat and liquid molecules together. The emulsifiers I bring are my love and intention manifested in a faithful practice of Centering Prayer, and also found in my other spiritual practices as well as my response to my daily life.

Thank you to Matthew, the Living Flame program and to my fellow participants for giving me so much food for my soul.

~Elena Andrews

About Centering Prayer

Fr. Keating describes three levels of awareness that occur during Centering Prayer.

Track 1: The ordinary psychological awareness we bring into centering prayer and deliberately let go of.

Track 2: The flow of thoughts and the periodic engagement in them. We become engaged when a thought activates one of our unconscious energy centers (survival/security, affection/esteem, and power/control).

Track 3: You become aware that you are not interested in any thoughts. You are aware that you are not interested in

thoughts that come down the stream of consciousness. In that situation, you can simply rest in the presence of God (you are in contemplative prayer.) You don’t need to return to the sacred word because you are already in the place where the sacred symbol is designed to take you, which is complete disregard of the thoughts that are going by.

From: The Discipline of Centering Prayer; Centering Prayer Six Follow Up Sessions, Tape 1: session 2.

Advent Day of Prayer

On a beautiful Saturday morning in early Advent, I found myself car-pooling with Prayer Group friends to Coastline Community Church in Carlsbad. We had rolled out of our beds early for the sole purpose of joining other contemplative companions for a much needed Advent Day of Prayer. The "flyer" had invited us to "Illumination" and the reminder that Christ is indeed the Light in our world.

On the way we were happily sharing that we were delighted to be able to take the time out from busy Christmas activities to "BE" in Advent. Perhaps we were all unconsciously, and silently, questioning if we were being wise. Should we stay home and "DO" Christmas? After all, there were so many little details to take care of before December 25th. Maybe we were facing the usual Advent double dilemma. A hard choice that we know has value on both sides. We were welcomed at Coastline by Sue and Chris Hagen, our C.O.N.S.D. co-ordinators, and Susan Siciliano, the contact person with Coastline Church. The "energy" was welcoming and included a festive table of comfort foods. All the fine details were taken care of and we were beginning to feel "nourished" even as we began our day. These preparations always look so "effortless", but we know better, so let me quickly slip in a very sincere thank you to our Servant Leadership, always ready to serve. After a very deep and prayerful period of Centering Prayer we were introduced to Susan Komis, our "Wisdom Teacher" for the day. We heard that Susan is a very grounded and loyal Servant Leader in Contemplative Outreach and has worked side by side with Fr. Thomas Keating for almost 20 years. As Susan began to speak in her very gracious and contemplative manner, my heart was beginning to open wide to the Advent-Christmas-Mystery and I was grateful that I had this opportunity to BE in Advent.

Susan began her presentation by opening us up to the historical origins and ancient themes of Christmas. She spoke of many external experiences of Christmas down through the ages. Some facts we were aware of, but many that we were not, all of which were very interesting. It was from

this point that Susan took us into the many symbols and archetypes of Christmas. She spoke of all the "major players" in the Christmas story; Mary, Joseph, the Magi, and most importantly, Jesus, the Christ. As Susan continued in her presentations it was becoming very apparent that she was taking us very deep into Advent mystery. Susan Komis was accompanying us on our interior spiritual journey of moving from believing in the historical Jesus into knowing the Christ who lives within. We were invited into a deep meditation and asked "What gift do I bring to this Christ Child"? Do I bring Gold? (Could my "gold" this year be my false securities and need for them?) Do I bring Frankincense? (My need for sense of power and adulation?) Do I bring Myrrh? (My cravings for pleasures?)

It became a deep, interior, personal question; a question to gently hold. I was brought before the Cosmic Christ and in this recognition I was invited to celebrate the Christ that is being born in me. Susan invited us to a metaphysical perspective that we might KNOW the birth of Christ Within. We were being invited to re-connect with the "magic" and the "mystery" of Christmas and to celebrate the Divine Light breaking into our own human consciousness. As we read this now, Advent and Christmas 2008 are but memories. But the question will always remain, "What gift will I bring to the Christ being birthed in me this year?" The Christmas story tells us how readily the Magi brought their gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the Christ. My story often proves that I hold on to my gifts, unwilling to turn them over to quickly. This Advent Susan Komis brought me a whole new appreciation of the word "illumine." I can "connect" it more now with Fr. Keating's description of the Illuminative stage of our spiritual journey. Illumination is the breaking in upon a person greater spiritual insights and understandings. This opens us to an abiding sense of rootedness in the Divine Presence: Divine Union. This must be the meaning of the Advent Journey into the Christmas-Epiphany Mystery. I am grateful for the many teachers along the path on this journey.

~Evelyn McGreevy

Q and A with Fr. Keating

Q Sometimes I use my sacred word less than other times. Is that ok?

A Its use or presence will vary from one period of prayer to the next, according to circumstances. You need great flexibility in using it. The principle is always to use it until you go toward greater peace, silence, and beyond. But when one is in peace, silence, and beyond, forget it.

A Moment for Reflection

"If we don't live more slowly, more simply, and more consciously, we don't experience what's right in front of us.

And here's the connect: if you don't experience your experiences, nothing satisfies you and you always need more."

~Fr. Richard Rohr
The Great Chain of Being

Reflections On The Living Flame

On Saturday, November 22, the Living Flame group met for the third time. The topic of the day was the Formation of the False Self.

Marge Rafferty, who is actually the head of the Living Flame program, spoke to us about the origins of the personality we form around ourselves in reaction and adaptation to our early environment. We begin in a specific culture and racial or ethnic group, and we bring into our lives a certain genetic disposition. On top of these influences, the dynamics of our individual families have a tremendous effect on our emotional and spiritual growth. In order to flesh out this assertion, Marge used a model that Sharon Wegscheider developed in the 1970's in order to explain the dynamic experienced by members of dysfunctional families, particularly ones in which one member has an addiction of some kind. The model explicates the ways in which the members of the addicted person's family adapt their behavior to the situation by occupying certain roles. In the morning presentation, Marge explained and illustrated this model. During the after-

noon session she had six people come up to the front and actually occupy these roles by adopting certain physical behaviors and positions on the stage area. It was certainly impactful to actually experience these roles for the people who were called up front, and the audience was also able to see a lot more clearly what the model tries to depict. While the model was not completely applicable to all families, we participants were able to relate to aspects of it and understand a little more clearly how crucial our family of origin is to who we are and how we respond to the events of our lives.

Living Flame is not just about the information that contributes to our learning, though. It is an entire package that includes two double sessions of Centering Prayer, a time for small group sharing, and a large group wrap-up at the end of the day. There is a lovely balance of silence, prayer, information and peaceful experience. We leave more bonded as a group, encouraged, and filled up with the Holy Spirit
~Susan Siciliano

Living Flame Update

On Saturday February 28th Susan Komis will speak on "Divine Therapy." Susan has served Contemplative Outreach since 1990. She began as a Coordinator for the St. Louis region for five years and is presently the Director of Chapter Resources and Communication Services. The CRCS supports Coordinators and Contact Persons throughout the Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. network and Susan makes Chapter visitations and offers programs for leadership enrichment and Chapter development. Susan has made several presentations to our Chapter and we are delighted to welcome her once again!

On Saturday March 28th Bonnie Shimizu will speak on "The Night of Sense." Bonnie has been working for Fr. Keating for 20 years as his secretary, assistant in editing, consulting and "anything else he needs me for." She is the Chairman of the Contemplative Outreach Ltd. Faculty and focuses on facilitation as a member of the CRCS. She is back in her home state of Washington after spending 22 years in Colorado and, happily, is able to continue her work with Fr. Keating through technology and telecommuting. We are delighted to welcome her to our Chapter!

~Sue Hagen

Prayer Group Facilitator Support & Affirmation

All prayer group facilitators are encouraged to attend our first 2009 meeting. It is a time to share ideas and resources.

The "Wisdom Circle" group facilitation method will also be presented. Date: 2/14/09, Time: 9:00 am – 11:30 am, Place: Home of Chris and Sue (908 Via Linda, Escondido 92029).

Please send a representative from your group if you are not able to attend.

~Chris Hagen

DONATIONS

We are so grateful for your donations to CONSD. As a volunteer organization we have no grants or other forms of financial support other than from those who desire to support CONSD's Vision and Mission through their generous donations. Your donations help support the daily operation of our home office, telephone, the purchase of supplies, the production and mailing of our Newsletter and other written communication and our ability to provide Centering Prayer Events. In addition we were able to send two Chapter members to Presenter training in San Francisco in November. WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

CONSD AND COSD EVENTS

CONSD EVENTS

2009

Date: March 14, 2009
Event: Mini Introductory Program
Time: 1:00-4:00 PM
Location: St. Thomas of Canterbury Church, Temecula

Date: March 21, 2009
Event: United In Prayer Day
Time: 9:00-12:30PM
Location: Lutheran Church of the Incarnation, Poway
Suggested Donation: Free Will Offering
 Please bring a sack lunch

Date: April 18, 2009
Event: Introductory Workshop Program
Time: 9:00-2:30PM
Location: Hope United Methodist Church, San Diego
 (Rancho Bernardo)
Suggested Donation: \$25.00
 Please bring a sack lunch

Date: April 24-30, 2009
Event: Intensive Retreat in Orange, Ca.
Facilitators: Fr. Carl Arico and Marie Howard. For information call Marie at (310) 823-5863

Date: May 16, 2009
Event: Regional Event: Contemplation: The Heart of the World with Fr. Thomas Keating
Time: 2:00-3:30PM
Location: St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church, Encinitas
Suggested Donation: \$35.00

Date: December 5, 2009
Event: Advent with Fr. Carl Arico
Time: TBA
Location: TBA
Suggested Donation: TBA

2010

Date: October 29-31, 2010
Event: CONSD Retreat at Prince of Peace Abbey. Details to follow

For information on CONSD Events call Sue Hagen at (760) 745-8860

COSD EVENTS

2009

Date: Feb. 21, 2009
Event: Exploring Your Dreams: Uncovering God's Gifts Through Journaling
Time: 8:30-3:30PM
Facilitator: Sr. Maria Tasto
Location: Mission San Diego de Alacala, (California Room)
 Please bring a sack lunch
Pre-registration: \$35.00
At the door: \$45.00
Send registration to:
 COSD
 P O Box 7796
 San Diego 92167

For information on COSD Events call Lucille at (619) 226-6000

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Mailing Committee: Rebecca Crowley and the Prayer Groups from Poway and Rancho Bernardo

	Area	Leader's)	Telephone	Location	Day & Time
1	Del Mar (1)	John & Mary Wavrik	858-755-8437	St. Peter's Episcopal Church 334 14 th Street, Del Mar	Tuesdays: 4:30 p.m.
2	Del Mar (2)	Kathy Agnew Susan Siciliano	858-481-8754 858-792-6988	Home of Carol Walsh (Call for directions)	Mondays: 6:30 p.m.
3	Encinitas (1)	Margo King Shirley Shetula	760-436-4460 760-436-6721	Home of Bernice Taaff (Call 760-942-2165)	Mondays: 10:30 a.m.
4	Encinitas (2)	Mike and Ann King	760-753-1575	Home of Mike and Ann King Call for directions)	Thursdays: 7:00 p.m.
5	Encinitas (3)	Sharon Hoffman Beth Ward	760-635-9463 760-436-6589	San Dieguito United Methodist Church (Call for meeting location)	Mondays: 6:30 p.m.
6	Encinitas (4)	Fr. :Larry Hart	760-753-3017	St. Andrews Episcopal Church Parish Hall 890 Balour, Encinitas	Thursday: 6:30 p.m.
7	Escondido	Linda Dollins	760-745-5100	First United Methodist Church 341 S. Kalmia Escondido	Mondays: 4:30 p.m.
8	Fallbrook	Marcy Burge	760-723-2773	Fallbrook Presbyterian Church 463 S. Stagecoach Lane, Fallbrook	Saturdays: 8:30 to 9:30 a.m.
9	Fallbrook (2)	Barbara Hudson	760-728-5791	St. Peter's Catholic Church 450 S. Stagecoach Lane,	Wednesday : 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
10	Murrietta	Debbie Lindsay	951-698-8368	Home of Debbie Lindsay 23511 Silverwood, Murrietta	Thursdays: 12:30 p.m.
11	Oceanside (1)	Ed Clifford	760-630-1897	Mission San Luis Rey McKeon Center Room 19	Wednesdays: 7:00 p.m.
12	Oceanside (2)	Mary Williams	760-510-9337	St. Thomas More Catholic Church 1450 S. Melrose Drive	Thursdays: 1:00 p.m.
13	Poway (1)	Elena Andrews	858-451-2098	Saint Gabriel Catholic Church 13734 Twin Peaks Road, Poway	Fridays: 9:30 to 11:00 a.m.
14	Poway (2)	Colleen Clementson Rebecca Crowley	858-748-8548 858-748-3801	Community Church of Poway 13501 Community Road, Poway	Tuesdays: 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.
15	Poway (3)	Sue & Chris Hagen	760-745-8842	St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church 16275 Pomerado Road, Poway	Tuesdays: 5:00 p.m.
16	Poway (4)	Sue & Chris Hagen	760-745-8842	St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church 16275 Pomerado Road, Poway	Tuesdays: 6:30 p.m.
17	Ramona	Joan Gansert	760-518-2081	Immaculate Heart of Mary Catholic Church 537 E Street, Ramona	Fridays: 8:30 a.m. Daily Mass Chapel
18	Rancho Bernardo	Maureen Anderson	858-673-8886	San Rafael Chapel	Wednesdays: 7:00 to 8:00 p.m.
19	Rancho Santa Fe	Marlynn McCullogh	760-436-1924	Church of the Nativity 6309 El Apajo, Rancho Santa Fe	Saturdays: 9:00 a.m.
20	Serra Mesa	Diane Langworthy	619-697-3558	Mary Magdalene Apostle Catholic Community/ Gethsemane Lutheran 2696 Melbourne Dr , San Diego	Tuesday: 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.
21	Temecula	Amanda Rines	951-245-9962	St. Thomas Episcopal Church Sanctuary 27655 Jefferson Avenue, Temecula	Wednesdays: 4:30 p.m.

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