



# Consd News

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## Putting on Mind of Christ

Did God create the brain?



On Saturday, September 10, 2016, Chris Hagen combined the bright facets of his knowledge, expertise, and wisdom into an illuminating presentation entitled, **“Putting on the Mind of Christ: How Centering Prayer Changes the Brain.”**

With a professional background in speech pathology and neurology, Chris enabled a primarily lay audience of centering prayer practitioners to understand the intersection woven between the experience of centering prayer (meditation) and the workings of the brain. Demonstrating how research proves a connection between meditation practice and the neuroplasticity of

the brain, Chris used scripture and science to talk about the transformation of consciousness. Chris’ outline of content included four conferences and four guiding questions while the following introductory Bible verse served as the guiding mantra of the entire presentation. How do we discern the will of God? A bold question that is answered not with a perfunc-

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may discern what is the will of God. Romans 12:2.*

tory one-size-fits-all reply, but with a response that is both personal and universal and is contained within the aforementioned scriptural verse: not with our current level of ordinary consciousness, but with “*a renewing of the mind.*” The Old Testament refers to ‘mind’ as heart, as soul, as spirit. The New Testament names it our inner person. Chris used the word brain. We must renew the structures in our brain. From this scripture, come four questions that Chris posed for us: What must be transformed? Where does renewal occur? How does it occur? What is God’s purpose?

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## Putting On Mind of Christ

### *Renewing of the Mind*

#### **Conference 1: The Mind of Christ – The Potential that Already Exists Within.**

What is the mind of Christ? Scripture states that we are made in the image of God. We look to Jesus as the model of this image. He lived a life of non-judgment, of patience and humility, of forgiveness and compassion. Jesus reflected the Mind of Christ to be a template for relationships based on unconditional love. We have the indwelling potential to “put on” and to become robed in the compassionate Mind of Christ.

*Question #1: What must be transformed?*

#### **Conference 2: The False Self that Exists within our Brain**

A common term to centering prayer practitioners, the ‘False Self’ refers to the reactive consciousness that directs the actions of our “ordinary level of consciousness.” Chris pointed out how the false self can become a barrier to our access to and expression of our Divine Level of Consciousness, the mind of Christ, within our daily lives.

*Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, brothers and sisters, yes, even one’s own self, cannot be my disciple.  
Luke 14:26*

Defining ‘hate’ in the passage as ‘leave’, Chris shared that in order to put on the Mind of Christ we need to leave or transform our ordinary level of consciousness. We need to move from the False Self to our True Self. ‘Leaving’ or letting go is a constant spiritual theme of surrendering one’s self to God. We are surrendering one way of being for a deeper, broader,

higher way of being. Jesus asks us to surrender “an eye for an eye” attitude to the stance of unconditional, forgiving love. We have a choice. We can either function in daily life in the reactive manner of our Ordinary Level of Consciousness, the home of the False Self, with its instinctive and assumptive needs, beliefs, and values or responsively with the compassionate, nonjudgmental sphere of our Divine Consciousness, the home of our True Self.

Our False Self is not a construct that exists external to our self. Rather, it is a myriad of learned behaviors that are housed within our brain. Shaped by our interactions with our environment, the False Self is an inescapable network of neurologic structures. Our life’s sensory, mental, emotional, and physical experiences are fed into our brain through twelve cranial nerves as well as our spinal nerves. The same information goes to both the left and right side of the brain. The left side of the brain believes its job is analyze, label, categorize, and judge the information it is processing in a dualistic right/wrong, good/bad, pleasant/unpleasant, etc. dualistic manner. Chris referred to the left side of the brain as the “Me” side. On the other hand, the right side of the brain believes its job is to *not* analyze, label, categorize, and judge the information it is processing too quickly. Here there is no distinct “I”, “no differentiation between self and environment.” The right brain sees its job as understanding/accepting other’s needs, feelings, thoughts, and beliefs and values even if they differ from the person receiving the information. Here exists only the present. Chris called the right side of the brain our “We” center. While the brain functions as a whole, but the left side of the brain is biased toward what we call the False Self and the right side biased toward the True Self.

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## Putting on Mind of Christ



Richard Rohr says that the “False Self becomes the raw material for your unique version of the True Self”. So, in brain talk, how do we move beyond ordinary consciousness towards divine consciousness? How do we *renew the mind* to put on the Mind of Christ?

Using “user friendly” terms Chris outlined the following various parts of the brain that mediate False Self and True Self behaviors:

From a neurologic perspective, the False Self is false because the left side of our brain always interprets the meaning of the present based upon past experience rather than the reality of the present moment. As we grow and mature, we are constantly collecting more information from our environment. What is out there (the reality of our external environment) is being put in here (the inner reality created by our brain). We develop a template of sorts that is used to interpret the meaning of a current experience with what was learned in the past. We are always *interpreting* the meaning of a current experience based on our past experiences.

Albert Einstein describes this situation in the following way: “reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one.” This illusion (False Self) is, according to Father Keating, “inevitable, normal, and necessary.”

*Question #2: Where does renewal of the mind occur?*

### Conference 3: How Centering Prayer Changes the Brain

The Gatekeeper (Thalamus): Processes external/internal sensory information. Directs thoughts and feelings to locations in the brain.

The Alarm Center (Amygdala): Transmits emotional memories of anxiety and fear.

The “Uh Oh” center (Temporal frontal area). Where information from the heart and gut line up. A sense of ‘something not right’ comes from here as does empathy.

The Memory center: helps frontal lobe select response; regulates emotions.

The Habit Center (Basal ganglia): Stores some of our emotional habits; where we react instead of respond.

The Assessment Center (Prefrontal cortex): Broken into two areas - one mediates the ability to put yourself in another’s shoes, and another is more egocentric, worrying.

The Empathy center (Anterior Cingulate Gyrus): The sense of compassion and social awareness.

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## Putting On Mind of Christ

Illustrating how a False self and True self “Neuro Circuits” might shuffle incoming information among the aforementioned centers of the brain, Chris emphasized that decreasing the False Self reaction and increasing the True Self response would enhance the *renewal of the mind*.

*Question #3: How does the renewal of the Mind occur?*

Einstein said, “No problem can be solved by the same consciousness that caused it.” Richard Rohr has shared additional insight: “We can’t think our way into a new way of thinking, but we can live our way into a new way of living”. To answer the question of how to renew the mind, Chris spoke about three different research methods used to study how the brain responds to meditation.

The **Transcendental Meditation in EEG studies** measured electrical activity occurring during meditation. At the beginning stage of the meditative experience, the brain was in the beta wave level of consciousness – our busy thinking, planning, judging consciousness. As meditation continued, the brain began to register the alpha wave stage during which there is a decrease in thoughts and awareness of surroundings. Significantly, during this stage a synchronization between the two hemispheres of the brain begins to develop. Deeper into the meditation, the brain enters the theta wave state, also called the meditative state, in which there is no awareness of thoughts, no consciousness. This state has been related to the subconscious. This state of consciousness may be similar to what Thomas Keating speaks of as the time when the “unloading of the unconscious” may occur.

The second research project was a **Neuro-Radiographic Meditation Research** consist-

ing of thirteen studies of meditators practicing centering prayer, mindfulness, and Zen. All subjects had been meditating between 1–20 years. Measuring cerebral blood flow using SPECT (single photon emission computed tomography) and fMRI (functional magnetic resonance imaging), increases and decreases in brain activity were noted. They found decreased activity in the Gatekeeper and the right hemisphere’s “We” center: significant for governance of external/internal processing; less sense of individual self; and heightened awareness of the present moment. They found increased activity in the Assessment center and the Empathy center: significant for delineating a sense of inner focus; increased sense of compassion and social awareness.

The third research project used **MRI to measure increase and decrease in brain volume** (i.e. increase or decrease in the number of nerve cells) They found an increased volume in the following:

Right hemisphere’s Gatekeeper (increased filtering of information);

Right hemisphere’s Uh Oh center (increase of empathy; decrease of anxiety);

Right hemisphere’s Helpful Assessment center (greater potential to regulate alarm, override habit center, and reflect upon one’s own and others’ thoughts and feelings);

Right hemisphere’s Memory center (increased potential to regulate emotions);

Right hemispheres’ “We” center (less sense of “me”; being in present moment); and,

Left and Right hemisphere’s Empathy center (greater potential for compassion and social awareness).

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## Putting on Mind of Christ

The only decrease in brain volume was in the left and right hemisphere's Alarm center signifying a decreased potential of anxiety and anger responses. Chris also called our attention to the fact that the majority of changes in the brain occurred in the right hemisphere, the non-dual, non-judging, in the present moment side of our brain. Another significant result of these studies is that, no matter the type of meditation or measurement, the results were the same:

- decrease in Alarm Center activity
- increase in assessment center; suggest increase in inner focus and decrease in processing of external stimuli
- increase in empathy center
- increase activity in 'we' center

The research clarifies the significant impact that meditation and contemplative prayer have upon the brain. Looking more closely at the left and right hemispheres of the brain, we can begin to understand the impact that centering prayer can have upon the *renewal of the mind*. The left hemisphere of the brain is the dualistic side. Here experiences are judged as right/wrong or appropriate/inappropriate. It is the site of language that gives us the ability to label, analyze, categorize, and judge.

The right side is non-dual. Information is taken in without judgment or categorization. This side of the brain is dominant in terms of where meditation most broadly affects changes in the brain. There is one place in the right side which is not diminished in meditation, the Habit center which we need. The increases in the non-dual side during meditation affect the structures that deal with compassion, empathy, forgiveness. We need the non-dual side, the

Christ side, to relate to one another with compassion.

Chris then illustrated how the interactions of a 'reacting' neuro circuit based on predominance of the dualistic side of the brain might signify an increase in the False Self. He also showed how a 'responding' neuro circuit based upon predominance of the non-dual side of the brain might signify an increase in the True Self. While we need the dualistic nature of our brain in most daily activities, we need the True Self nature of the non-dual brain in our relationships with others.

Scientific thinking used to be that the brain was fixed in nature. Now, research and studies show the brain to be an organism able to reorganize itself and, in response to meditation, to rewire itself. Research showed NO change in brain centers in those who practiced a relaxation exercise. It was during meditation that transformation occurred. This is the neuroplasticity of the brain: the neuro networks that fire together, wire together.

*So, practically speaking, what do we need to do to activate this benefit and thus renew the mind?*

The answer is regular periods of meditation of from 20-30 minutes. The longer one has practiced meditation, the greater the changes. Conversely, brain changes reverse if meditation is stopped. Long-term meditators also experience increased brain activity in the areas of the True Self neuro circuits while engaged in non-meditation activities. Only meditation has altered brain activity and volume. Meditation is not a form of relaxation. *Its intention, in any meditation practice, is to decrease suffering and to increase compassion.*

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So, if research results demonstrate the capacity of meditation to alter the brain, then logic leads us to the next question.

### Conference 4: Does God Create the Brain or does the Brain Create God?

Drawing once again from scripture, Chris shared:

*For you formed my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb. Psalm 139:13*

Our inmost being, our spiritual self, is closely connected to our biological self. They are not the same, yet are intimately woven together. We are prompted from within to move outward, to grow, to mature, to do something. But what? Using the story of Moses and the burning bush, Chris illustrates that the burning bush represents that thing in our life where God shifts our attention. Moses answers God, telling God that he is present, "Here I am". Moses' focus turns to God, and God tells him his purpose.

*For everyone who asks, receives; the one who searches, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Matthew 7: 7-8.*

What is it within me that says I have something to be received, to be found, to be opened?

While the brain mediates the behaviors of both our False Self (unquestioned beliefs and values; exaggerated needs) and our True Self (empathy, non-judgmental; forgiveness), the urge to grow spiritually comes not from our brain, but from our heart. What draws me to want to move from the mind of the False Self to the mind of the True Self? Is it me creating this desire or is it God?

*It is God, who for God's own loving purpose, puts both the will and the action into you. For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him. Philip-pians 2:13.*

When we sit in centering prayer, we sit in the stillness and await "the presence and the action of God within". Our desire is our asking, seeking, and our knocking. God's presence within us is active as God *puts* will in us, *works* in us, *gives* us desire and power to find our purpose.

*Question #4: What is God's purpose?*

Chris pointed us to the hearts and minds of four great contemplatives and answered this profound question with their words.

#### Teilhard de Chardin:

*"We must discover Christ within us as the very meaning of our lives."* Bridging what had been a controversial divide between evolution and Christianity, de Chardin stated that the next great frontier of evolution is the evolution of consciousness. Ever since the Big Bang, we have been drawn towards higher and deeper levels of consciousness.

#### Fr. Thomas Keating:

*"All of creation is within the womb of God."* God is not within me? No, I exist within God. We have a biological umbilical cord which is eventually cut. Our spiritual connection to God is never cut. It consistently encourages us to grow spiritually.

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## Putting on Mind of Christ

### Ilea Delio:

*“Jesus is the new Big Bang in evolution.”* Jesus, living within the Judaism of rule and tradition, stated that he came not to abolish the rules, but to fulfill them. Chris calls Jesus an Evolutionary who called us to evolve and modeled for us the living reflection of Christ consciousness.

### Raimon Panakkar:

*“We are asked to continue the incarnation.”* This is all about relationship. Love one another as I have loved you. Jesus taught, modeled, and implored us to love one another in the words he shared, the healings he nurtured, and through all the loving actions he demonstrated to human beings of all types.

*Without the Incarnation of Christ within us, we will find neither purpose nor fulfillment in life.”* Beyond our ordinary level of consciousness there exists a deeper level of consciousness that is compassionate and purposeful. Beyond our daily routines there exists a way of relating within ourselves and outward to each other that is based upon a bedrock of compassionate purpose. We are being asked, prompted, drawn to deeper levels of consciousness and more actively loving relationships. The Incarnation is within us.

And what is the source of this desire for a fuller life, a deeper meaning, a broader level of consciousness? Does it come from our brain and human made forms like religion? Or does it come from God and from the “breath” that gives and sustains life? Does the brain create God? Then, there must be something ‘out there’ to receive. Perhaps the essential question is: does the brain respond to God? The contemplative mind perceives a symbiotic rela-

tionship; a ‘resting’ in the ultimate reality that we name God.

We know that religion is a form created by human beings. Father Keating describes religion as being in service to spirituality. Spirituality, posits Chris, can be seen as an innate human need. In contemplative thought, spirituality is implanted within us by God as the source of our desire to be in close relationship with our Creator. Spirituality is God pulling us to a higher and broader and deeper level of consciousness.

Which brings us back to the beginning of the presentation.

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind so that you may discern what is the will of God.*  
*Romans 12:2*

We have learned how centering prayer has the potential to transform our ordinary consciousness, our brain and our heart and our gut. This nurturing of our biology – which is so closely woven within the womb of God – facilitates the growth of those structures that allow the mind of Christ (unconditional love) to flourish within us. With this *renewal of the mind*, we are able to enter into the Mind of Christ and fulfill the greatest of the commandments. We may “love the Lord our God with all our heart and all our soul and all our mind.” And then, because it is so very much about relationship, we may “love our neighbor as our self (our True Self).” Thank you, Chris, for reminding us of the way Home.

~Parth Domke



## Staying in Touch with CONSD

As a chapter, CONSD has a responsibility to let our fellow contemplatives know about events we are planning as well as general information and policies of both Contemplative Outreach, Ltd, and CONSD. It's also important to let you know what happened at our events if you missed them. To accomplish these tasks, we have four avenues: Mailchimp emails, the Newsletter, the CONSD website, and Facebook.

Mailchimp. Mailchimp is a bulk, direct email service that allows us to send shorter (usually one page) messages to you. They are almost always an announcement of an upcoming event, such as the December 3<sup>rd</sup> half day retreat at St. Bartholomew's. The email usually includes a flyer that can be downloaded to a PDF page and printed. For those without printers, the pertinent informational text for the event is displayed below the flyer. We try to send out the flyer about 2 months before the event and 1-2 reminders as the event draws closer. Mailchimp is sent out to over 400 contemplatives, mostly in our immediate area. If you are not receiving these emails and wish to, email [dollinslinda@hotmail.com](mailto:dollinslinda@hotmail.com) and I'll get you on our mailing list. You may also request to be taken off our mailing list.

The CONSD Newsletter. Every February, May, August, and November, we post our online newsletter on the CONSD website and email it to you by Mailchimp. Years ago, we printed and mailed the newsletters to any who requested one and were most grateful to Chris Hartmann who printed them at no cost to the chapter. The Newsletter is usually 10 pages long and written by excellent CONSD contributors who review our events. If you have missed an event, this is the place to find out what happened. The Newsletter also includes information on upcoming opportunities and a

list of the prayer groups.

The CONSD Website. In 2007 Anne Alseros and Chris Hagen worked together to create our website. Anne, the first webmaster, built the site and Chris researched and contributed the content. When Anne left the area, Diana agreed to be our new webmaster and has efficiently and effectively maintained our outstanding website which is both user friendly and packed with information. For example, a tab in the upper left corner has the current Newsletter as well as a listing of all Newsletters for the last 9 years. The dropdown menu for the Centering Prayer tab lists all of the current prayer groups and is a place to find out about the structure of Contemplative Outreach. The Events tab has information about future CONSD offerings, and the colorful Highlights tab has pictures of the year's events—you might just see yourself there. If you're looking for a retreat setting, the Resources tab has a great listing with links. Finally, the Volunteer tab describes the needs of our Servant Leadership Team if you would like to join us. The CONSD website is at [CONSD.org](http://CONSD.org).

Facebook: This past year Kathy Mendoza created a Facebook page for us which you can find by googling Contemplative Outreach of North San Diego Facebook and clicking on the second listing you're given. You can also use your Facebook page to find it. As many of you know, this informal format allows for everyone to interact with the chapter by posting a picture or writing a comment. We'd especially like for those of you who have recently been to an event to post.

You'll find that CONSD has many opportunities for you to become connected, and, of course, we also hope that you'll share these resources with others. ~Linda Dollins



## Prince of Peace Memoirs of a Silent Retreat



This year, marks my 6th Centering Prayer Retreat at Prince of Peace Abbey. It has become for me a yearly pilgrimage into silence amidst my active life.

I am a wife, the mother of 4 children, and a high school special education teacher for students with moderate to severe disabilities. The practice of Centering Prayer has been life changing and pivotal in my spiritual life. Since beginning Centering Prayer almost 7 years ago, I have faithfully kept up a daily practice. How can I neglect it when the one who loves me more than anyone or anything is waiting? We are partners you see, and we need each other immensely. For without God, I am nothing, and without me, God is missing a channel to pour out his love into the world. A channel that nourishes the family which I have been given, a channel to walk beside the families whom I serve, and a channel to build a safe and loving community for my students. To love, is an extraordinary calling within quite ordinary roles.

Silent retreat for me is a time to settle my wild, over stimulated, overworked mind and to fall safely into the arms of God. As I approach the Abbey each year, my car climbing the steep driveway, I am met by Jesus, with outstretched arms welcoming me back. I enter my room,

and in total solitude, I sink into my chair with a deep sigh. Soon, the gates will be locked and the world will gradually recede.

I make my way into the prayer room where we will gather, my eyes taking in God's people with whom I will enter into the silence and pray. We are strangers, yet intimately connected as one being in the greater whole of the universe. Our prayer will unify us as we become a presence of

light for the whole world. Chris and Sue are there waiting... the familiar icons of spirituality within CONSD. They have become the matriarch and patriarch set aside by God for us, with Linda silently and lovingly supporting it all. How grateful I am to be a part of this time and place.

We begin our opening ceremony and lay down the burdens we carry. Why is it that they are difficult to both lay down and pick up? I suspect the difficulty laying them down has much to do with our false selves and those emotional programs of happiness (our need for control, esteem, and security) we carry with us. And perhaps the picking back up is difficult due to our renewal and shifted motivations.

Each year, the retreat is different for me. Some years I have experienced revelation and grown in self-awareness. Other years have offered healing. And others have offered unlimited, uninterrupted sleep and rest with someone else doing the cooking!!! Two weeks prior to the retreat, I was moved by something Mother Teresa had written in her book, *Everything Begins with Prayer*, and I knew I would return to it. In it she writes, "We too are called to withdraw at certain intervals into deeper silence and aloneness with God, together as a community as well

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## Prince of Peace Memoirs of a Silent Retreat



To be alone with him, not with our books, thoughts, and memories but completely stripped of everything, to dwell lovingly in his presence- silent, empty, expectant, and motionless.” (p.23) I suspected my retreat was going to be something along those lines.

The Abbey offers many things to many people. It always fills my heart with joy to hear God’s people share how he touched their lives at this retreat.

From the bells bidding us to the sacred hours of prayer, to the beautiful nature surrounding us, to the readings, the care of the monks, the stations of the cross, and to the silence itself. God works according to our needs. The abundance of love I witness each year and the de-

tailed care God holds for each of us according to our uniqueness is brilliant.

So what has God said to me on this retreat in the stillness and silence? My mind does not know. It does not always need to know. I have found that, at times, God works in secret. Thomas Keating, in his book, *Invitation to Love*, talks about the way of the “hidden ladder”. God working in us in a way that transcends consciousness. We are transformed, but we don’t know when or why or how. My spirit knows what has occurred no doubt. A sense of calmness, rootedness in who I am, strength in purpose, and a general gathering of my energy surround me following this retreat. I know with all of my heart that my purpose for being here has been fulfilled but at a level beyond the mind.

As I enter back into the world, I am ready to pick up those things that I laid at God’s feet Friday night. Each burden is a calling, a place that longs for the light of Christ, for healing, acceptance, and love. Not only have I been altered, but that which I saw as burdens have been altered as well. This is why I come back year after year... to be filled. And as I am filled, I am capable of healthy giving. For it is that constant dance of giving and receiving love for which we were created.

~Jenny Alcazar

### *Intimacy with God*

We are summoned into the presence of God by the fact of our birth, but we become present to God only by our consent. As our faculties and capacities to relate gradually develop and unfold, the capacity to enter into relationship with God increases, and each new depth of presence requires a new consent. Each new awakening to God changes our relationship to ourselves and to everyone and everything else. Growth in faith is growth in the right perception of all reality.

~Fr. Thomas Keating

## Ramona Introductory Workshop



was so excited by what Centering Prayer can do that she got together people from her church and said they must go to the Ramona workshop. “Come and see.”

Pam also knew Marigold Velasco and Joan Neidig, from an existing Temecula prayer group, and both were also interested in forming another prayer group in Temecula. Marigold has been

to almost every event CONSD has offered in the last two years including four Introductory Workshops. She has wanted an Intro at her church but has had to wait because of construction. Marigold agreed to help Pam with facilitating the follow-up sessions, and Joan offered her home as a meeting place.

On October 29<sup>th</sup>, CONSD held its 29<sup>th</sup> Introductory Workshop at the lovely St. Mary’s of the Valley Episcopal Church in Ramona. The story of this workshop has two interesting threads: Deborah Lewallen’s long-held vision of forming a St. Mary’s Centering Prayer group, and Pam Bowen’s interest in using the Ramona workshop to jump-start a Temecula prayer group.

So, when the Intro Team of Merrilee Melvin, Jan Simpson and I arrived and saw Deborah and Cindy who had set up the sanctuary for Chris Hagen and Audrey Spindler’s presentations and prepared all of the hospitality, my heart overflowed with love and gratitude for all that had gone before to make it possible for others to learn our beloved prayer.

Others who gave of themselves to foster the prayer that morning were Rich Gannon of Escondido, who is working toward becoming an Intro. Workshop presenter, and Judith Pruess-Mellow, who brought one of her members from San Dieguito United Methodist Church in Encinitas.

Almost a year ago, Deborah, who has practiced Centering Prayer for many years and is a Facilitator Trainer, discovered that Cindy Dodson, also of St. Mary’s was interested in Centering Prayer. Deborah wanted a co-facilitator for a St. Mary’s group because she is away for periods of the year. For months, to acquaint Cindy with Centering Prayer, they made the long drive from Ramona to Chris and Sue’s prayer group, attended an Introductory Workshop in Escondido in the spring, and went to the Facilitator Training program sponsored by COSD in July. In August they set the date for the workshop at St. Mary’s.

Meanwhile, in September, Pam Bowen attended Chris Hagen’s presentation at St. Bartholomew’s, *Putting on the Mind of Christ: How Centering Prayer Changes the Brain*, and

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## Ramona Introductory Workshop



It was a beautiful workshop—the day beginning with an extraordinary sunrise and warming slowly. After a scrumptious morning spread of baked goods, cheeses, nuts, fruit and coffee, the comfortable sanctuary filled with folks from Ramona, Temecula, Encinitas, Rancho Bernardo and Oceanside. Chris and Audrey, presented the four conferences, the heart of the workshop, with clarity, wisdom, and wit. And, as always, the prayer circle, which filled the back of the sanctuary, became that holy, silent place where all, no matter how experi-

enced, could consent to God's presence and action within

Two groups, one from Temecula and one from Ramona will be forming for the six follow-up sessions next week. We are grateful to all those new to the prayer for coming, for they often remind us of our own journeys in Centering Prayer—the tremendous importance it holds in our lives.

As Fr. Carl Arico says, "It is a way of life." Looking back on the begin-

nings of this workshop, it appears that sometimes God is working in increments and sometimes in bursts. Is there a message for us in the difference? Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:12 quiets my observations and judgments on God's work by saying, "For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully even as I am fully known." All is in God's time, and still our prayers are with these hopeful beginnings.

~Linda Dollins

## The Franciscan Way

### Please Join Us for The Franciscan Way: Surrender to Love A CONSD Half Day Retreat

Who were Francesco de Bernardone and Chiara Offreduccio of Assisi, Italy? How did they become Saints Francis and Clare? What do these two 13<sup>th</sup> century "rich kid" dropouts have to say to us in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? See the man of love beyond the garden statue. See Clare step out from the shadow of Francis and

shine her light. Come join us from 9:00AM—12:30PM on Saturday, December 3, at St. Bartholomew Episcopal Church in Poway to explore the Franciscan way. The retreat will include periods of Centering Prayer, chanting, and time for reflection. "Let Francis and Clare show you how to die into your one and only life, the life that you must learn to love." — Richard Rohr

~Elena Andrews and Merrilee Melvin

## CONSD Presents a Half Day Retreat The Franciscan Way: Surrender to Love

Come away from the busyness and join us for a morning of Centering Prayer, chanting, and sharing the stories of St. Francis and St. Clare.

In *Eager to Love* Richard Rohr writes: "Compassion and patience are the absolutely unique characteristics of true spiritual authority, and without any doubt are the way both Francis and Clare led their communities."



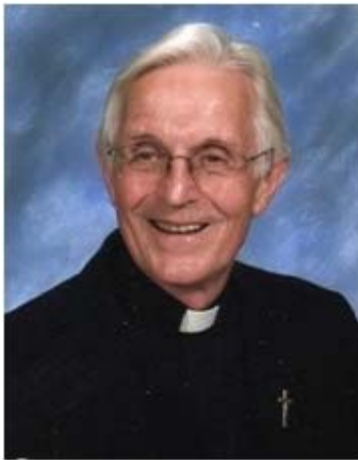
Saturday December 3, 2016  
9:00 am (Hospitality and Gathering)  
9:30-12:30 pm (Retreat)

St. Bartholomew Episcopal Church  
16275 Pomerado Road, Poway 92064

A free will offering will be taken at the door.

To preregister call the CONSD office: 760-745-8860  
or email Sue at [consd-news@cox.net](mailto:consd-news@cox.net)

## Father Bill Sheehan - Special Event



On February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017 drawing on the works of Cynthia Bourgeault and Fr. Thomas Keating, Father Bill Sheehan will present a whole day Conference. In the morning he will focus on deepening in the experience Prayer.

During this reflection we will look again at the importance of intention within the Centering

Prayer practice as well as the letting go process. Finally we will look more deeply into the meaning of receptivity that is at the heart of the Centering Prayer practice. In the afternoon we consider what begins to happen in the inner room. In his book *Manifesting God* Fr. Thomas Keating describes the three moments that begin to unfold in our lives as we faithfully embrace the practice of Centering Prayer.

Since 1983 Fr. Sheehan has been involved with Contemplative Outreach. During that time he has led many Centering Prayer workshops and retreats in different parts of the country.

~Sue Hagen

## Q & A with Fr. Arico

Q. Is it okay to replace the sacred word with an inward gesture of simply letting go and leaving it at that? Or is there an important aspect to the return of the sacred word that I am missing?

A. Just continue to do what you are doing using a gesture of simply letting go and leave it at that. I remember a charming example: If you have arrived at your destination there is no need to buy a ticket—you are already there. Repeating the sacred word would be like buying a ticket. The sacred word, or gaze or breath is a symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action and a means of letting go of thoughts, etc. that you are engaged with. If there is no engagement, then there is no need to use it. You are there. Where is there? You have let go already. David Frenette's book *The Path of Centering Prayer: Deepening Your Experience of God* would be an excellent resource for you.

Q. I always try to contemplative prayer, and it seems to be working. How can one be sure that

the outcome (even though negative at times) is working for the right? And what is the possible outcome?

A. In prayer we are dealing with the gift of trust. If you are open to the Holy Spirit, living the Gospels to the best of your ability, and asking forgiveness when needed, you have done all that is needed to prepare yourself for the gifts the Lord wishes to give to you. Following in his footsteps, you know through his life that all things work for good for those who love their God (Romans 8:28). Basically, our prayer is one of adoration and thanksgiving to the Lord for his wondrous love and example. The outcome is a God-centered life—becoming more and more like the one we wish to become...the one who is inviting us to pray.

## Saint Bartholomew's Centering Prayer Group



of Father Thomas Keating, Thomas Merton, and Henri Nouwen. Every week the group either reads books, listens to CD's or watches DVD's by popular/famous contemplatives. The knowledge gained from these medias further relationships with God in a non-judgmental safe place. This deepens the faith by sharing this ancient form of prayer practiced by the Desert Fathers.

The Centering Prayer Group at Saint Bartholomew's Episcopal Church meet every Tuesday at 5:15-6:30 PM in the education building on the second floor in the classroom at the top of the stairs. The church is located at 12575 Pomarado Road, Poway, CA.

For the past six years, this group has facilitated, hosted and participated in an ecumenical three day retreat the 2nd week of October at Prince of Peace Abbey in Oceanside. In addition, Saint Bartholomew's host centering prayer workshops, retreats and other contemplative events three to four times a year. All are welcome who want a relationship with God and are drawn to integrating body, mind and spirit into the silence. The Holy Spirit is present in this group as the members share their experiences and deepen their faith by learning, studying and through praying in silence.

The group facilitators are Chris and Sue Hagen founders of the original group formed over 14 years ago. Their devoted planning and orchestration of significant teachings and materials are a blessing to each and every member. There are 30 registered members from all denominations in the group and on an average there are 12-15 members who attend weekly.

“But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” Matthew 6:6

An example of studies would be the teachings

~Nancy Bachelier

### *Invitation to Love*

By consenting to God's creation, to our basic goodness as human beings, and to the letting go of what we love in this world, we are brought to the final surrender, which is to allow the false self to die and the true self to emerge. The true self might be described as our participation in the divine life manifesting in our uniqueness. God has more than one way of bringing us to this point. It can happen early in adult life, but if it does not, the ongoing stages of natural life may contribute to bringing it about. In the midlife crises, even very successful people wonder whether they have accomplished anything. Later we experience physical decline, illness, and the infirmities of old age. What happens in the process of dying may be God's way of correcting all the mistakes we made and all the opportunities we missed during the earlier part of our lives. It may also provide the greatest chance of all to consent to God's gift of ourselves.

~Fr. Thomas Keating



## CONSD & COSD Events—2016-2017

### CONSD EVENTS

#### **Half Day Retreat with Elena Andrews**

Event: The Franciscan Way: Surrender to Love

Date: December 3, 2016

Time: 9:00am-9:30am Hospitality  
9:30am-12:30pm Retreat

Location: St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, 16275 Pomerado Rd., Poway  
Free Will Offering

#### **Full Day Retreat with Fr. Bill Sheehan**

Event: Embracing the Spiritual Journey through The Gift of Spiritual Practice

Date: February 11, 2017

Time: 9:00am-9:30am Hospitality  
9:30am-3:00pm Retreat

Location: St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, 16275 Pomerado Rd., Poway  
Donation: \$25.00  
(Please bring a lunch)

#### **United in Prayer Day**

Date: March 18, 2017

Location: TBA in North County

### CONSD EVENTS

*For information on all CONSD events call Sue Hagen at (760) 745-8860 or Linda Dollins at (760) 743-8297*

### COSD EVENTS

*For information on COSD events call Kathy at (619) 749-4141*

Please note: The DVD of "The Mind of Christ" workshop will be available sometime in December.

Have you recently changed your home address, email address, and/or phone number? If you have, please send us the changes so we can keep our database up-to-date. This will help us to continue to inform you about the CONSD newsletters and of upcoming special events. Please call Sue Hagen at 760-745-8860 or email her at [consd@cox.net](mailto:consd@cox.net)

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## CONSD CENTERING PRAYER GROUPS

	Area	Facilitators	Telephone	Location	Day & Time
1	Carlsbad	Rev. Madison Shockley	760-729-6311 ext.207	Pilgrim United Church of Christ, 2020 Chestnut Ave. Carlsbad	Wednesdays 6:30-7:30pm
2	Del Mar (1)	Kathy Agnew	858 481-8754	St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 334 14 <sup>th</sup> St.	Thursdays 4:30-6:00pm
3	Del Mar (2)	Kathy Agnew	858 481-8754	St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 334 14 <sup>th</sup> St.	Tuesdays 8:55-10:00am
4	Encinitas (1)	Shirley Shetula	760-525-6721	984 Carmen Ct., San Marcos.	Mondays 10:00am
5	Encinitas ( 2)	Mike and Ann King	760-753-1575	Home of Ann and Mike (Call for directions)	Thursdays 7:00pm
6	Encinitas (3)	Susan Elmore	760-518-8387	Call for location	First & third Mondays 6:30pm
7	Encinitas (4)	Virginia Erickson	760-846-5749	Beth Lutheran, 925 Balour Dr., Multipurpose Rm., Encinitas	Mondays 4:30-6:00pm
8	Encinitas (5)	Judith Pruess-Mellow	650-823-0559	San Dieguito United Methodist Church, Encinitas	Mondays 1:30pm
9	Escondido	Linda Dollins	760-745-5100	First United Methodist Church, 341 S. Kalmia	Mondays 4:30pm
10	Fallbrook	Ann Keegan	760-723-0855	(Call for location)	Saturdays 8:30am
11	Oceanside (1)	Ed Clifford	760-630-1897	Mission San Luis Rey, McKeon Center, Room 12	Wednesdays 7:00pm
12	Oceanside (2)	Mary Williams	760-510-9337	St. Thomas More Catholic Church, 1450 S. Melrose Dr.	Thursdays 1:00pm
13	Oceanside (3)	Pat Julian	760 757-3659 x123	Mission San Luis Rey, 4050 Mission Ave.	Fridays 10:00am
14	Oceanside (4)	Kelly Jo Farnum	760 529-2350	Retreat Center, 4050 Mission Ave.	Fridays 3:00-4:30pm
15	Poway (1)	Elena Andrews	858-451-2098	St. Gabriel Catholic Church, 3734 Twin Peaks Rd.	Fridays 9:30-11:00am
16	Poway (2)	Colleen Clementson and Rebecca Crowley	858-748-8548 858-748-3801 88 748-3542	Community Church of Poway, 13501 Community Rd.	Tuesdays 6:30-8:00pm
17	Poway (3)	Sue and Chris Hagen	760-745-8860	St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, 16375 Pomerado Dr.	Tuesdays 5:00-6:30pm
18	Poway (4)	Sherlene Moller-stuen	858-451-6825	Lutheran Church of the Incarnation, 16889 Espola Rd.	Mondays 5:00-6:30pm
19	Rancho Bernardo	Audrey Spindler	858 208-8609	San Rafael Parish, Center. Rooms A & B	Wednesdays 3:30-5:00pm
20	Solana Beach (1)	Bebe Zaniboni	858-755-2545	St. James Catholic Church, 625 S Nardo Ave, Solana Beach	Tuesdays 9:15-10:30am
21	Solana Beach (2)	Joani Mendoza & Amy Stuck	858-755-2545	St. James Catholic Church, 625 S Nardo Ave, Solana Beach	Thursdays 7:00-8:30pm
22	San Marcos	Pastor Karla Halvorson and Jim Ullman	760 727-1509 760 598-8943	San Marcos Lutheran Church, 3419 Grand Ave., Sanctuary	Wednesdays 9:30-11:00am
23	Serra Mesa	Diane Langworthy	619-697-3558	Mary Magdalene Apostle Catholic Community/Gethsemane Lutheran, 2696 Melbourne Dr., San Diego	Tuesdays 7:00-8:30pm
24	Temecula	Jenny Alcazar	951-696-5657	42758 Settlers Ridge, Murrieta	Thursdays 3:45-5:00pm