



# CONSD News

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## **THE THERMOSTAT OF HAPPINESS: A Reflection on Chris Hagen's Talk**

I was invited to reflect on Chris Hagen's Zoom talk (["The Wisdom and Teachings of Father Keating"](#)) on June 12, 2021. As usual, Chris managed to drop some nuggets that resonated with me.

Raised as I was to achieve, I always understood the word "seek" to imply "find." If I am on a journey seeking something, I expect to someday find it, grab it, and hang onto it. At age 68, I'm ashamed to admit that I haven't found it yet. But Chris knocked my false idea on the head today with his thermostat metaphor.

A thermostat raises or lowers the heat or cooling to reach the optimal temperature you set. When it gets to that number, the device shuts off and the temperature drops (or rises) again. Though the perfect temperature is reached briefly, it is never maintained. The moment of happy temperature is fleeting.

The same is true of happiness. We imagine we will be happy when we get rich, promoted, married, retired, graduated, or recognized. And indeed, those celebratory moments may be joyful, but they don't last, just like the temperature you set on the thermostat. We always drop down from the high. My folks never taught me this wisdom, but I figured it out from experience when Disneyland wasn't "the happiest place on earth," I got divorced, and nobody bought my book.

Chris quoted Thomas Keating as saying, "There is only a beginning to the Spiritual Journey; there is no end." To me this means that I should just enjoy the ride and let go of the destination. Even if I did find something I sought, the joy would last only a minute.

Happiness needs to be an inner peace or contentment not based on finding anything or achieving anything.

Along the same line, Chris said he prefers the word "metamorphosis" to "transformation." A body-builder could transform himself from a 98-pound weakling to Charles Atlas by working

hard at the weights. But a butterfly doesn't have to work hard to metamorphose from a pupa. Her change is programmed into her, and she will develop with time, never lifting a finger. If indeed it is God's spiritual journey taking place within us, we can stop striving, struggling, and searching so frantically. We just need to let the process unfold as our divine DNA has determined, enjoying the show as we observe ourselves changing. If God's got this, what are we stressed about?

Thanks, Chris, for the insight and comfort. I'll be traveling lighter along the road.

~ **Pamella Bowen**

## **A "Wisdom and Teachings of Father Keating" Outline**



**Chris Hagen expounds on Keating's wisdom**

On June 12, 2021, CONSD hosted ["The Wisdom and Teachings of Fr. Keating: A Conversation with Chris Hagen,"](#) moderated by St. Mary's in the Valley prayer group facilitator Deborah Lewallen. About 70 people gathered through Zoom to hear Chris speak from the depths of his experience as a long-time contemplative and spiritual directee of Fr. Thomas Keating. The recording is now available on YouTube at [this link](#).

Chris's thoughtful integration of scripture, scientific analogies, and pertinent insights about human psychological development provide a valuable analysis of the aims and fruits of Centering Prayer. The following abstract (see next page) is an outline of Chris's presentation, with a few timestamps included, to serve as aids in listening—and re-listening. Enjoy! ~ **CONSD**

# **The Wisdom and Teachings of Father Keating, with Chris Hagen: An Outline**

**1. The Purpose of Centering Prayer:**  
**Become the Image of God (beginning at 9:23).** *“God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” ~Genesis 1:27.*

—Keating recognized that humans seek happiness – but we tend to seek the wrong experience, and we seek it in the wrong places.

—Happiness is usually defined as a positive emotional state that is brought about by an external experience.

—But from a spiritual perspective, happiness is a state of contentment and well-being and balance that is not caused by an external experience. It is “the peace that passes all understanding.”

—This peace we seek is imprinted into our being; it is part of our fully human and fully divine DNA.

—The unconscious beliefs that we accrue as we develop can create obstacles to this peace.

— **(17:30)** Scientific analogies are useful in understanding how these obstacles arise:

- **Homeostasis** is a state of equilibrium, our instinctual need for physiological balance.
- Homeostasis can be compared to a **thermostat**, which sets an optimal temperature in a room.

- Biologically, mentally, & emotionally, we have a preset optimal “temperature.” However, temperature always changes, and we can tolerate variations in temperature. Biologically, we are at our healthiest when we are operating within a certain **tolerance range**.

- As we develop mentally and emotionally and encounter our needs for survival and security, affection and esteem, and power and control, unconscious learning occurs. This

creates our personal “thermostat” and our **unconsciously learned tolerance range**.

- When this tolerance range is exceeded (e.g., when an emotional need is not met in a way that satisfies our unconsciously & often immature or misguided beliefs), we experience afflictive emotions: fear, anxiety, anger, frustration, etc.

- We seek relief from these afflictive emotions by creating ‘programs for happiness,’ i.e., outsized demands for security, affection, and control). This is how the so-called **false self** comes into being.

— **(28:00)** While our biological tolerance range cannot be changed, our unconsciously learned tolerance range, our beliefs about how and how much our needs ‘should’ be met, can be changed.

—These three things happen when we are stuck in false beliefs about how happiness is achieved:

- Our sense of where we find happiness is too narrow.
- Our optimal “temperature” on our thermostat is set too high.
- Our tolerance range is too limited and is often stuck at earlier levels of development.

—The treatment for this is to reset our thermostats: **change our beliefs about the source and experience of authentic happiness**.

—This will enable us to meet our instinctual spiritual needs, described by Maslow as the **need for transcendence**, the need for connection beyond ego, and the need to help others.

—This can also be stated as: **becoming and expressing the image of God, the divine DNA, in our lives.** Jesus Christ provides us the human model and path for doing this.

—To follow Christ's new commandment in daily life – to “love your neighbor as I have loved you,” is to satisfy the spiritual yearning that will lead us to genuine happiness, the “peace that passes all understanding.”

—Ultimately, the self is not “false.” It is our unconscious beliefs about the source and experience of happiness that are false. The self develops over time.

## **2. The Spiritual Journey: Take Up Your Cross (37:15)**

*“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.”*

~Luke 14:26

—The purpose of this journey is not to eradicate our needs for security, affection, or esteem. It is the distortion of these needs that must be dismantled.

—This dismantling entails the death of the false self and the resurrection of the true self.

—This requires that we abandon those unconscious beliefs / ‘programs for happiness’ that are inconsistent with unconditional love.

—The spiritual journey is not a quest for something we do not have; rather, it is the *unfolding* of what is already within us.

—**The divine DNA within us propels our metamorphosis into the true self.**

## **3. Centering Prayer in Daily Life: Love Your Neighbor (47:17)**

*“In the beginning, was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....And the Word became flesh and lived among us.”*

~John 1:1, 14.

—Jesus was the Word, incarnation, and enfleshment of God's image. His life shows us

how to live as the image of God. As Raimon Panikkar noted, “We are asked to continue the incarnation; it didn't stop with Jesus.”

—The spiritual journey is not just the twice-daily practice of Centering Prayer, but also a way of being in the activities of daily life – a way of incarnating the image of God, day by day.

—As Keating writes in *Open Mind, Open Heart*: “The ordinary events of daily life become our practice. I can't emphasize that too much. A monastic structure is not the path to holiness for lay folks. The routine of daily life is. Centering Prayer is aimed at transforming daily life with its never-ending round of ordinary activities.”

—Our encounters with people and situations in our daily life provide opportunities to respond in ways we would want to be responded to.

—We cannot will ourselves to be unconditionally loving. But over time, Centering Prayer and meditation changes the brain in ways that increase our capacity for empathy and compassion.

—We can **intend** to respond to others with respect, understanding, etc.

—We can nurture our innate capacity for spontaneous unconditional compassion, non-judgmentalness, forgiveness, humility, patience, etc.

***“Do you think this is YOUR spiritual journey? If you do, think again, for you are wrong. It is God's journey in you. Through your transformation, God is transforming all of humanity, one person at a time”***

***~Fr Thomas Keating, in conversation with Chris Hagen***

#### 4. Helps on the Way: Responding Rather Than Reacting to Conflicts (53:43)

*“The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you.” ~John 14:26.*

—**Reacting**, i.e. “fight or flight,” is our default mode during conflicts.

—**Responding** is the mode of being and acting in the image of God in daily life.

—Conflict happens when our perceptions & interpretations of the outside world do not match our beliefs, values, and unconsciously learned concepts.

—Thus, **conflict actually occurs within us** and not between us and other persons/situations.

—To respond to conflict, we must learn to **pause** between stimulus (trigger of the conflict) and response.

—“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response.....to stand back from ourselves....not attached to our thoughts or our knee-jerk reactions, we can find the space we need to choose the way we want to act or the words

that would be most helpful.” –Victor Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning*.

— **(1:03:38)** We can intend to create the space for the Holy Spirit to guide us in a number of ways:

A. **Before the Conflict**: Daily Contemplative practices: Centering Prayer, Lectio Divina (monastic method), Welcoming Prayer, Prayer of St. Francis, Guard of the Heart, praying a scripture such as 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

B. **During the Conflict**: Be aware of your early warning “fight or flight” signs (feelings in stomach, chest, heart rate, flushing, sweating, muscle tension).

i. Create space by choosing flight.

ii. Take a moment to breathe with wisdom of God in and the guidance of the Holy Spirit out. Wisdom= Spirit= Breath.

iii. As you listen and observe, gently return to your sacred word or active prayer phrase.

C. **After the Conflict**: No analysis, commentaries, or internal monologues.

i. Do not react to your emotions. Notice and sink into your feelings while letting go of thoughts, commentaries, or analysis.

ii. Practice the Welcoming Prayer Method.

What we recognize in Jesus is meant to be lived by every human being. The One behind this transformation is the Holy Spirit, the divine *dynamis* poured into Jesus Christ – the Anointed – from his conception on, and which is present in every person from the very moment he or she appears and starts being alive. To the extent that we open ourselves to this anointing, we become “Christified” – transformed into an *alter Christus*. While there is a descending, as well as an ascending Christology, we can also talk of an inner Christology. Inner does not mean alien to this world, but rather a revelation of all that the world holds within itself. This springs from within things and people not as an effort, but as the growth of a seed ... hidden but always present in each one of us. We come to life to welcome God’s self-giving and to become the matrix of its unfolding in the world.

~Javier Melloni, *El Christo Interior*

# Mary, Mother of God

Prayer Journal entry: June 5, 2021

At prayer this morning, I read “The Discipline of Prayer”  
message from *The Contemplative Life Program 40-Day Practice*:

## FULL OF GRACE

Before the incarnation and before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit,  
in the faith of a humble maiden, God finds the total acceptance.  
He had awaited from the beginning of time. She whom the Almighty made  
‘full of grace’ responds by offering her whole being to Him: ‘  
Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord;  
let it be done to me according to Your word’ (Luke 1:38).

Fiat: This is Christian prayer - to be wholly God’s,  
because He is wholly ours.

The prayers of the Virgin Mary, in her Fiat and Magnificat,  
are characterized by the generous offering  
of her whole being in faith.

Excerpts from the “Catechism of the Catholic Church”

With a pure heart  
In faith  
With boldness  
This is how we are to pray.

And in the moments after reading these simple, profound words, I gently recalled, in waves of piercing yet soft-focus images, the last fifteen years of Catholic influence that have been layered onto my Protestant upbringing. Paintings, sculptures, icons, cathedrals, litanies, and many adorations of Mother Mary.

As a young Protestant, Mary was the blue-gowned teen Virgin who gave birth to Jesus

after innocently saying yes to God. And I felt sorry for her when she witnessed her son’s agonizing death. After that, though, it seemed like there was not much more to her story. Why then did Catholics revere her and even pray to her? I didn’t take it any further. Catholics just had different beliefs and practices from my Protestant ones.

But this morning, a new awareness of Mary overpowered me, grounded perhaps on

changes in my understanding of the Atonement. Years ago, through the teachings of Fr. Richard Rohr, I had come to see and even more to believe that the cross was more than Jesus doing God's bidding (Thy will be done...) or being abandoned by God ("He descended into hell."), or bearing our sins so God would forgive us and let us into heaven. The Atonement reveals who God is and what God wants from me. I, too, must surrender and give my life—not in death necessarily, but in dying to self, moment to moment. And that's a tough message. I believe that Jesus died so we would know what we need to do. And my path is working on dying to self every day in Centering Prayer, in the Welcoming Prayer, in the Jesus prayer and other forms.

But back to Mary. This morning the Spirit let me SEE Mary. "In the faith of a humble maiden, God finds the total acceptance." Mary shows me, show us all, that we need to BE Mary to be infused with the Holy Spirit. And though the Gospels do not have much more to tell us about her than the birth of Jesus and the crucifixion, it is enough. Enough to see that to share Christ, I again need to surrender—surrender to the pains of the birth of a new role in my life, surrender to having purpose stripped from me, and to surrender to releasing my "good" intentions.

I need to surrender everything, and then to be present to what is. Like Mary, I need to witness the cross, and then remain, and then serve.



**"Virgin Mary," El Greco, c. 1600 AD**

We are not ourselves when we open ourselves to God. I used to say I was afraid God would send me to Calcutta if I surrendered. And sometimes God does send us there. Yet, when we resignedly say, "let it be done to me according to Your word." (Luke 1: 38) it can seem impossible to move forward into that darkness. But we do, and then we know we can. Because with God each moment can be transformational.

And that understanding I can only grasp for a moment. Like this moment, this morning, through the power of the Spirit.

Thank you, dearest God, for this consolation: knowing this blessed Mother of God.

Amen.

**~Linda Dollins**

# Reflections on a Five-Day In-Person Centering Prayer Retreat



The 'Contemplatives in Action' on Retreat

What a gift to share in a community of those seeking to awaken to Christ's embodiment in us. On Sunday, June 27, 2021, seven of us from Mary Magdalene Apostle Catholic Community gathered for our own, private, five-day Centering Prayer retreat held at Holy Spirit Retreat Center in Encino, CA. I traveled down from San Francisco to join a group of contemplatives I had only known via Zoom sessions during this period of Covid. My husband accompanied me at the beginning. "Were these online acquaintances part of a cult?" he teased, prior to our warm welcome. An invitation to deeper authenticity, compassion, faith, humility, companionship and humor followed.

Full disclosure: Don't go on a centering prayer retreat expecting to retreat from the world and be guaranteed peacefulness. How fortunate we are with Contemplative Outreach and Centering Prayer to be offered opportunities to pray in silence together. The example, companionship and support of others helped me face the truth that the awareness of our embodiment of Christ "makes us utterly real" —warts and all. Rather than retreating, we are invited to advance, relying more and more on God's grace as we face the obstacles our false self throws out to block the path to waking up to Christ in us. Thank you, God, for this beautiful experience within this community in this peaceful setting. ~ **Carrie Govan Skelly**

We awaken in Christ's body  
as Christ awakens our bodies,  
and my poor hand is Christ. He enters  
my foot and is infinitely me.  
I move my hand, and wonderfully  
my hand becomes Christ, becomes all of  
Him (for God is indivisibly  
whole, seamless in His Godhood).  
I move my foot, and at once  
He appears like a flash of lightning.  
Do my words seem blasphemous?—Then  
open your heart to him  
and let yourself receive the one  
who is opening to you so deeply.  
For if we genuinely love Him,  
we wake up inside Christ's body  
where all our body, all over,  
every most hidden part of it,  
is realized in joy as Him,  
and He makes us, utterly, real,  
and everything that is hurt, everything  
that seemed to us dark, harsh, shameful,  
maimed, ugly, irreparably  
damaged, is in Him transformed  
and recognized as whole, as lovely,  
and radiant in His light.  
He [she, they] awakens as the Beloved  
In every last part of our body.

~**Symeon the New Theologian**, quoted  
by Vincent Pizzuto in *Contemplating  
Christ: The Gospels and the Interior Life*.

# The Cosmic Prayer Retreat

*The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the firmament shows forth the work of his hands.  
Day unto day takes up the story;  
and night unto night makes known the message.  
~Psalm 19: 2-3*



From July 7 – 14, 2021, the Holy Spirit Retreat Center in Encino, CA, hosted “*God is Love at the Heart of All Creation: Cosmology and Centering Prayer*.” Skillfully led by Camaldolese Fr. Stephen Coffey, this retreat was based on the new guidebook and DVD of the same title, which includes segments of a recorded conversation between Fr. Carl Arico and Fr Thomas Keating. Their wide-ranging dialogue was filmed in 2013 and had not been previously aired. As noted by Contemplative Outreach, Ltd, “*God is Love* continues and builds on the works of Thomas Keating over the past 30+ years, beginning with the *Spiritual Journey* series. It offers a vision of hope and a view of reality that at once integrates the sciences, religion, and humankind’s place in the cosmos as divine in origin, unifying in purpose, unfolding in its grandeur.”

What a marvelous grace – a retreat featuring two of my favorite things: cosmology and Centering Prayer! Indeed, my earliest experiences of awe entailed lying flat on the grass in my back yard as twilight darkened. Basking under a starry sky, I’d relish the celestial expanse and ponder the unfolding

mystery of space, time, and existence. To couple that sense of holy wonder with the healing silence and transformative grace of communal Centering Prayer—surely this was a retreat after my own heart. As the week of the retreat approached, I found myself fondly referring to it as “The Cosmic Prayer Retreat.”

Each day included meals in silence, four 30-minute periods of Centering Prayer, and a morning and evening viewing of a Keating DVD segment followed by small and large group sharing. We also engaged in *Visio Divina* with the paintings of William Congdon (included in both the guidebook and the DVDs) and *Lectio Divina* with scripture and writings on cosmology, religion, and evolution from Meister Eckhart, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Thomas Merton, Beatrice Bruteau, Ilia Delio, Cynthia Bourgeault, Raimon Panikkar, and others. Fr. Coffey celebrated a liturgy each day, accompanied by the musical talents of Holy Spirit staffers Michael O’Palko and Sister Chris Machado. Daily Eucharist was a tender, healing gift – many of the 14 retreatants had not been to church ‘in-

person' for more than a year. Tears blessed my eyes more than once during the week.

Retreats are not necessarily blissful experiences. They might be saturated with healing, insight, and consolations; they can just as well include spiritual struggle, painful recognitions, and upwellings of grief. But there is generally a blessing to be received, perhaps something unexpected or not grasped until after the return home. Though I had anticipated I would delight in this “cosmic” retreat—a lovely respite from the anxiety and fear pervading our world—I had not realized how far cynicism and disillusionment had crept into my spirit over these months of pandemic and social division. Apparently, I needed to be reminded, down to the depths of my soul, that God’s heart is far wider and vaster than anything I can fathom, and that the signs of our times and the heartrending distress of our current moment do not ultimately define us. The fog of bad news tempts us to see the world through the current flaws and failings of our species, but that leaves us with a woefully incomplete story. As Fr. Carl and Fr. Thomas noted, “When God chose to create, it was not a one-time event. Rather, it is continuous and going someplace—a drawing forth ... of the world ... in an unfolding, evolutionary process that is both holy and mysterious. This unfoldment suggests an intent in creation to bring into manifestation more and more expressions and awareness of the Ultimate Reality and awaken in us, as we consent, the greater capacity to love—the very essence of creation itself—creation that is awash in grace.”

*We are creation, awash in grace. And creation is still in process, unfolding, dying, resurrecting, flowing forth.*

The German philosopher Karl Jaspers defined humanity’s axial age as that historical period when the great philosophical, intellectual, and religious systems that came to shape human society and culture emerged – including Greek philosophy and the traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Judaism – roughly, between 800 BCE and 200 BCE. The term “axial” here means “shift” – a turn away from primarily local concerns and toward *transcendence*. Part of the discussion between Fr. Carl and Fr. Thomas in the *God Is Love* series focuses on the recognition that human consciousness is now starting to unfold from the rational to the intuitive stage of development—and that this comprises yet another axial shift toward transcendence. Practices like meditation and various forms of contemplative prayer assist this evolutionary unfolding. As we *let go* in prayer and in daily life, inner blockages to grace are dissolved. The healing that ensues increases our capacity to allow divine love to flow in and through us, releasing the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

The retreat served as a powerful reminder of this divinely initiated process. Day by day, as the accrual of prayer periods, *Visio*, *Lectio*, and daily Eucharist steeped my being more deeply in the fullness of God, the fog of gloom lifted a bit further away, and my

heart felt lightened, freed. Night by night, after our group discussions, I would walk back to my room under a wide, moon-flowering sky, refreshed, renewed, and grateful.

I fervently hope that this retreat (and variations on it) is offered frequently in the future and made more available to Centering Prayer practitioners and contemplatives the

world over. If an opportunity arises to attend one, I urge you to go (and please remember that scholarships are available through Contemplative Outreach and CONSD). As affirmed by the compilers of the *God is Love* guidebook, "Humanity is challenged to understand cosmology, religion, and our very selves anew during these times of great possibility and great peril.... This is an axial time."

~Mary Williams



"Kelley's Lake" at Holy Spirit Retreat Center



The Chapel at Holy Spirit Retreat Center





## In Memoriam: Shirley Shetula



One of CONSD's long-standing servant-leaders, Shirley Shetula, passed away on July 31. Shirley was one of the original co-facilitators of the Centering Prayer group at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in Encinitas; in later years she also facilitated a prayer group in her home. In addition to her service with CONSD, Shirley was the council treasurer for the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in San Diego, a ministry that provides assistance to those in need.

I have memories of Shirley as a sunny, loving, and supportive presence at multiple CONSD events. I recall how she purchased the entire *Spiritual Journey* video series (then on VHS tapes) so that the St. John's Centering Prayer group could watch Fr. Thomas Keating's essential teachings together. In the early 2000's, she and I carpoled together to attend our first 10-day intensive Centering Prayer retreat in Temecula. At the end of the retreat, we all sat in a circle for sharing. Shirley exclaimed, "God is coming out of my pores!" I will never forget that.

Shirley's funeral Mass will be held at the Old Parish building at Mission San Luis Rey on Tuesday, August 17, at 1:00 PM, followed immediately by the cemetery ceremony. A light reception will follow, where people will be invited to share their fondest memories.

We trust that our dear Shirley rests in the love and peace of God. May her family and friends find comfort and blessing in her memory. ~Mary Williams

*It is on behalf of the world ... on behalf of each person, of every human being, that we will be personally faithful to God, that we will personally place ourselves in the service of his glory – and we will do so, not because of the world, not because of people, but because of the God who loved the world and who loved all people with a first and gratuitous love.*

**~Madeleine Delbrel, We, the People of the Streets**

## Q and A with Lindsay Boyer

### Tears During Centering Prayer

**Q:** I have been practicing Centering Prayer off and on for several years, last year almost every day. I have recently been experiencing tears/crying for no apparent reason. Please advise.

**A:** Thank you for expressing your vulnerability in this question.

Our bodies hold in their tissues the pain and trauma that we have accumulated throughout our lives. As you practice Centering Prayer regularly, you are creating an opportunity for God to heal your wounds. The pain and hurts, both small and large, that have been trapped inside you are able to rise up and out. You don't need to be able to understand or express exactly what is being healed. You

can simply and trustfully continue to surrender to the process of healing and letting go, placing yourself in God's hands and knowing that something very profound is taking place in the silence of the prayer.

Your question can remind all of us to open to and accept whatever comes up for us in Centering Prayer. Be gentle with yourself and patient and tender with your tears. Although they may be raw and uncomfortable sometimes, as a sign of the healing that is taking place within you as God acts upon you, they are a blessing.

Warm regards,

Lindsay

### A Gift of Grace From God

Tears are a gift of grace from God, and their fruit is always joy. Weeping arises from the heart and signifies an open and softened heart. Perhaps that is why so many people are embarrassed to cry; they do not want to reveal their vulnerability. Yet many of us have felt the rich communal dimensions of crying with others. Think of the great global funerals of Mother Teresa and Princess Diana where millions around the world were united in a common experience of grief.

The religious traditions honor the gift of tears and have found ways to ritualize it. During the Passover Seder, when Jews remember their escape from Egypt, they bring salt water to their lips to symbolize the tears of bondage. In ancient times, when a person died, mourners put their tears in bottles and sometimes even wore them around their necks. Over the ages, the weeping of tears has been a sign of the mystical experiences of saints and repentant sinners. These transcendent moments go beyond what the mind can comprehend; tears are a response of the heart.

~Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat, "The Gift of Tears," *Spirituality & Practice*.



*Contemplative Outreach North San Diego Presents:*

*An Introductory Program  
on Centering Prayer via Zoom*

*Do you feel pulled in all directions?*

*Do you seek a closer relationship with God?*

*Centering Prayer may be for you!*

Centering Prayer is both a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship. It is not meant to replace other forms of prayer but adds a depth of meaning to all prayer. It facilitates the movement from more active kinds of prayer into a receptive prayer of resting in God.

This Program is for: Those who are brand new to the prayer, those in a Centering Prayer group who have never attended an Intro, and those who are long-term practitioners but would like a refresher.

**Date: Saturday, September 11, 2021, from 9:30 AM to 12:00 noon.**

Four 90-minute follow-up sessions will follow weekly, with dates to be determined after the initial workshop.

To register, please send an email to: [cpregdiane2021@gmail.com](mailto:cpregdiane2021@gmail.com) .

You will be sent a Zoom link the day before the Introductory Workshop.

*“Be still and know  
that I am God.”*

*~Psalm 46: 10*

## **Recommended Courses, Retreats, and Spiritual Formation Events**

**Although most of these events are being held online, a few retreat centers plan to offer on-site events and “hybrid” events, with status to be updated as Covid protocols change. Each summary below indicates whether the event is online, on-site, or a combo that offers on-site and online options.**

**Wisdom School: The Imaginal Realm, with Heather Ruce, Joy Andrews Hayter, and Catherine Regan.** This ‘Wisdom School’ will use Cynthia Bourgeault’s e-course video teachings to explore the Imaginal Realm so that we might learn to open ourselves to this world that surrounds and sustains us and to give back, participating in this divine exchange as conscious planetary servants.

The teachings draw from her book *Eye of the Heart: A Spiritual Journey into the Imaginal Realm* in which she offers us a new cosmic map and perspective of how an attuned and open heart may approach the current challenges we face and receive the assistance necessary for navigation.

Retreatants will be invited into a ‘wisdom way of knowing’ through a daily rhythm of video teachings from Cynthia, periods of Centering Prayer, chanting, mindful work, mindful movement, sharing, and contemplative free time. **Onsite at the Mercy Center in Burlingame, CA, August 19 – 23.** For more information and registration:

<https://eventsframe.com/e/pijSIJji0/wisdom-retreat-the-imaginal-realm/>.

**Seeker to Sage: Journey to the Unknowable, with Susan Koomis.** Co-sponsored by Contemplative Outreach of New Orleans and the School for Contemplative Living, this online retreat will include Centering Prayer sessions, Q and A opportunities, and small group gatherings via breakout rooms. Koomis, an experienced presenter and Contemplative Outreach servant-leader for over 25 years, will offer presentations on: Stages of Prayer and Faith, The Awakening, The Seeker, The Sage, and more. **Online, August 20 – 22 Central Time.** For more information and to register: <http://www.thescl.net/>. Click on the first heading on the second line: Centering Prayer retreat 2021. Or contact Maggie Dawson at [mgdrake@juno.com](mailto:mgdrake@juno.com).

**Finding Your True Self, with David Morgan.** In his book, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, Thomas Merton called our “thought-made self,” the story we tell ourselves about who we are, our “false self”—distinguishing it from our deepest “true self.” In this half-day retreat, David Morgan from the Contemplative Outreach of Maryland and Washington leadership team will help us explore our true selves and facilitate a discussion on the teachings of Thomas Merton, Richard Rohr, Basil Pennington, Thomas Keating and others. We will attempt to surrender our grip on our false, “separate-from-God” selves and learn to rest at our center, to reside at the core of our being, and relax into the Peace that surpasses all understanding. The program will

include three sittings of centering prayer. **On Zoom, August 21, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM Eastern Time.** For more info and to register: <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJAtc-ChrTstGtCfKVmasNCiXo6kKgWi0zxo>

**New Windows on *The Cloud of Unknowing*, with Cynthia Bourgeault.** In this 4-week online course, Cynthia Bourgeault opens up new windows of perspective on *The Cloud of Unknowing*, showing how this classic medieval text offers profound insights and relevance for our own times. Cynthia draws from her vast experience and almost five decades of working with *The Cloud* — first as a medieval scholar, then as a student of Centering Prayer, and now as teacher of the Christian nondual tradition. The e-course consists of 12 emailed lessons, each with an essay by Cynthia, using a short passage from *The Cloud of Unknowing* as a stepping stone on what she describes as “a practical path of transformation in the service of the continuing evolution of human consciousness.” Hosted by the Spirituality and Practice website. **September 6 to October 1.** For more info and to register:

<https://www.spiritualityandpractice.com/ecourses/course/view/10290/new-windows-on-the-cloud-of-unknowing>

**Local Event: Introductory Program on Centering Prayer via Zoom, with commissioned presenters Patti Smith and Mary Williams.** Whether you are new to Centering Prayer or would just like to refresh your practice, come join us for this local online event on **September 11, 9:30 AM to 12 Noon.** Four continuing sessions will follow weekly, with dates to be decided after the initial workshop. To register, send an email to [cpregdiane2021@gmail.com](mailto:cpregdiane2021@gmail.com). A Zoom link and other materials will be sent to you prior to the workshop.

**Centering Prayer Introductory Workshop: 12-Step Friendly, with Contemplative Outreach of Greater Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky.** We sometimes think of prayer as words we express to a God who is “out there,” and often don’t recognize that God is present to us in our inmost being, with every breath we take, every beat of our heart, every thought, feeling, in all the activities of our daily life. The knowledge and experience of God’s love in this prayer move us closer to becoming who God created us to be in our lives and in the lives of those with whom we live and love and interact daily. **On Zoom, September 26, 1:00 PM to 4:30 PM Eastern Time.** For more information and to register, email [cogenky@gmail.com](mailto:cogenky@gmail.com).

**Centering Prayer One-Day Virtual Retreat, with Beverly McCune.** In addition to Centering Prayer periods in the morning and afternoon, there will be unscheduled time in the morning and a short video in the afternoon. **September 29, 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM Central Time.** For more information and to register: <https://consciousharmony.org/centering-prayer-1-day-in-person-retreat/>.

**Guard of the Heart, with Bob Mischke.** This class will teach the practice of “Guard of the Heart” (Also referred to as “Watchfulness” or “Presence Practice”) and how it complements our Centering Prayer and the practices of the Welcoming Prayer and the Active Prayer Phrase. We will learn the three ways any afflictive thought or emotional disturbance can be instantly released as it arises. Join us for this enriching and deepening complementary practice. **October 23, 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM Mountain Time.** For more information and to register: <https://www.centeringprayer.net/guardoftheheart>

**New retreats, courses, and spiritual formation events** are always being added to the calendar at the Contemplative Outreach, Ltd., website. Go to <https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/> and click on the “Events” tab at the top right to keep up to date.

*Scholarships are available from CONSD and Contemplative Outreach, Ltd.*



# Prayer Groups

	Area	Facilitators	Telephone	Location	Day & Time
1	Carlsbad (1)	Rev. Madison Shockley	760-729-6311ext.207	Pilgrim United Church of Christ, 2020 Chestnut Ave. Carlsbad	Wednesdays 6:30-7:30pm
2	Del Mar (1)	Barbara Hamilton	480-236-7319	St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 334 14 <sup>th</sup> St.	Thursdays 4:30-5:45pm
3	Del Mar (2)	Nichola Riggle	858 481-8754 760-448-5224	St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 334 14 <sup>th</sup> St.	Tuesdays 8:55-10:00am
4	Encinitas (2)	Virginia Erickson	760-846-5749	Bethlehem Lutheran, 925 Balour Dr., Encinitas, in the Sanctuary	Mondays 4:30-6:00pm
5	Encinitas (3)	Lynne McKiernan	619-665-6344	San Dieguito United Methodist Church, Encinitas	Mondays 1:30 pm
6	Escondido	Linda Dollins	760-745-5100	First United Methodist Church, 341 S. Kalmia	Mondays 4:30 pm
7	Fallbrook	Barbara Hudson	818-357-4167	(Call for location)	Saturdays 8:30 am
8	Murietta	DeeDee Warden	951-265-8557	42753 Settlers Ridge, Murietta	Wednesday 4:00pm
9	Oceanside (1)	Ed Clifford	760-630-1897	Mission San Luis Rey, McKeon Center, Room 12	Wednesdays 7:00 pm
10	Oceanside (2)	Mary Williams	760-510-9337	St. Thomas More Catholic Church, 1450 S. Melrose Dr.	Tuesdays 1:00 pm
11	Oceanside (3)	Pat Julian and Laura Pasquale	760 757-3659 x123	Mission San Luis Rey, 4050 Mission Ave.	Fridays 1:00 pm
12	Poway (1)	Elena Andrews	619-246-3356	St. Gabriel Catholic Church, 3734 Twin Peaks Rd.	Fridays 9:00-10:30 am
13	Poway (2)	Colleen Clementson & Rebecca Crowley	858-663-6584 858-748-3801 858 748-3542	Community Church of Poway, 13501 Community Rd.	Tuesdays 6:30-8:00pm
14	Poway (3)	Parth Domke	858-829-2664	St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church, 16375 Pomerado Dr.	Tuesdays 5:00-6:30pm
15	Poway (4)	Audrey Spindler	858-208-8609	Order of St. Luke* (call for directions)	Sunday 10:45am

16	Ramona	Deborah Lewallen & Cindy Dodson	760-519-1811 602-549-9839	St. Mary's in the Valley Episcopal Church, 1010 12th St., Ramona	Mondays 4:30-5:45pm
17	Rancho Bernardo	Audrey Spindler	858 208-8609	San Rafael Parish, Center. Rooms A & B	Wednesdays 3:30-5:00pm
18	Solana Beach	Ann Deakers	858-775-1738	St. James Catholic Church, 625 S Nardo Ave, Solana Beach	Tuesdays 9:00-10:30am
19	San Marcos (1)	Karla Halvorson & Sharon Phelps	760 727-1509 760-533-2437	San Marcos Lutheran Church, 3419 Grand Ave., Sanctuary	Not currently meeting
20	San Marcos (2)	Jim Ullman & Marjo Gray	760-598-8943	St. Mark's Catholic Church	Not currently meeting
21	Serra Mesa	Diane Langworthy	619-697-3558	Mary Magdalene Apostle Catholic Community/Gethsemane Lutheran, 2696 Melbourne Dr.	Tuesdays 1:00-2:30pm
22	Temecula (1)	Pam Bowen, Joan Neidig, & Marigold Velasco	909-938-9932 951-676-2928	Home of Joan Neidig, 42149b Camino Romo, Temecula	Thursdays 6:30pm
23	Temecula (2)	Robin Orner	951-669-3998	Hope Lutheran, 29043 Vallejo Ave. Classroom 6, Temecula	Tuesdays 6:30pm
24	Vista	Martha Treutle	760-809-2529	United Methodist Church of Vista, 490 S. Melrose Dr. Vista	Mondays 9:30-10:45am

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