



CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH OF CENTRAL FLORIDA  
Four Levels of Listening and Soulfriending  
Saturday, February 11, 2017

SCHEDULE

8:30 am	Gathering <i>(Coffee &amp; Refreshments)</i>
9:00 am	Centering Prayer - <i>30 minute period</i>
9:30 am	Welcome, Introductions, Overview of Day
9:45 am	Break
10:00 am	Presentation: <b><i>Four Levels of Listening</i></b>
11:30 am	Break
11:45 am	Presentation <i>cont'd.</i>
12:00 pm	Small Group Process
12:30 pm	Lunch
1:15 pm	Presentation: <b><i>Soulfriending</i></b> <i>(in the context of Centering Prayer groups)</i>
2:30 pm	Break
2:45 pm	Small Group Process
3:15 pm	Large Group Closure
3:30 pm	Centering Prayer - <i>30 minute period</i>

Go In Peace!

The Heart of a Servant is the Sanctuary of God

## *The Four Levels of Listening*

### Our Cultural Disposition Toward Listening:

- a) Debate      b) Discussion      c) Getting Our Point Across
- How do we engage in honest dialogue?
- What are the qualities of a good listener?

### The Contemplative Dimension of Listening:

- An adventure in spiritual intimacy and servant-leadership (*in service to one another*)
- An “informal” relationship
- Grounded in God-centered listening to one another at the level of friendship
- Centered on God in such a way that each is listening to God in the other
- Must become a listening “presence”
- Listening Carefully .... **Care – full = “full of care”** for the other

### Psychological Dimension of Listening:

- The ability (or inability) of each person engaged to arrive at self-intimacy
- The recognition that each person is different and unique
- Has the listener developed the capacity to listen; to truly “hear?”

### Spiritual Dimension of Listening:

- A “listening” together – each one to the other and to the Spirit in their midst  
*...Isaiah 55:2-3, Mark 7:14*
- Beyond psychological dimension
- Listening as personal communion
- Listening as unconditional surrender to God
- Listening with holy expectation
- Listening as an “empty-ness”
- Waits to realize the fullness of the message of God

### Listening – A Momentary “Death To Self”:

- Both the speaker and listener are instruments of God
- The listener is abandoned to the speaker and God in faith (*detachment*)
- A listener imparts personal opinions only when moved interiorly by the Spirit or invited by the speaker. A listener does not offer resolution or formulate a decision for the other person(s).

## **Divine Wisdom:**

Wisdom in Hebrew Scripture:

- Consistent listening fosters “Hakmah” –Intuitive knowledge and divinely bestowed discernment in the affairs of God
- “Hakmah” pertains to mystery of God itself
- God makes us participants in his Wisdom – received from our inmost being  
...*Wisdom 7:22-28*
- God imparts Wisdom to those who respond faithfully to God’s initiative

Wisdom in New Testament:

- “Sophia” surpasses “Hakmah”
- Christ as personification of Wisdom beyond Law ...*John 1:1-14*)
- In a safe setting, both speaker and listener receive divine wisdom from their listening to God. The more loving the listening, the purer the wisdom

## **Four Levels of Listening:**

- **Literal Listening**                      What you hear is what you get (*or don’t get!*)
- **Active Listening**                     Signals that clarify dialogue between speaker and listener
- **Affective Listening**                  Empty-ing oneself, we hear at a deep level and know
- **Transformative Listening**        In you, I see the Face of Christ

## **Active Listening**

- **Mirroring -**                            through facial expressions/gestures
- **Encouraging -**                        with back-channel words, sounds, noises
- **Echoing -**                                asking for additional detail, clarification
- **Reflecting -**                            specify feelings (*speaker or listener*)
- **Re-stating**                              what was said by the speaker

## **Affective Listening**

- **Empty-ing**                              to be fully present – listener may feel they are “expanding”
- **Avoids**                                    answers, suggestions, advice, solutions, consolation, action plans
- **Allows**                                    information enters head center; allows movement to the heart
- **Listens**                                    deeply, with attitude of peace, quiet clarity; does not probe or insist

## **Transformative Listening**

- **Trinitarian**                            intuitively aware of the Holy Spirit in your midst
- **Participants Equal**                  refrains from pre-judgment, bias, prejudice
- **Open To Allow**                        disposes oneself to God to expand your generosity as listener
- **Allows Individual**                  to “own” situation for opportunity for growth and capacity to listen to one another from a “centered place”

## **Transformative Listening Is ... Heart Piercing and Life Changing**

### **The Four R's In Practice:**

**Resist** No Thought; **Retain** No Thought; **React** to No Thought; **Rest** in the Listening

### **Helps to Aid Speaker:**

- Is this something you wish to talk about now?
- What has been the history of the situation?
- What steps have you taken to resolve the situation?
- What ideas do you have for resolution?
- What would an acceptable situation look like to you?

### **Listening as One Soul:**

- Befriending of the other; befriending of our own self
- Bi-directional; inward and outward
- **Less** is more in true listening;  
**L – Listen, E – Encourage, S – Sit in silence together, S – Be willing to say little**
- Soul-friends engage and participate in the sanctuary of human presence

### **Mystery of Transmission:**

- Listening: An attitude of heart whereby that which is deepest and most mysterious in us remains in loving attentiveness to that which is deepest and most mysterious in God
- Our intimate Presence to one another is the door to all belonging ....
- Put yourself in a place where you can be found

### **In Summary:**

- As servant leaders, we are accountable; a good listener keeps us honest and accountable
- Through this accountability, we learn who we truly are and open ourselves to be healed
- If we want to be heard, we must first learn to listen to others ... *Be Still and Know ... Psalm 46*
- No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care!

*"We all need good counsel ... anyone guided merely by his own light follows the guidance of a fool.  
We all need someone else to help us along the way; to tell us the truth, to challenge us and confront us,  
and occasionally to shatter us ..."*

*Teresa of Avila*

*Revised January, 2016*

*How to Master the Art of Listening*  
*Make a Decision to Listen "Master-fully!"*

1. **Make Eye Contact** - truly "see" who is speaking to you.
2. **Don't Interrupt** - halt any thoughts that come to mind.
3. **Practice "Active Listening"** - Ask questions for clarification or explanation
4. **Show You Understand** - use background noises when appropriate or nod
5. **Listen Without Thinking** - stop forming responses in your mind. Tempting to fill in the spaces. Listen to the entire message.
6. **Listen Without Judgment** - withhold any negative evaluations or judgments. Speakers will shut down to a narrow minded person.
7. **Listen to Non-Verbal Communication** - Does their body language align with their words? Does your body language align with your listening?
8. **Create a suitable environment** - eliminate background noise; show care and consideration
9. **Observe Other People** - Create an "annoying habit" checklist by watching others and observing the irritating and possible rude things that they do.



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## CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH

### *Soul-Friending*

#### In the Context of Centering Prayer Groups

*The following information has been excerpted from the Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. International Newsletter articles on Soul-Friending written by Fr. Thomas Keating*

All events sponsored by Contemplative Outreach are a form of spiritual direction or “soulfriending.”

The Centering Prayer group is a spiritual, small faith contemplative community comprised of people who are committed to a regular practice of Centering Prayer and wish to share the essence of Centering Prayer with others in a sacred space.

#### **Distinction between Spiritual Direction & Soul Friending:**

##### Spiritual Direction:

- personally directed to one person
- concentrated
- Holy Spirit is director (triangular relationship)
- identifies underlying principles to particular situation in one’s life
- about one’s relationship with God now
- challenges
- gives spiritual advice when needed (*spiritual practice, retreat, etc.*)
- directee perceives director as person with authority or more experienced
- spiritual director may receive financial compensation
- listening skills of spiritual director are critical
- fidelity to prayer is paramount
- exemplifies utmost charity



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## CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH

### *Soul-Friending*

#### In the Context of Centering Prayer Groups

#### Soul-Friending:

- different dynamic than spiritual direction
- not therapy
- sharing w/trusted person(s) who have been through or having same experience
- persons sharing are perceived on equal basis
- willingness to walk with friends and share journey  
*(scriptural Mary & Elizabeth)*
- Holy Spirit is group director
- fidelity to Centering Prayer is paramount
- no expectation of financial compensation
- exemplifies utmost charity

#### Purpose of Soul-Friending in CP Group:

- fundamental purpose is to share the prayer
- encourage one another to persevere
- members submit to divine therapy of purification process
- become aware of obstacles in path
- support and reassurance through dry periods which affects our attitudes, actions, and re-actions

#### The Nature of Soul-Friending in Groups:

- members possess a listening attitude *(refer to "4 Levels of Listening" workshop)*
- others mirror aspects of self *(positive & negative)*
- members support but do not attempt to "fix"
- attitude of trust, particularly in faith-sharing
- non-judgmental, non-threatening, non-intimidating
- gratitude for group experience



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## CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH

### *Soul-Friending*

#### In the Context of Centering Prayer Groups

- suspension of personal concerns, preferences, agendas, fears, or desires for self
- soul-friending arises spontaneously in group at certain stage of growth
- group receives limited help from facilitator at this point
- members not co-dependent on facilitator, looks for truth to surface from within group
- facilitation of meeting gradually shared by group members when appropriate

#### Role of Facilitator:

- faithful to practice of Centering Prayer
- does not need academic certification
- some development of intuitive faculties helpful
- is in service to awakening the group's sensitivity to the activity of Holy Spirit moving within the group
- offers higher levels of inspiration and motivation
- identifies "unloading" of the collective group mind-as it manifests
- insight to see purification happening in self and others
- helpful to have base understanding of Night of Sense/Spirit (*"Invitation to Love"*)
- provides support, not domination
- does not impose their personal truth upon others; rather, leads group to the threshold of their own inner truth
- redirects group from tension to relaxation and constant re-surrendering to presence of God
- fosters genuine care and concern among group members for one another at soul level
- expresses utmost charity in all situations





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## CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH

### *Soul-Friending*

#### In the Context of Centering Prayer Groups

#### Further Development of Soul-Friending Process:

- reflect on reality of what is happening in group (awareness of divine presence)
- pray that the group will be a channel of God's truth and love for each member
- reflect on the mystery of transmission – brief presentation here
- brief Presentation on the Seven Deadly Attitudes

#### Continue to re-orient self and group towards God - facilitate group away from:

- counseling
- therapy
- conversation
- over-socialization (*during group meeting time*)
- manipulation (*conscious/unconscious*) be aware of role reversal
- :transference or counter-transference
- attitudes/behaviors - projected onto group
- confusion as to what is happening in group
- need to make things go “right”
- excessive worry (repulsion, attraction, hostility, sympathy)

Creates: uneasy feelings, low grade anxiety - warrants careful evaluation by group



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## CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH

### ***Soul-Friending***

#### **In the Context of Centering Prayer Groups**

#### **Creating an Atmosphere Where Soul-Friending Takes Place:**

- private, tranquil (*noisy clocks, pets, cell phones?*)
- feeling of spaciousness, underlying peace
- conducive to openness, receptivity
- quiet clarity
- fosters attitude of being in prayer w/others around
- utmost charity

*Note:* This presentation is one component of the Facilitator Formation II program offered in chapters.

*The Contemplative dimension of the Gospel manifests itself in an ever-deepening union with the living Christ and the practical caring for others that flows from that relationship*  
..... Theological Principle #2

May, 2015



## *What is Faith Sharing?*

Faith sharing is the practice in which two or more people share experiences about their relationship with God ... their awareness of the presence of God, ways in which they have responded to or resisted the presence of God in their lives; places of suffering, confusion, or joy that have been the entry point for their prayer. It is grounded in humble acceptance of the truth that each one of us is a person honored and loved by God and that God is present and active in all of our lives. It assumes the belief that God often chooses to minister to us through the sharing and support of others.

Intentional faith sharing is done in an atmosphere of reverent listening and confidentiality, fortified by prayer. People are asked to share their experiences simply and to receive the sharing of others without judgment or attempts to change the experience. There are numerous possibilities for the content of what is shared ... e.g., a response to such things as scripture, a film, or a mode of prayer experienced with a group.

In faith sharing itself, each persons' sharing is followed only by a prayerful silence during which the group holds the person in prayer. If there is any dialogue, it comes only after everyone has shared. It is generally related to the common experience of the group rather than the experiences of individuals.

# What is the False Self?

- **The self developed in our own likeness rather than the likeness of God; bases its self worth on cultural or group identification**
- **Self we want to impose in our own mind and upon others**
- **Seeks happiness in satisfying instinctual needs** (*control, approval/esteem, security/survival*)
- **Attachments, addictions rule life**
- **Creates static in our field of consciousness**
- **Keeps us out of touch with inner reality resulting in no interior freedom**
- **No sense of Cosmic; little sense of unity with others**
- **Mixed motivations, hidden agendas**
- **God will love me when I am perfect; intercepted by Night of Sense, Spirit**

# SEVEN DEADLY ATTITUDES

1. Attachments
2. Aversions
3. Comparisons  $\Rightarrow$  Equals (=) State of Dis-Ease
4. Expectations  $\Rightarrow$  Equals (=) Suffering
5. Anticipation
6. Competition
7. Judgment