



COCFL News

UPCOMING EVENTS

COCFL WINTER ZOOM RETREAT

“From Seeker to Sage: Journey to the Unknowable”

**Presented by Susan Komis
November 12 - 14, 2020**

Cost: \$45

**Registration Deadline:
Friday November 6, 2020**

For registration and more information about this event, visit www.COCFLorg

**SAVE THE DATE!
FEBRUARY 6, 2021**

**“Forgiveness”
Presented by Patty Merlo
(Format for this retreat has not yet been determined dependent on COVID 19)**

LOOKING FORWARD!

**Visioning Day
TBD in 2021**

For more information about these events, visit www.COCFLorg



Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida

October 2020

COCFL website: www.cocfl.org

During this difficult and challenging time when COVID 19 has attempted to force our groups apart, the Leadership Team for Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida, led by Dan and Jesse, has been praying, working and planning to find new and creative ways to overcome the challenges presented by the pandemic.

A Word from Dan Wagner

My hope and prayer during this pandemic is to get all the chapter’s prayer groups meeting again in a safe, virus-free way. Currently we have thirty-three prayer groups with fifteen meeting on Zoom, nine meeting over the phone, group phone conferences, text, email and in socially distanced ways at inside and outside venues. There are nine groups that are not currently meeting for a variety of reasons.

The inspiration came from Contemplative Outreach’s explanation of some aspects of the Zoom platform that said our chapter account can be shared with other facilitators at no extra cost.

The research on how to enable sharing fell flat without any clear way of doing it despite the efforts of a couple members of our team.

Letting go of that hope to do it ourselves, contact was made with Pamela Begeman from Contemplative Outreach who is on the CO ltd.

A Word from Jesse Fox

“Go into your cell and it will teach you everything.” This saying from the Desert Fathers is packed with meaning, and the COVID-19 pandemic has brought it forward into our lives in so many ways. Since March, the whole world has been told more or less “go into your cell” and don’t come out until it is safe. The frenetic pace of the world slowed, but it was quickly followed by job losses, fears of death from infection, and a heightened awareness of human fragility and civil unrest. The resulting isolation has developed an introspection and soul searching that awakened many people to prayer.

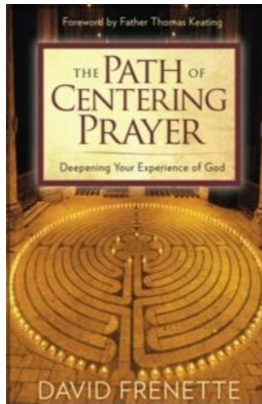
Perhaps for those who have an established contemplative practice, they were able to find even more encouragement to deepen their relationship with God through Centering Prayer. For others, the strain and unpredictability of the world has become a barrier to practice. For most, it has probably

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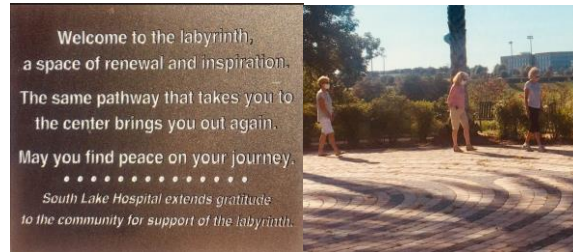
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Walking and Praying a Labyrinth

By Veronique Sallin



In our confined COVID times, where some groups are no longer able to meet, labyrinths offer a safe outdoor Centering Prayer meeting option. You can walk it with masks on for additional safety!



We are blessed to have a Labyrinth in our town of Clermont, built in 2007 by South Lake Hospital as a replica of the Chartres cathedral Labyrinth in France. Walking it with our Centering group has been a profound spiritual experience for all as we recall:

“We entered the Labyrinth for a slow meditative silent walk to the center, following the paved pattern designed on the ground. A gentle breeze accompanied us, and we were sheltered from too much sun by the clouds. As we reached the center, we spent time in prayer, before walking out using the same path back to the world.

It was a beautiful experience, full of meaning and symbolism for all of us: the rhythm, the focus on the present moment, the centering on God's presence at the center, the distant distractions of the noises around phasing in and out, the winding path near and away from the center, the turns, sometimes sharp and difficult to take as in real life, the long stretches when we could relax and look up at the sky, the absence of expectation as we walk in circles not knowing where we were on the journey”...

It is not by chance that David Frenette chose to illustrate the cover of his book on Centering Prayer with a picture of the Chartres Cathedral labyrinth. The labyrinth is a sacred place set aside for us to reflect, center within, and pray.

Walking a labyrinth is a deepening spiritual experience where our Centering Prayer practice comes alive. As we go through the 4 stages of our walk, we are invited to *Remember, Release, Receive and Return* as explained in these labyrinth walking guidelines:

[Walking the Labyrinth Remember Release Receive Return](#)

There are close to 4500 labyrinths in the USA and 150 of these are located in Florida. Chances are there is a labyrinth near you.

Labyrinths have been around since the 4th century and many of them are found in cathedrals in France and Europe. Beside their obvious decorative function, they were intended so that would-be pilgrims, unable to make the long perilous pilgrimage to the Holy Land, could make an inner pilgrimage by going to the cathedral and walking the labyrinth.



Labyrinth of Saint Quentin Basilica, in Aisne, France.

Modern labyrinths are usually associated with hospitals, churches, spiritual centers, and even found on private properties. I counted more than 30 in our chapter, from Jacksonville to Titusville, Ormond beach, St Augustine, Melbourne, Ocala, Gainesville, and many in the Orlando area.

You can find out about labyrinth locations on this world-wide locator site: <https://labyrinthlocator.com/>

Safe journey on a labyrinth near you!

A WORD FROM OUR CO-COORDINATORS

A Word from Dan Wagner (Continued from Page 1)

Servant Leadership team for Communications. She graciously and quickly responded with just the information needed! Thank you, Pamela Begeman! The afflictive emotion of control wanted us to solve it in collaboration with our team, but God had a different idea.

With those instructions, Veronique Sallin was contacted from Clermont to experiment with Zoom. After a few missteps, we were able to get it to function quite seamlessly.

All the chapter's facilitators were emailed to let them know that the chapter account was available if they were interested in using it to get their group safely back together again online. Tony Ippolito in Merritt Island emailed and said they were interested in doing a Zoom meeting. So, after a few meetings one on one and with his two groups, they are now safely back together for the first time in five months.

Diane Bradley's group from Rockledge is also on Zoom now as is Mt Dora's St Patrick's. There are still openings for anyone else who is interested. Please contact me for more information.

Other groups are back together using a variety of methods such as Altamonte/Longwood praying simultaneously at their individual homes prompted by an email to start and phone calls to finish. St. Andrew's in Orlando sends out a text reminder to pray and keeps in touch by phone. St Gabriel's group in Titusville meets on the phone by conference call with the entire group through Teleplan provided by their church. There is also a similar service called FreeConference.com that allows an entire group to meet on the phone free that the servant leader team has successfully used. Some groups are still meeting in person in a socially distanced way. One creative group from St. Luke's United Methodist in Orlando meets at Woodlawn Memorial park which is a Columbarium in Gotha, FL. They can walk and pray on the labyrinth and practice Centering Prayer in a socially distanced way inside the open-air courtyard of the Columbarium.

--- Dan

A Word from Jesse Fox (Continued from Page 1)

been a mixture of both.

In other words, over the past several months, we have collectively encountered most of the geographical landscape of the spiritual journey. The great gift of Centering Prayer, to me, is that no matter where one is, whether that is in the depth of darkness or the height of illumination, or the dry in-between, Centering brings us back to the God who holds all together in unity:

*Yours is the day, O God, yours also the night;
you established the moon and the sun. You fixed
all the boundaries of the earth; you made both
summer and winter. Ps. 74:15-16*

As the pandemic continues to unfold, we are encouraged by the Psalmist to affirm our lives grounding it in the infinite, loving Creator, despite the fears and challenges we continue to face. Thus, every time we return to the sacred word, we affirm *this*, all of what *this* means.

Jesse Fox, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Stetson University



Port Orange Prayer Group Discovers Zoom

By Andy Rawls

NEWSLETTER MISSION:

Our mission is to increase communication between COCFL Centering Prayer groups through news, direction to resources, Q&A, personal sharing, in an informal way, creating in the process a stronger connection between all our members. It is the prayer of the Servant Leadership Group that this endeavor will serve as support for better understanding, and an increase in spiritual desire and importance of the Centering Prayer goals.



Comments from the Port Orange Centering Prayer Group about meeting on Zoom:

“It does fill the gap and keep us connected so I think it is great.”

“I think it is a wonderful thing. It’s wonderful to be able to do it on Zoom and basically do what we do when we are in the home [meeting place].”

“I still feel we have a connection with all of you.”

“I find that what we do and the length of time we do it is perfect.”

“I love it because I’m up here in New Jersey and so it allows me to belong to the group.”

“Because of the virus, I’m confined to the house most of the time so this is a real wonderful outlet. ... It means so much to me.”

“I would recommend it to any Centering Prayer group if they are not already doing it.”

Our Port Orange Centering Prayer group had gathered in a circle week after week sharing our glimpses of the One that IS, the cares that come from daily living and the challenges of aging.

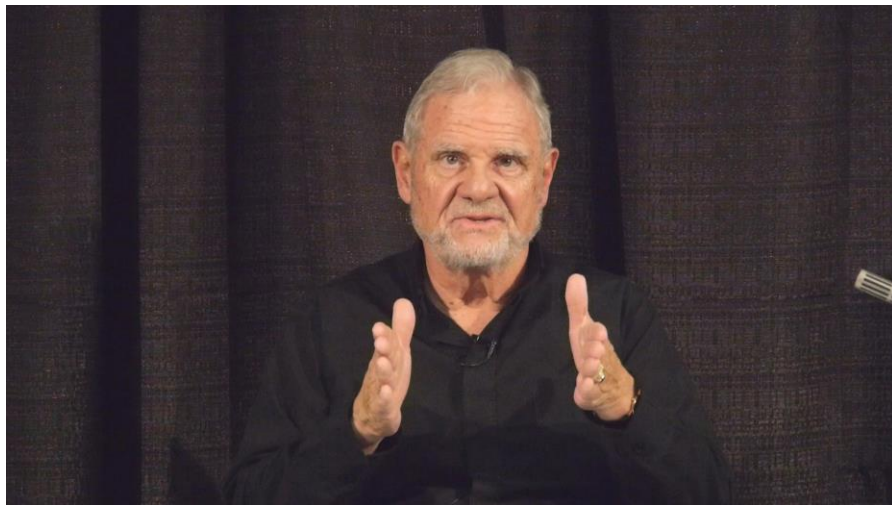
After the pandemic hit in March, we suspended our regular Wednesday gatherings. As the quarantine dragged on into April many of us heard about Zoom groups.

We sent out an email invitation to gather on Zoom for an informal time of sharing. By that time, most had been staying in for a month and were ready for connections with other people and encouragement for their prayer practice.

We adopted a one-hour format which included a check-in time, Lectio Divina, Sacred Sharing, a video clip relating to Centering Prayer and as always, the Lord’s Prayer. We decided to do our 20 minutes of Centering Prayer off-line before our meeting at least in the beginning.

We began using video clips we recorded at Fr. Carl Arico’s 2016 COCFL retreat on “Putting on the Mind of Christ.” With Fr. Carl’s blessing we divided the retreat videos into 10-15 minute segments for our Zoom gatherings. Fr. Carl’s insight into Centering Prayer, and his gentle humor have helped us all grow in Christ and given us fuel for discussion.

The participation has been strong with our group nearly the same size as before the pandemic. Two of our “snowbirds” who finally were able to go north in mid-summer continue to join our virtual gatherings. Perhaps we have discovered a useful model for connecting that may outlive the pandemic.



Note: Our collection of 20 videos of Fr. Carl are available to other Centering Prayer groups. Use the YouTube playlist or search YouTube for “Fr. Carl Arico, Putting On the Mind of Christ.”

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWgK3hOD9wqoldeeB9yaiy3SkM1rz0Bzc>