



COCFL News

NEWSLETTER

MISSION STATEMENT

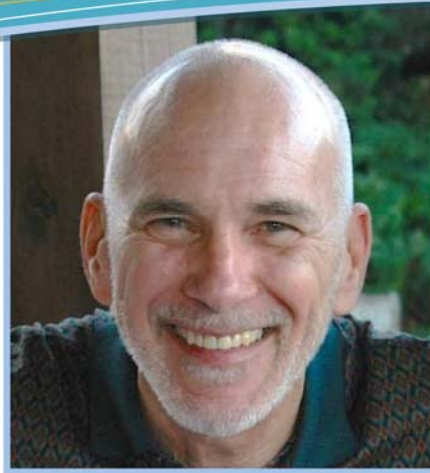
Our mission is to increase communication between COCFL Centering Prayer groups through news, direction to resources, Q&A, personal sharing, in an informal way, creating in the process, a stronger connection between all our members. It is the Servant Leadership Team's prayer that this endeavor will serve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

CONTACT US WITH YOUR NEWS!!!

Please send us information about your group's history, news of interest, photos, questions, or sharing, as well as special events planned in your area. Please help find a name for our newly created newsletter. Email to Alma Garcia ajg810@yahoo.com.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This newsletter is the result of a concerted effort by members who have supported it through submission of articles, ideas and technical support. We thank them and thank the Holy Spirit for guiding us along.



A Word from Nestor de Armas, COCFL Coordinator

Dear Friends,

At Visioning Day, attendees highlighted events and retreats as a chapter priority over the next three years. I am happy to report our Servant Leadership Team has reached consensus on our Event/Retreat Program for next year. For two weeks before our meeting, each of us prayerfully considered the purpose of our Event/Retreat Program and the criteria we would use for selecting topics and speakers. We also reached out to all our facilitators and asked them to let us know the topics their Centering Prayer groups wanted to have next year. In selecting topics we agreed our topics should:

- Address the broad spectrum of Centering Prayer experience manifested in our chapter's membership.
- Focus on Fr. Keating's teachings, Contemplative Outreach resources, Centering Prayer practice and concepts, Christian contemplative practice.
- Be fresh and timely.
- Be responsive to the interests of our Centering Prayer groups.

Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida

Issue 4

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www.COCFL.org

We reached a consensus to offer the following events recommended by sixty percent of the respondents to our Centering Prayer Group Survey:

Three-Day Silent Retreat on Centering Prayer to be held at the Canterbury Retreat Center in Central Florida.

Introductory workshops will be offered to those relatively new to the practice and Deepening Workshops for those who have been practicing for some time.

Night of Sense with Susan Komis as presenter. We will explore the exquisite gifts of the Night of Sense. These multi-dimensional gifts mark a profound movement beyond self to the Other. We will learn how this stage of the spiritual journey simultaneously reveals the pathology of the human condition while at the same time heightens our awareness of the transcendent love of God.

Welcoming Prayer. Mary Dwyer will lead us in exploring this prayer practice of attending, letting go, and surrendering to God in the present moment of daily life. Developed by Contemplative Outreach's (Continued on page 3)

NURTURE AND SUPPORT SERVICE TEAM

By Gwen Robertson

Our purpose is to nurture and support all the CP groups in Central Florida. It is accomplished by visits to chapter CP groups by our team of two, Gwen Robertson and Dan Wagner. We are available for questions, share in their CP practice and hopefully help the group feel more connected and involved with the chapter. Lately, I visited St. George's Episcopal group in Lady Lake. It is a wonderful new Centering Prayer group with a deep prayer life and very strong community of love and support. After quiet music, Fr. John Kelly led us into prayer. A 30 minute sit and private sharing followed. Personal prayer requests were made as we held hands and prayed the Our Father. It was a very moving experience.

Lelia Mullis assists Fr. John with the group, and attends the leadership group meetings on his behalf. She is a dynamic person, dedicated to Centering Prayer.

It was a loving and joyful experience.

I thanked Lelia for her dedication to CP and she explained to me, "I know how much it can change lives!"

"When you want to pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

Matthew 6:6

ST GEORGE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH



By Anne Ayoub

The St. George's Episcopal Church in the Villages, Florida has begun a Centering Prayer group due to the persistence of Lelia Mullis, who had been practicing Centering Prayer for 12 years.

When Father John Kelly came to St George's in the fall of 2014, Lelia approached him concerning starting a group. She was pleasantly surprised to find that Father had facilitated a group in his last parish in New York and was very excited about starting a group. With her 12 years of Centering Prayer experience, Lelia agreed to help with setting up the environment, establishing communications, and doing the detail work.

Fr. Kelly contacted Kathy Kotas, who put him in touch with Gus Galloway, who has been a Centering Prayer facilitator and a spiritual director for many years. Gus had just established a connection with COCFL and on Jan 30-31, 2015 he conducted the introductory workshop. He met with the group for six weeks to teach the basics.

Our group, consisting initially of 30 members, has now 15 steady members. We meet on Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. at St. George's Episcopal Church in the Villages. Father John Kelly is our facilitator and Don Lozier, a parishioner at St. George's, is our co-facilitator.

We are an ecumenical group that includes Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, and Church of God members. We are developing a great sense of caring and belonging in our group and are looking forward to growing spiritually. We are also looking forward to serving as a hub church for events sponsored by COCFL.

COCFL.ORG is Under Construction

by Andy Rawls

Soon our updated website will feature the latest information from the Central Florida chapter. You will be able to find information about upcoming events. In addition, we will have new and better links to audio and video from recent events. A new photo gallery highlights chapter events. We will be posting our newsletter in an easier to read and download format. In the coming months, we will be adding more features and information to support your prayer practice.

We hope you will check the website regularly for updates and send suggestions for improving COCFL.ORG to webmaster@cocfl.org.



Busy little Monkey –
 jumping in my mind,
 Wanting my attention –
 doing tricks of every kind,
 Causing such a ruckus –
 just hoping I'll unwind.
 So that will never happen
 – so get thee behind.
 You can sing and dance –
 it really doesn't matter,
 My sacred word will cause
 it all to scatter.
 I sit still in the silence
 saying "yes" to loving God.
 It matters not what
 happens –
 consenting is my job.
 I bring my consent to this
 work of LOVE.
 Surrender to God makes
 me free like a DOVE.
 Twenty minutes twice a
 day –
 at first it seems uncanny.
 How will I ever make it –
 it gives me a sore fanny.
 I want to be healed so
 what must I do.
 Be patient, persistent,
 faithful, and true.
 Practice makes perfect –
 is what I am told.
 It better happen fast –
 or I'll be too old.
 This journey inward is
 quite an adventure,
 So call all your friends –
 to join this new venture.
 We're all in need of
 healing –
 so gather round to pray,
 Surrender to the potter –
 so he can re-shape the
 clay.
 We're part of this mystery
 – this life here on earth,
 But what is really
 happening –
 is just my re-birth.
 It's painful, it's joyful, it's
 all of these things,
 And heavenly angels are
 clapping their wings.
 There's dancing in heaven
 and here down on earth.
 What more could we ask
 for – it's heaven on earth.

Dan Wagner and Liz Lefevre share with us their experience at the retreat.

Dan comments: "The retreat was a recharging experience for me, being able to pray three or four hours a day, together with 46 other like-minded people, and listen to presentations that encourage and enrich my practice. Barbara Rietberg did a mini spiritual journey by reviewing the Welcoming Prayer, Prayer for Discernment, Lectio Divina, Prayer as Relationship, False Self, and the Forgiveness Prayer. We listened to Fr. Sheehan's great homilies during Mass. As participants shared their retreat experiences at the end, the feeling was powerful. At this time, a participant sang a beautiful song that will help us carry the retreat experience in our hearts as we go our separate ways: "Remain, remain in the company of God."

Liz shares: "This was my first intensive retreat after practicing Centering Prayer for almost twenty years. God gifted me with "a shift in the earth" before everything settled in place. "God loves me." This statement I have heard so many times really penetrated as the words of Fr. Bill were repeated often. "He loves the parts of me that I DON'T LOVE." To have the space to allow these words to wash over me was a priceless gift.

I had never before opened the gift of Grand Silence and I surrendered even my eyes to a time without distraction. Social media, reading other than the scripture and most important, my voice, were abandoned and all the blessed space opened up. When the silence was broken for the final dinner, it was beautiful to feel the sacred friendships that had been formed through our prayer time together. We had learned to know each other from our hearts and treasured the effort each one had made to keep our sacred space just that- a time of healing, personal growth and a taste of the Divine Indwelling. God was surely in this place as He is everywhere.

Note: Both Dan and Liz thank CO and COFL for scholarship assistance that enabled them to attend the retreat.

A Word from Nestor de Armas, COFL Coordinator (Cont. from pg. 1)

late master teacher Mary Mrozowski, it is based largely on the teaching and wisdom of Fr. Thomas Keating and the eighteenth century work *Abandonment to Divine Providence* by Jean Pierre de Caussade.

A Day of Prayer will be a time to simply come together as a community to cultivate interior silence and develop a basic disposition toward a relationship with God. We will practice Centering Prayer, do contemplative walks, and meditate. In the words of Father Keating, "moving from external and internal noises to stillness and, ultimately, to the center of our being beyond self-reflection, to being with God: to just sit there and be still in God's presence, and to let happen what happens."

We are looking forward to an enriching Event/Retreat Program next year!

Blessings,
Nestor de Armas

UPCOMING EVENTS: Save the Date

Facilitator Formation Level 1

with Nestor de Armas
Saturday, October 3, 2015
9 - 3pm, St. George Episcopal Church
1250 Paige Place, The Villages, FL
Donation \$20.

Introduction to Centering Prayer

Retreat with Jim McElroy
November 6-8, 2015
Canterbury Retreat and Conference
Center, Oviedo, FL

Night of Sense with Susan Komis

January 22-23, 2016
Church of Our Saviour, Cocoa Beach

Welcoming Prayer

with Mary Dwyer
February 5-6, 2016
St. George Episcopal Church,
The Villages, FL
More info to come on COCFL.ORG

The Formation and Servant Leadership workshop St Louis – July 2015



Several COCFL members attended this national CO workshop/retreat: Left to right front row: Anne Ayoub, Gwen Robertson, Malinda Rawls, and Joanie Mills. Left to right top row: Guy Galloway, Nestor de Armas, and Andy Rawls.

MEMBERS SHARE

“Centering prayer practice has totally changed my entire being. It is the force that enabled me to now live a lifestyle of service to others, primarily the elderly and terminally ill. In return, it has given me a keen sense of awareness and a deep inner joy, peace and immense gratitude for everything in my life, past and present.”

FACILITATOR WORKSHOP – Level II Nestor de Armas, presenter



By Alma Garcia

On May 16, 2015, around 35 Centering Prayer members attended a Facilitator Formation Workshop Level II, at All Saints Church, in Winter Park, Florida. It was expertly presented by Nestor de Armas, who had previously asked for our input in prioritizing the topics to be included. The purpose of the workshop was to empower us to incorporate the principles of servant leadership into our service as Centering Prayer group facilitators, in order to help our Centering Prayer group members support each other in their transformation in Christ.

The workshop's intense schedule included two periods of Centering Prayer, morning and afternoon, the topics of dispositions on servant-leadership in the contemplative dimension, the role of the servant leader, stages of groups to maturity, and facilitator and chapter relationships.

There were small group discussions in which the members shared their own disposition revealed in their servant leadership style, and how it helped foster growth in their group. A very important disposition of servant-leadership is to maintain a safe environment for everyone in the group in order to allow the Spirit the maximum opportunity to work. The guidelines for sharing, welcoming problems and opposing views, were also thoroughly discussed. The servant leader should be an integral member of the group, and foster friendly, respectful, trusting and humble attentiveness to the group's discernment process.

Of great interest was the topic of “Organic Growth of Prayer Groups,” which introduced to us the concept of organic growth in Centering Prayer groups as an aid in fostering a maturing spirituality. The members were grouped at tables that included the age of their own Centering Prayer group, to explore where their own group may be in this dynamic of spiritual maturation. A group's life-cycle evolves through distinct stages, all influenced by elements that bring change, i.e. personalities, significant events, and environment (cultural, physical, spiritual).

The Centering Prayer Group stage developments are: **New Prayer Group, Friendship, Spiritual Maturation, and Spiritual Community.** The groups discussed what movements were occurring within their own groups towards the “next stage” of maturation. It was a fruitful and joyful, hard working day for all!