



# COCFL News

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### SAVE THE DATE!

#### COCFL ANNUAL RETREAT

with

**Maru de Guevara**  
December 6 – 8, 2019

Canterbury Retreat &  
Conference Center  
1601 Alafaya Trail  
Oviedo, Florida 32765

#### 12 STEP RETREAT: INTRODUCTION TO CENTERING PRAYER AS AN 11<sup>TH</sup> STEP PRACTICE

March 20 – 22, 2020

Canterbury Retreat &  
Conference Center  
1601 Alafaya Trail  
Oviedo, Florida 32765

**Presenters:**

**Jim McElroy,  
Joe Mahar**

**and Danielle Stephens**

More information on these  
upcoming events will be  
available soon at  
[www.COCFL.org](http://www.COCFL.org)



## Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida

### June 2019

COCFL website: [www.cocfl.org](http://www.cocfl.org)

#### A Word from Dan Wagner

Sometimes our prayer can become routine and we need to re-nourish ourselves with a book, a retreat, a change of prayer venue, a video or our weekly Centering Prayer group. These avenues we travel allow us to see things in a different way apart from our regular pathways. Other people in a retreat may offer a thought or insight that takes us elsewhere in our thinking and is an answer to our prayer. The presenter talks of just the very thing that we have been pondering on our faith walk, or the priest's sermon seems directed right to us and provides us with a step forward to the answer we have been seeking. When we listen closely on the path we walk, sometimes the answer can come up in an unexpected visit, a phone call, a trip to the park, a surprise that takes us away from our routine thinking.

The most excellent path that needs to be walked to aid us in recognizing this is our Centering Prayer. It helps us to be open to these works and words of God when we least expect them. The unexpected sunlight that falls on my face when I am feeling blue or the lyrics of a song on

(Continued on Page 3)

#### A Word from Jesse Fox

This May we introduced about 30 new pray-ers to Centering Prayer at St. Barnabas Episcopal Church in DeLand. Devoted servant leaders of our chapter, Liz Lefvre and Nestor DeArmas, did an excellent job of bringing their sincere love, grace, and humility as an outgrowth of their considerable knowledge and experience by facilitating the training for us. We were especially grateful to several seasoned Centering Pray-ers from St. Anne's Catholic Church in Debary who showed tremendous support in offering their experience during discussions and question and answer periods! It was a joy to me to see the Body of Christ come together in mutual love and support in our collective journey toward intimacy with Christ. It has been a desire of mine to see Centering Prayer become more accessible to members of DeLand's community since recently relocating there in 2017. At the follow-up sessions at St. Barnabas, we have brought together the richness of the Anglican prayer tradition of praying the Daily Office for evening prayer with the

(Continued on Page 3)

## Prison Ministry:

### Making a Difference One Life at a Time!

By Donna Davis

## United in Prayer Day

March 16, 2019

By Beth Murphy

New York Times Best Selling Author, Matthew Kelly, identifies four questions as fundamental in leading a meaningful life.

1. Who am I? 2. What am I here for? 3. What matters most? 4. What matters least?

As a volunteer at Hernando Correctional Institution in Brooksville, Florida, I have the opportunity to offer a class in Centering Prayer as well as Lectio Divina and the Welcoming Prayer. A group of women who have elected to participate in a course that we currently call “Contemplative Fellowship” have the opportunity to wrestle with these questions in “the Classroom of Silence.”

One of my favorite quotes from Fr. Thomas Keating has always been, “Humiliation is the surest path to humility.” These women know what that means. They have had everything stripped from them – their material possessions, their identity, and their dignity. Misconceptions about the women behind those walls and bars pervade our society. And the dehumanizing way in which these women are often treated does nothing to let them know that they matter.

When I meet these women each one is a unique person on a journey, as we all are. And the gratitude and appreciation that we take time out of our own busy lives to spend with them is evident. I have never felt unsafe or unwanted in my time there. In fact, my sense is that I am exactly where I belong. When the women thank me for coming, I reply “It’s God that got me here, but it’s you that keep me coming back!” As these women open and respond to God’s presence and experience His unconditional love and acceptance and the respect shown to them by the volunteers, they begin to value and respect themselves and others and to accept who they really are in God.

There is a principal in physics that when 2% of the molecules in a pot of water reach the boiling point, the entire pot boils. Imagine 2% of the population in any prison practicing Centering Prayer and the effect that could have on the entire compound for good. Imagine the possibilities! Maybe God is speaking to you? As I said, it’s His call! And it’s the experience itself that will keep you coming back.



It was a beautiful day for prayer as we gathered at Saint John the Evangelist Catholic Community in Viera, Florida. Mary Helen McCay and her group were perfect hosts – including everything from meeting us in the parking lot to directing us to the snacks and hot coffee, and a beautifully arranged quiet peaceful room. The day as a whole was a blessing but the most meaningful part for me was the small group sharing.

Attached to our agenda was a list of Thomas Keating quotes. At 10:45 we broke into three small groups. As a group we could select any of the quotes to discuss. Our small group quickly agreed to discuss: “If people continue doing Centering Prayer, they continue to grow. It’s God’s will to give us the grace.”

Everyone’s story was so completely different! My story was one of the “rare cases” that Father Keating talks about in the Spiritual Journey. My husband has always been drawn to the contemplative life and when I was finally drawn into it I have experienced deep healing and transformation- “beauty for ashes.” One woman learned about St. Teresa of Avila as a child in Catholic school and continued to study her writings. Another woman lost a child and Centering Prayer and yoga kept her and her husband on the path. And yet another woman shared that the grace of the prayer is that she no longer reacts but rather responds to any given situation. She desires a deeper relationship.

It seemed to me that the grace of the prayer that transforms our lives brought us together and as we shared our stories they really became one story, the story of Contemplative Outreach, God’s grace in prayer and action.

## A WORD FROM OUR CO-COORDINATORS

### A Word from Dan Wagner

(Continued from Page 1)

the radio that seem to answer the question I was just asking myself. We just never know how the Holy Spirit is going to help us out. Listen, be still and be mindful.

So, it is a circle. The more we pray and are mindful, the more we become aware of God's presence and action in our lives. In order to recognize inspiration, we need to pray; in order to pray sometimes we need inspiration. Lord, please strengthen us and help us to be mindful of your constant contact with us when we least expect it!

### Attention Local CP Facilitators!

Your COCFL Servant Team thanks you for your dedicated service as a facilitator for a local Centering Prayer group. You are the front line of hospitality, the gateway for those seeking to practice Centering Prayer, and we are grateful for your contribution.

Please let the Servant Team know what support services you would find helpful in the coming year.

**When you think about your efforts as a Centering Prayer facilitator, what kinds of support would you like to receive? How might we be of help to you?**

Please send your reply to Susan Arneson, [sunnyvilla@live.com](mailto:sunnyvilla@live.com). Your input is important and will provide the Servant Team with valuable information to be used in planning activities for 2020.

**COCFL Servant Team**



### A Word from Jesse Fox

(Continued from Page 1)

contemplative silence of centering brought into the natural flow of the community's vocal and silent prayer. As many already know, the Daily Office is drawn directly from the hours of monastic Christianity, and so brings with it the thousands of years of Christian discursive and contemplative prayer into unity and into the present where we connect with God and the mystical body of Christ. As many theologians have pointed out, these two major streams of prayer were never meant to be divided, though they were for a variety of reasons, none of which have to do with intimacy with Christ. Instead, vocal prayer (kataphatic = Greek for "with images") and silent prayer (apophatic = Greek for without or beyond images) bring together the full life of prayer into one body. I have found in my personal prayer that combining something like the Daily Office into my Centering Prayer brings to life both major forms of prayer into unity, much like "being" and "doing" are intimately related and bring each other to fuller flourishing.

As you may have expected, we are currently finalizing a format for regular Centering Prayer meetings in DeLand as an outgrowth of our introductory training. If you are looking for a Centering Prayer group in DeLand, we will be putting out more information shortly on our Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida website for meeting location and times. However, if you are new to Centering Prayer, or a seasoned practitioner, you are encouraged to contact me with questions. We hope to be meeting on a bi-monthly basis starting this summer or very early this fall and would be happy to see you there!

Jesse Fox, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Stetson University

*"We rarely think of the air we breathe, yet it is in us and around us all the time. In similar fashion, the presence of God penetrates us, is all around us, is always embracing us."*

~ Fr. Thomas Keating

## Divine Therapy, A Day with Rickey Cotton By Victoria Bennett

### 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.



### Oracion Contemplativa Retreat April 10 - April 12, 2019

This retreat at the San Pedro Retreat Center in Winter Park was led by Maru de Guevara who will be leading our three-day retreat December 6 – December 8, 2019.

In her own description of the weekend, Maru said:

“It was full of surprises and living Presence, grateful tears and deepened consent.”

We look forward to our time with Maru in December. We hope that you will join us!



Dr. Rickey Cotton was an English professor at Southeastern University in Lakeland and is currently a spiritual director who presents on Centering Prayer, Lectio Divina and other spiritual topics for Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida. He presented on Divine Therapy on April 6 at Hope Episcopal Church in Melbourne. His title comes from Thomas Keating, “The purpose of Divine Therapy is to enable us to become who we really are.”

Rickey provided his audience with a comprehensive handout that was easy to follow and worthy of rereading at home. This allowed him to keep 60 participants on topic, give adequate breaks, conduct a group activity and answer individual questions. Rickey’s syllabus included scripture, excerpts from Fr. Thomas Keating, a bibliography of theologians and other relevant information.

Rickey included diagrams that illustrated how the inward journey of Center Prayer progresses deeper and deeper into the unconscious mind where our most painful wounds reside. He likened this to an archeological dig where the goal is to uncover and release painful artifacts of our earlier lives. More than once Rickey pointed out that professional therapy was sometimes needed in tandem with Divine Therapy. He used a personal example of how Centering Prayer and professional therapy helped him through a pivotal time in his own life. He also pointed out the need for spiritual direction at different times and gave a plug for the 12 Step program.

Rickey allowed for moments of silence after each block of presentation, for the attendees to assimilate what was being said. Throughout the program, participants were encouraged to minimize conversation to help with concentration and relaxation. Centering Prayer was led once in the morning, at the start of the program, and once after lunch.



Sitting in the sanctuary of Hope Episcopal Church was tantamount to being outdoors because the windows were large and the room brightly lit. It was amazing that 60 people could go on break and still find privacy.

The day was not only informative and relaxing but it genuinely felt like a retreat. The setting and the time to reflect contributed to the richness of the experience. Thank you Rickey and all who worked so hard to make this happen!