



COCFL News

UPCOMING EVENTS

**An Introduction to
Centering Prayer
Workshop**
March 14, 2020
St. Ann's
Catholic Church
26 Dogwood Trail
DeBary, FL
9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
For more information,
contact
Mary Ann Blaubaach
mayan3502@gmail.com

**28th Annual
United in Prayer Day**
March 21, 2020
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**Facilitator Appreciation
Luncheon**
May 9, 2020
10 AM – 2 PM
St. Patrick's
Catholic Church
6803 Old Hwy. 441
Mt. Dora, FL 32757

SAVE THE DATE!
COCFL Winter Retreat
November 6 – 8, 2020
Canterbury Retreat Center
1601 Alafaya Trail
Oviedo, FL 32765

**For more information
about these events, visit**
www.COCFL.org



Contemplative Outreach of Central Florida

March 2020

COCFL website: www.cocfl.org

In an effort to help us all know our coordinators a little better, this month we have asked Dan and Jesse a couple of questions in an interview style. Their answers give us a glimpse into who they are, how they got here and what has most influenced their path to Centering Prayer.

A Word from Dan Wagner

What were the meaningful events or circumstances that led you to discover Centering Prayer?

I worked at a local newspaper and went to college. I decided after graduation that I would stay on there. Knowing that the full-time positions were very stressful, I decided I would have to meditate in order to maintain a balance in my life. I was a teenager when I came to that conclusion but never acted on it until ten years later when the newspaper printed a full, page one article on a Centering Prayer program only a mile from my work with two prayer sits before work and two at lunchtime. I had been looking for something and that fit right into my schedule. Part of the program was a "Contemplative Walk."

Looking forward to my first visit, I wondered what a contemplative walk was. Would it go around the block of the center city neighborhood where they were located? I had no idea.

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A Word from Jesse Fox

What were the meaningful events or circumstances that lead you to discover Centering Prayer?

It probably could be traced back to the first time I read Thomas Merton in high school. I was going through a crisis of faith, and was searching for answers when one night I had some free time and went to a bookstore to read. I noticed a book that caught my attention by the title. It may have been Thoughts in Solitude or Seeds of Contemplation. Raised Protestant, I realized quickly that this was not on the "recommended" reading list, so to speak, but something drew me to it. I wasn't able to name it at the time, and as I read it I didn't cognitively get it, but it resonated with me beyond the words themselves. Over time and with Merton's guidance, I found my way to Thomas Keating. When I first was introduced to Centering Prayer, I had been searching for a way to experience what Merton was talking

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Awakened to Wonder By Maru de Guevara



It was a great privilege to pray and “hold the field of our belonging” with you during our Advent retreat last December. A field of faith, hope and love is formed by our intention to deepen our communion with God. Silence, prayer and openness to Spirit provide the space in which the mysterious divine action takes place in each of us, moving us at ever deepening levels, not so much by information, given that all knowledge shall pass away, but by divine life, light and love that defy all understanding. Whatever God does in us is quite beyond our capacity to measure or grasp, which is both disconcerting and comforting. Disconcerting because curious minds want to know; comforting because when we cannot see or understand what has taken place, we have no other choice than to trust.

I am not denying the importance of that which can be known, for faith comes by hearing as Scripture says. And as we hear, understand and turn around from our own limited ways, we are healed: progressively, patiently and relentlessly. Yet, we tend to over-emphasize this kind of palpable, noticeable conversion. I am simply reminding us of a different kind of “dark” knowing that while unsettling, if we are to trust the mystics across the ages, is more reliable and capable of housing the ineffable. Often times beneath the levels of novelty and discovery, God is acting secretly in the hidden chambers of our inmost being.

One of the amazing things I’ve come to know, taste, and experience from this divine dance, is that somehow God seems to bring me around to what I thought I knew or understood only to discover it at yet another level or perspective. It is an endless journey of discovery if I am willing to remain open and awake to wonder.

More than ever our oneness with the God that is still becoming flesh all around us, calls us to be living cells that are receiving and transmitting the divine love from all, and to all around

us: the planet, plants, oceans, deserts, animals and the human family. Most especially to the disadvantaged and marginalized as the 12th principle of our vision calls us to. I am grateful to you and all who are saying yes to this amazing journey we are on.

Let us then continue to commit and consent to becoming living parts of Christ. After all, if not us, who? If not now, when?

12th Principle of the Vision of Contemplative Outreach By Thomas Keating

12. The practice of Centering Prayer deepens our awareness of the oneness of all creation and our compassion for the whole human family.

Centering Prayer inspires ever-increasing regard for others, especially for the poor and those abandoned or exploited in the various throwaway cultures of our time. We are invited to make available the gift of Centering Prayer to everyone, particularly to the needy and the marginalized. Centering Prayer also enables us to respond to the Divine presence in the whole human family, and in all of creation.



Meet the New Administrator for National Organization of Contemplative Outreach, Ltd In New Jersey

After a prayerful process of selection, interviews and discernment, the national organization, Contemplative Outreach, Ltd, is delighted to announce the hiring of our new administrator, Mary Jane Yates. She comes to us from Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. She has been a part of Contemplative Outreach for 12 years, serving our organization as a prayer group facilitator, Introductory Workshop presenter and retreat leader.

She is well versed in collaborative leadership and community development. While a Canadian citizen, she grew up in Nigeria, West Africa and has a passion for cross-cultural and diversity issues. She is devoted to contemplative life through her Centering Prayer practice and as a nature therapy guide.

A WORD FROM OUR CO-COORDINATORS

A Word from Dan Wagner (Continued from Page 1)

As I learned more, I began going regularly once or twice a day. Sr. Jean Lavin, the director of the program, started doing days of prayer and then three-day retreats. So it was that I did retreats at Glinodo on Lake Erie across from the motherhouse, at Mount St. Benedict, Erie, Pa. as well as retreats at Bethany retreat center in Frenchville, Pa where I met Sr. Rita Panciera and Sr. Therese Dush.

When Sr. Jean Lavin retired from retreats, I continued praying retreats at Bethany and began going to Sr. Rita's House of Prayer.

Who have been some of the people who have impacted your spiritual journey the most? And how?

Sr. Jean Lavin, Sr. Rita Panciera, and Fr. Ted Carter have had the most influence on my journey. Sr. Jean because of the way she taught prayer in such a way that you knew she knew the mystery of contemplation without words. "Keep up your practice," she would say. Glinodo retreats initiated me to four-hour prayer days. We prayed on pillows, and I still remember the unloading of the unconscious I experienced there.

Sr. Rita influenced me because of her encyclopedic knowledge of many books, especially the Bible. She taught and prayed Centering Prayer and she could recite passages from the Bible and many other books verbatim. In addition, she has suffered some injuries from which her recovery is miraculous. She got run over by a bus. Yes, a bus the size used in nursing homes. The driver didn't see her, knocked her over and ran over her shoulders as she lay on her side but she survived. She is a miracle!

Fr. Ted Carter influenced me because of the passion he had for the prayer. He would weave talk of silence and contemplation into his sermons quite frequently. The one saying he had about Centering Prayer events was not to be concerned over how many people came. He called it "the heresy of numbers."

The most important book to me was Fr. Keating's seminal work "Open Mind Open Heart." It is like no other.

--Dan

A Word from Jesse Fox (Continued from Page 1)

about but lacked a method. I often found myself saying, "What he is talking about is so right, but how do I practice it?" It would be true to say that Merton helped me understand the why, and Keating helped me understand the how.

Who have been some of the people who have impacted your spiritual journey the most? And how?

There are so many it is hard to narrow down to just a few. But my father was incredibly influential. As a pastor I saw him care for people in ways that many would never hear about, because he wasn't "showy." From him I first learned the breathtaking love of God for us. I would say that from there I have always had people who have given me guidance for the journey at critical times, many of them were my former teachers and counselors. Often times they provided me with an open space where I could be vulnerable yet still safe, to ask the deepest heart questions, which I realized over time, all of us to one degree or another carry with us.

What are some of the books or authors who have been most influential in your spiritual growth? Why?

I have already mentioned a couple, the two Thomases (Merton and Keating). Merton's No Man is an Island is one of the great literary works, to me, of the western spiritual tradition. Merton, like me, aspired to be an academic and his writing has always been able to appeal to my mind as well as my heart. I would say the three great Spanish spiritual directors, St. Theresa of Avilla, St. John of the Cross, and St. Ignatius of Loyola and their three major works (Interior Castle, Dark Night of the Soul, The Spiritual Exercises) have all shaped my spirituality in ways I am still discovering. From each I learned the contours of the soul (St. Theresa), the journey of transformation (St. John of the Cross), and the practical skills of discernment (St. Ignatius).

Jesse Fox, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Stetson University

The 28th Annual United In Prayer Day March 21, 2020

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.

God's Bountiful Love By Alice Logan

The annual Florida Centering Prayer weekend retreat with Fr. Bill Sheehan was held January 3-5, 2020, in North Palm Beach. The theme this year was "*Reflection on God's Bountiful Love*." Fr. Bill's reflection was based on the 11th century poem of St. Simeon the New Theologian in which he reminded us that we awaken in Christ's Body as Christ awakens in our bodies. He reflected on how God's bountiful love continues to unfold in our lives from birth to death and beyond. Fr. Bill always reminds us that there is never a moment that we are separated from God. It's all about love and the relationship.

This was my eighth weekend retreat at Our Lady of Florida Spiritual Center. I assist Basha Perez with the retreats. This retreat, which always sells out months in advance, had many new retreatants as well as old friends. The incredible experience of this retreat was the silence. The silence was profound. In the closing gathering many reflected on how powerful the silence had been. It was a way for me to go deeper into my inner work and "return to the heart."

This weekend each year is a wonderful way to begin the new year. After the hustle and bustle of the Christmas holidays, it's a great way for me to relax and refocus on what is important in my spiritual life. The Central Florida silent retreat in December led me into the Advent season and the January retreat prepared me for the continuation of the journey consenting to God's presence and action in my life.

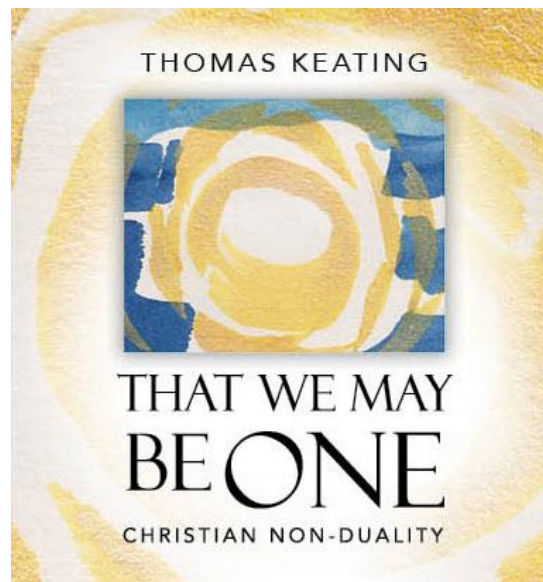
**A day of prayer dedicated to whole making in our relationships,
our world and ourselves.**

"Healing Divisions"

*There is neither Jew nor Gentile,
neither slave nor free,
nor is there male and female,
for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*
- Galatians 3:28 (NIV)

We invite and encourage you and your prayer group to participate in this worldwide event sponsored by Contemplative Outreach in the following three ways:

1. Attend a local group retreat. Check for event information in the chapter on COCFL.org
2. Organize your own in-home retreat.
3. A 24-hour, worldwide silent prayer vigil will be hosted on March 20-21. All are welcome to sign-up for 30-minute prayer periods, either as individuals or in groups.



The suggested video segment is "Christian Non-Duality and Unity Consciousness (18 min.)" from the series That We May Be One: Christian Non-Duality available for \$10 in the Contemplative Outreach online store. The segment is downloadable for those without Internet at the time of showing. Or you may purchase the entire DVD package for \$25 in the online store.

To access downloads and ordering information or to sign up for prayer times, visit our website at www.COCFL.org