



Speaking of Silence

Central Illinois Contemplative Outreach

Fall 2017

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Gifts While Walking Home



by *Sandy Baker*,
CICO Co-coordinator

I have walked on the Constitution Trail in Normal/Bloomington since it was

created in the mid-80s. My husband drops me off at various points along the trail; he jokes that I always find my way home!

Home is indeed what the trail now feels like to me. It is exercise, stress relief, and quiet time all in one. I know where the first hint of fall is (the sumac near Vernon Avenue) and I watch gardens grow in backyards (and I always say ‘next year, I’ll do that’).

One small garden this season was brimming with corn, tomatoes, green beans, cucumbers, and peppers. One day in September a small folding table appeared, filled with tomatoes and a sign that said ‘free tomatoes’. I took two and as I finished my walk I breathed in the distinctive summery fragrance of ripe tomatoes; later on I found out that they were also delicious in a peak-season sort of way. Beans



and peppers on a later day appeared along with more tomatoes on that table. The garden and tomatoes are now done. Anytime I walk I look automatically toward the house to see if there is anyone I can thank.

Perhaps because of the contentious times we are in, that neighborly act made a deep, soul-restoring impression on me. As the song says, it “feels like home to me”. And perhaps I can pay this act of generosity forward in some other way. “Freely have you received, freely give”, says Jesus.

Fruits of Centering Prayer

Now you know where I’m going with this metaphor, don’t you? The fruits of centering prayer, Fr. Thomas Keating says, are the fruits of the Spirit. These fruits are made visible not in centering prayer time but in the remaining “23 hours of our day”.

They are pure gift: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. These gifts I can pay forward to my world.

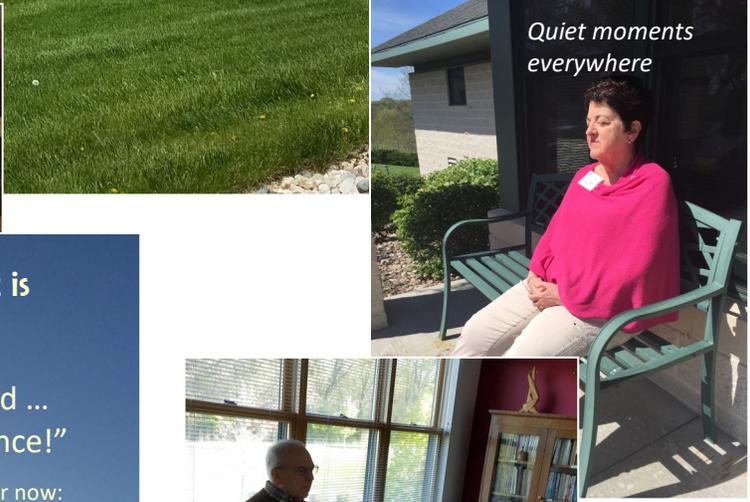


Here is something else that inspired me in the past few months. It was a first-ever meeting of Christian Contemplative organizations in August. They discussed healing our world through contemplative practice and compassionate action — see [page 5](#).

Spring Retreat at Benet House



Conference / Library is a good place to journal, draw, or read



Quiet moments everywhere

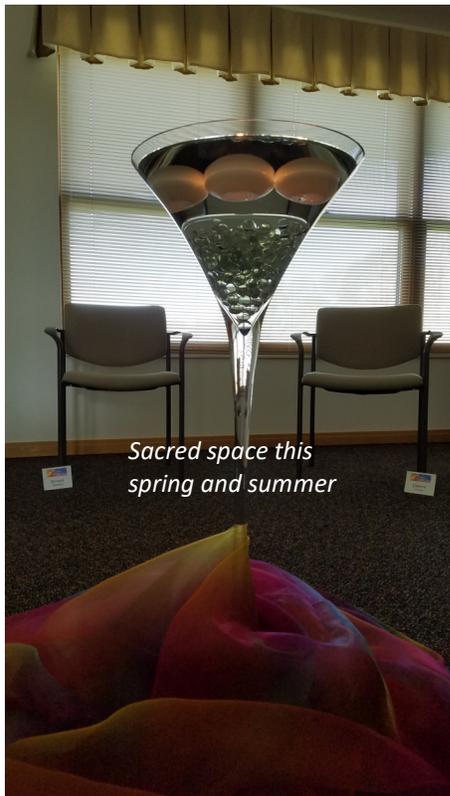
**Next retreat is
April 2018**

**“You are invited ...
Entering the Dance!”**

Click this link to register now:
[St. Mary Monastery/Benet House site.](#)




Centering prayer space



Sacred space this spring and summer



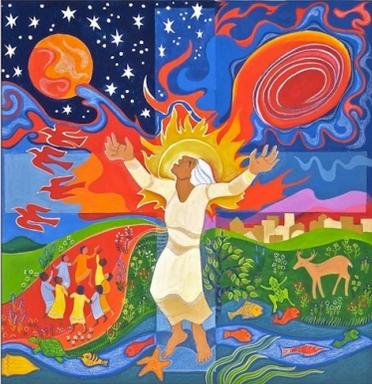
Conversation during Sunday brunch



Path down to the lake

Events This Year

This has been the year of special events for us, starting with a celebration of the 25th anniversary of the centering group started by Sr. Audrey Cleary. Each event this year wrapped several sittings of centering prayer with a special event. Here's an overview of the retreats and events. What's not easy to describe is the peace that comes as we settle in, quiet ourselves, and rest. We are in good hands, consenting to God's presence and action within us!



25th Celebration: This event included prayers and hymns, plus reflections from each of the 38 guests in our prayer circle that morning. Food and much sharing followed! See our report in [spring issue of this newsletter](#).

Gentle Movement: This event allowed our participants to be guided in gentle movements with chair yoga, all in silence. Rest and refreshment for body, soul, and spirit! Barbara Nunemaker was our gentle, wise teacher.

Spring Retreat: St Mary's Monastery has hosted this retreat for more than 30 years. Our group produces and presents the four day retreat. Theme this year was "Coming into the fullness of life." More about this on [page 2](#).

Summer Retreat Day: This was a one day version of the spring retreat. A DVD teaching and Visio Divina are key ingredients of this program which uses

the theme from the spring retreat.

Pausing: The Art of Pausing morning reminded us to pause anytime, in the midst of whatever is happening, to take in the present moment. As a way to remember these moments, author and reporter (and Bloomington resident) Judith Valente asked us to write 3 lines — a haiku — daily about what was memorable during that day. We had time for a writing assignment, walking the labyrinth, plus resting or journaling near the water fountain, butterfly garden or gazebo at the Community Cancer Center.



Calendar of Upcoming Events

Details about dates and times for these events will be shared by email and on our website. Meanwhile, mark your calendars!

Advent Evening

Wednesday, December 17, 2017
6:30 pm - 8 pm
St Patrick Church of Merna,
Bloomington

CICO Leadership Meeting

February 24, 2018
St. Patrick Church of Merna,
Bloomington

United in Prayer Day

Saturday, March 17, 2018
St. Patrick of Merna, Bloomington

Spring Retreat

April 19-22, 2018
St. Mary Monastery/Benet House,
Rock Island, IL

Introduction to Centering Prayer

2018 — to be determined
(Monday and Wednesday sessions)

Summer Retreat Day

August 2018
St. Patrick Church of Merna,
Bloomington
9 am - 3 pm

CICO Leadership Team News

These are highlights reported at the Leadership meeting in October:

Managers for Special Events Needed

Special events in the past year were very well received and many participants have asked that we repeat them in the future. To expand our event calendar, we need help managing these events. Contact Florrie or Sandy if you're interested in helping us repeat these (or any) programs in the coming year ([see page 3](#) for descriptions) :

- Gentle Movement and Centering Prayer
- Centering Prayer and Pausing

Anne Colloton, Coordinator of Introductory Programs

We are delighted to announce that Anne Colloton is our CICO Coordinator of Introductory Programs.



A presenter trained in the Contemplative Outreach method in 2015, Anne coordinated workshops this year in Bloomington. Her innovation was to schedule workshops at the same time as centering group meeting times, which allowed the attendees to move from the workshop into a group at the same time; the result was an increase in those who transitioned from workshop to a group.

In October, she also co-presented with Cynthia Fore, presenter from out of state, for a new group forming in Normal.

Anne will work with our presenters John Petersen, Toni Petersen, and Florrie to schedule the workshops.

Would you like to schedule a workshop?

Please email Anne to schedule an introductory workshop or review in your area: acolloto@gmail.com.

About the Workshops

Introductory workshops are conducted by presenters who have been commissioned by Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. They pass along the tradition of centering prayer. Workshops are presented on a regular basis and in fact are strongly recommended for those new to centering. It is a three or four hour session that includes discussion

and practice in four general areas:

1. Prayer as Relationship
2. The Centering Prayer Method
3. The Sacred Word
4. Deepening Our Relationship with God

Participants also have the opportunity to ask questions and to review their personal practice in view of what they are learning.

Blessing Bags

Collection of items for bags is underway. This fall to early winter, we hope to spread the blessings in our 25th year by creating gallon sized bags filled with items that homeless ones might need: toiletries, clothing such as socks, gloves, caps, and food such as protein bars. Creation and distribution of these will be at each group's discretion. If you want to expand or switch this to donations of larger items directly to a mission or food bank, that is up to each group. You know the needs in your community.



Videos on Contemplative Outreach site

In the past, teaching videos were VHS, then on DVD. Now, the videos are available online! Here is a link: <http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/resources>

Welcome to Our Circle



Welcome to new members who have joined our prayer groups in the past six months:

Barbara Bunch, Bloomington-Monday
 Brenda Schaut, Bloomington-Wednesday
 Brian Tellor, Bloomington-Wednesday
 Cherry Schwulst, Bloomington-Monday
 Dave Schwulst, Bloomington-Monday
 Michelle Beverage, Bloomington-Monday
 Patrick Kennedy, Bloomington-Monday
 Paul Baker, Bloomington-Friday
 Sarah Arundale, Bloomington-Monday
 Steve Meckstroth, Bloomington-Monday
 Traci Trunk, Bloomington-Monday

Facilitators: Please email Florrie or Sandy when new members join your groups. We add their names to our mailing list so they will receive this newsletter and event information. Thanks!



Cherry Schwulst is a regular at Monday at 11:30 group at St. Pat's. Welcome back, Cherry!

Here's how it began for her:

I was raised by a mother with a very deep faith. I have grown to appreciate this grace in my life more and more through the years. I was very drawn to God as a young girl but as I grew older, my heart was broken because of my father's battle with alcoholism. I left home after high school to escape the memories but with a wounded heart which I tried to heal myself. I have since learned that only our loving God can heal the human heart and that He longs to do just that!

By age 35, I found myself divorced with two small children and my own struggle with alcohol. At that moment, I could sense God drawing me back to himself and His divine healing touch. I began a program of recovery and opened more to this Divine Life and Love. About two years into sobriety, God brought Sister Audrey Cleary into my life. I



was blessed to meet regularly with her. I also was introduced to Centering Prayer and a lovely Christian community that had developed around this practice.

Centering Prayer both individually and with a weekly group has deeply impacted my life. It served me well while my husband and I ministered in the Dominican Republic for almost ten years. It has been a sweet "God surprise" to now be back in Bloomington and reconnecting with the strong Centering Prayer community that has grown up here over the years.

Centering Prayer is my "yes" to God. This time of interior silence leads to saying yes to God in other ways, to being more loving and less controlling. To being fully alive!! I was drawn to Centering Prayer because I desired healing. I have stayed for love.

To God be the Glory!!

Review: Healing through Contemplative Practice and Compassionate Action

Last year, Fr. Thomas Keating met with three other contemplative leaders who have helped to renew the Western Christian contemplative tradition in our time. Sharing a commitment to the Christian contemplative



Fr. Laurence Freeman: World Community for Christian Meditation, 1991
Fr. Thomas Keating: Contemplative Outreach, 1984
Fr. Richard Rohr: Center for Action and Contemplation, 1986
Rev. Dr. Tilden Edwards: Shalem, 1973

tradition and concern for the healing of our world, they decided to gather a group of younger contemplative leaders to exchange ideas, learn from one another and the Holy Spirit within each of them. The New Contemplative Leaders Exchange met for the first time in August at St. Benedict Monastery in Snowmass.

Highlights from the First Exchange

Participants:

- Recognized the Holy Spirit working and found great joy in being a part of a community of love who experiences contemplation as central to the Christian story.
- Shared a desire to be of service to the evolution of consciousness, and to heal our world through contemplative practice and compassionate action.
- Drew upon the wisdom of Constance Fitzgerald, a Carmelite whose words were a "balm for our souls". She speaks of finding ourselves in a moment of impasse where frustration and anger saturate our perspective. She suggests we can view these moments as opportunities for our imagination to reframe our view toward grace and love.

Watch this video: vimeo.com/232621975

Visit this Contemplative Outreach page: <http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/about-new-contemplative-leaders-exchange>

Thanks for contributing: Phileena Huertz: <https://gravitycenter.com/new-contemplative-leaders-exchange/>
Leonardo Correa, WCCM, leonardo@wccm.org



CICO Centering Prayer Communities

For meeting location, please contact the facilitator listed:

Bloomington-Normal

Monday, 11:25 am

Jana Schopp, 309/824-6283,
jana@stpatrickmerna.org

Tuesday, 9 am

Sandy Baker, 309/706-1177, bakersm@gmail.com

Wednesday, 9:00 am

Mary Beth Bantham, 309/662-9563,
mebanth@ilstu.edu;
Kathleen Kolls, 309/454-1046,
daisys12@frontier.com

Wednesday, 6:30 pm

Richard Dammers, 309/664-5921,
rdammers@ilstu.edu

Friday, 9:30 am

Florrie Dammers, 309/664-5921,
fadammers@gmail.com

Saturday, 9:00 am

Madeleine Callahan, 309-830-1354,
mcallaha@iwu.edu

Champaign-Urbana

Monday, 7:00 pm

Mary Lou Menches, 217/344-1125,
mmenches@illinois.edu

CICO Leadership Team

Coordinators

Florrie Dammers, fadammers@gmail.com
Sandy Baker, bakersm@gmail.com

Sr. Marianne Burkhard, srmarianne@cdop.org
Ed Colloton, ecolloton@gmail.com
Richard Dammers, rdammers@ilstu.edu
Spencer Gillespie, wspencerg405@gmail.com
Mary Lou Menches, mmenches@illinois.edu
Jana Schopp, jana@stpatrickmerna.org

Presenters — Introductory Programs

Anne Colloton, coordinator, acolloto@gmail.com
Florrie Dammers, *John Petersen*, *Toni Petersen*

Eureka

Thursday, 2:00 pm

Carolyn Yoder, 712-441-4881,
jubilosa52@gmail.com

Geneseo

Tuesday, 8:30 am

Susan Ford, 309/945-8504, Sueford181@gmail.com

Moline

Sunday, 6:00 pm

Wednesday, 9:00 am

Carol Mizeur, 309/363-1480, camizeur@gmail.com

Peoria

Wednesday, 6:30 pm

Cece Tedford, 309/692-6109, or 309/255-9168 (cell)

Peoria Heights

Monday, 7:00 pm

Pat Callaway, 309/657-2611 (cell) or 309/691-5586,
pcallaway9346@yahoo.com

Rock Island

Wednesday, 1:00 pm

Sr. Catherine Cleary, OSB, 309/283-2100,
ccleary@smmsisters.org



This newsletter is published twice a year, in spring and fall, by the Central Illinois Contemplative Outreach leadership team. We also keep in touch with emails and our website:

<http://centeringprayercentralillinois.org/>

It is our hope that by recognizing our widespread community and sharing our experiences, our collective centering prayer practice and community will grow.