



## Community

## Letter

We pray that this newsletter reaches you in good health and robust faith in our loving God.

Without the daily practice of sitting with God in silence, our accelerating world would be quite overwhelming sometimes. But our beautiful practice teaches us, over and over again, to release and return to the deep, sustaining presence within. We accept that thoughts come and go, but by letting go of them, we slowly participate in the Mind of Christ. As Cynthia Bourgeault recently said, (in her webinar based on her new book [The Heart of Centering Prayer: Non-Dual Christianity in Theory and Practice](#)) this unique prayer practice gently and gradually changes our very consciousness. Our mind and heart gradually become aligned within God's love. This simple prayer is no ugly duckling, she said. It is a swan!

We hope that you are taking advantage of the myriad opportunities to sustain and enrich your practice. Several are mentioned in this newsletter, including a one day retreat with Fr. William Meninger and Contemplative Outreach's annual United in Prayer Day in March. Personal retreats, such as the one described at the Desert House of Prayer, your regular prayer group, and books, DVDs and webinars offer the chance to deepen and strengthen your relationship with the Divine. In November the

remarkable Dan Miller will speak to us from the depth and breadth of his practice and study. From the conviction that God's plan for us is real and good, we find the peace and presence to engage the world in truly helpful ways. May it be so for each one of us, as opportunities arise within our unique lives.

Last November, Sr. Dianne Bergant called us to consider a new theology based on Pope Francis' recent encyclical. And Fr. Keating said in his new DVD study series entitled [God is Love: The Heart of All Creation](#) (the topic for the United Day of Prayer on March 18) that a new theology is needed in light of contemporary revelations about cosmology and evolution. All creation expresses the heart and mind of God. Thus we are urgently called to relate to the natural world as a form of God's very self. We hope the review of Sr. Dianne's remarks opens you to these considerations.

We are here for YOU, so please contact us with any comments or concerns. Our contact information is in the newsletter, as well as on the website, [www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org). We hope so much to see you at one of the coming events. Let us continue to encourage, strengthen and care for each other. Every time we do, we fill the world with loving energy. We help transform the world.

*Your servant leadership group.*



## Announcements

For Details and to Register visit

[www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org)

### Friday, February 17, 2017 Sun City

Introduction to Centering Prayer

9 am to 1 pm

Lord of Life Lutheran Church

13724 W. Meeker Blvd.

Sun City, AZ 85375

### Saturday, February 25, 2017 East Valley

Introduction to Centering Prayer

9 am to 1 pm

St. Bridget Catholic Church

2213 N. Lindsey Road

Mesa, AZ 85213

### Saturday, March 25, 2017 Scottsdale

One Day Retreat

with Fr. William Meninger, OSCO

9 am to 4:30 pm

St. Barnabas on the Desert Episcopal Church

6715 N. Mockingbird Lane

Paradise Valley, AZ 85253

### March 31 to April 2, 2016 Sedona

Centering Prayer as an 11th Step Practice

for all 12 Step Fellowships

Retreat featuring Fr. Bill Sheehan

### Taize' Prayer Service Central Phoenix

First Wednesday evening of each month

7 to 8 pm

St. Joseph Hospital Chapel

350 W. Thomas Road

Phoenix, AZ 85013

### Mini 12 Step Retreat with Bill Sheehan

Evening Friday March 10, 2017

from 6:30 to 8:30 PM

and Saturday March 11, 2017

from 9 to 4 PM

*Central United Methodist Church*

1875 N. Central Ave., Phoenix AZ 85004

Pioneer Chapel

**Rate: \$60 (includes lunch and snacks)**

**Keynote speaker: Bill Sheehan**

Partial Scholarships may be available.

Introductory presentations on the Method of Centering Prayer as an 11<sup>th</sup> step practice plus other spiritual practices will be included.

Registration available at

[www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org)

## **A Time Apart at the Desert House of Prayer**

by Jerry and Concetta Tong

The Desert House of Prayer is a secluded retreat center north of Tucson, a place of silence for the practice of Christian contemplation. Founded in 1974, it is located at the edge of the Saguaro National Park, embraced by three mountain ranges and a wide wash. There are ten rooms and four hermitages, plus a chapel, library, laundry and central dining room.

The week following last Thanksgiving, we spent several days in Tucson at the Desert House of Prayer. They welcome seekers from a variety of religious traditions or no tradition, who are searching for silence and solitude on their path to greater intimacy with God. We make sure to schedule time there every year.

Located on 31 acres of the Sonoran Desert, the natural beauty evokes an awareness of God's

presence and is ideal for fruitful solitude. We experienced quiet days including periods of Centering Prayer, praying the divine office in community and celebrating daily Mass. Breakfast and lunch were in silence while dinner was an opportunity to talk with others about the day's experiences.

This place offers a unique opportunity to truly experience the ability to move into the deep silence of our being and experience God sharing His first language. We found a renewal of our spirits as we prayed, walked the beautiful trails and spent time in the presence of God in the chapel.

We recommend this place for anyone wanting to spend a few days in silence and solitude.

## **Taize' : A Quieting, Mystical Prayer Service**

Taize' prayer (pronounced tay-zay) is a quiet, simple way of prayer designed for people of all Christian walks. It is designed to achieve a contemplative state through music, song and silence. The Taize' community is an ecumenical monastic order in Burgundy France. The group is composed of more than one hundred Brothers from Protestant and Catholic traditions. It was founded in 1940 by Brother Roger Schutz, a Reformed Protestant.

A special Taize' service is being offered here in Phoenix on the first Wednesday of the month. The simple melodic chants are sung by professional singers who add a deep sense of richness to the service, with participants joining in the chants. The songs are repeated over and over, deepening our communal prayer. The service includes a period of rich silence, prayers of praise and intercessions. There is a sense of privacy and yet a great sense of community in this prayer. Taize' is a simple form of worship that provides a space in our busy lives where we can focus on the love of God revealed in

Christ's cross and in the gathered community. There is an opportunity for private prayer for yourself, for your loved ones and others. During the service you are invited to approach the Icon cross which is surrounded by lighted candles. You can bring your concerns and anxieties and pray for yourself and those you love. Some people leave the service with a deep sense of love and peace.

The Taize' service is held from 7 to 8 pm on the first Wednesday of the month at St. Joseph's Hospital Chapel located at 350 W. Thomas Road Phoenix, Arizona 85013. There is parking in the 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue parking garage which is easily accessed off Thomas Road and 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue (which has a traffic light). The chapel has an outside entrance on the South East side off the main hospital entrance and is well marked. If you have any questions contact Sister M. Rachel Torrez at 602 944-2728, or [rtorrez@cox.net](mailto:rtorrez@cox.net). Once you attend for the first time, you want to return again. Please don't miss this opportunity.

## "God so Loved the World..."(John 3:16)

**Sister Dianne Bergant, Ph.D.**

**Saturday, November 5, 2016**

by Kathy Kramer-Howe

Dianne Bergant joined us after travelling from her home in Chicago for a fascinating and inspiring day of enrichment. As a professor of Old Testament scholarship, she combined deep understanding of the scriptural roots of our faith with a wise and humorous understanding of every day experience.

Taking as her inspiration Pope Francis' encyclical, *Laudato Si*, Sr. Dianne wanted to talk with us about the need for new lenses on old theology. Good spirituality is grounded in good theology, she asserted. Theology attempts to talk about the cosmos and people's relationship to God. Good theology demands that we know what lenses we are using to understand scriptural truths. Some of Sr. Dianne's frameworks include linguistics, history, culture and technology, metaphor, authorship, audience, and worldview. Our contemporary understanding of the cosmos is totally different from that of the ancient Israelites, so that needs updating. And hidden in the rich poetry and metaphor of the Hebrew Scriptures are vital messages about God, Creation and ourselves.

In the modern world we tend to look to science and technology for definitive explanations, yet Sr. Dianne called on our life experience as proof that these are not the primary ways of understanding truth. The important experiences in life - birth, death, love, relationship - are real and true, even if history and science can account for only a small part of them. What is humanly meaningful has truth, although words are inadequate to describe it. We use metaphor and simile, emotions and gestures to express those truths ("it's as if..." "it's like..."). We are helped when people listen to the human truth being expressed, beyond the bare facts or unanswerable questions. Biblical metaphors and stories serve the same purpose.

Sr. Dianne examined the book of Genesis for its deep truths about our relationships with Creation.

God created us and continues to come to us through creation. We were formed from the very dust of the earth. The earth is both the source of our existence and our responsibility to nurture. In his encyclical the Pope asserted that the earth is not ours, it is God's. Thus we have no right to plunder the powers of the earth. Sr. Dianne organized her talk around three themes from the encyclical: Radical Anthropocentrism, Interconnectedness, and Interdependence.

**Radical Anthropocentrism** simply means that human beings value other life in the world by whether or not we think it is useful. We use a human-centered lens to guide our treatment of other insects, animals and ecologies. This mind-set has grown over the centuries based on interpretations of scripture and our human nature. In traditional cultures, one can see examples of other ways to relate to creation (reverently and sustainably). Modern peoples struggle to understand the interconnectedness of all life on earth, and the damage we inflict if we take too much, too often. If our pesticides destroy too much milkweed, we will lose the monarch butterflies. Scripture reveals the unwavering truth that God created all that is, so that everything that IS has value, has a share of God's self. Sr. Dianne used stories in Genesis to illustrate that our "original sin" was placing ourselves - not with God - but as Gods, with the powers of God. In the theologies of the Ancient World this was the most destructive error and it always ended badly.

**Interconnectedness** is a reality that we already know. We breathe, we eat, we need the natural world in order to continue to be alive. We are totally interconnected with the natural world, yet it is not dependent on us. Lower forms of life, such as microorganisms, serve higher forms of life. We would not exist for a moment without them both within and outside our bodies. It doesn't work the other way around, however. Remembering this humbling reality is important in combating our

anthropocentrism. There is a deep, natural connection between us and the world. "Every single human is born a **nature mystic**," Sr. Dianne said. "When do we lose that? If we pay attention to how nature comforts and soothes us, we can feel at home everywhere."

Where humans excel is in our psychic complexity. We strive to grasp the biggest possible picture, to understand how everything works. The next evolutionary step in consciousness may or may not occur, but if it does, Sr. Dianne wondered if it would be in greater unity. Examples she cited were The World Bank, multinational corporations, the internet. Humanity has come from deep levels of tribal, ethnic and religious limitations, but experience has made us break down some limitations. Some people can now conceive of themselves as belonging not just to one nation and one religion, but to the planet and to a worldwide search for God, a truly interconnected world.

**Interdependence** refers to our relationship with God. Sr. Dianne used the Book of Job to illustrate this eternal dynamic. Job suffers and demands to know, Why? He craves justice and a just world. God never answers Job's urgent, existential questions, instead seeking to restore Job's trust and awe. Just as we often do, Job took God to task about things he could not understand or control. God gave him an experience of the power and majesty of God in the heavens and on earth. The religious question here is: can we trust a God who has all the cards and doesn't show them to us? And, if not, what are the other options? Can we trust, or do we demand to understand? Can we see how we - and everything else - is held and sustained by God even when things happen that we find

incomprehensible? That's a broad and humbling perspective.

Sr. Dianne reminded us that in the Hebrew Scriptures, the primary names of God are merciful, gracious and abounding in generosity. Can we trust that God is filled with loving kindness in the face of a broken world? No definition or metaphor can fully describe God, but the images we use suggest protection, nurturance and steadfastness. Creation, she suggested, could be understood as an emptying of Godself, a representation of Godself. God is in all things, but not limited by all things. **All that exists participates in the reality that is God.** Sr. Dianne suggested that this theology, if taken fully to heart in all our actions, can finally place us in right relationship with God's creation, one of interconnectedness, reverence and protection.



### **Contact People**

The following may be contacted for information about Contemplative Outreach programs and meetings in their area.

- Rick & Kathy Kramer-Howe....Phoenix 602.955.6057
- Phil and Mary Leonard.....Phoenix 480.966.7558
- Robert Johnson.....Prescott 928.717.2441
- Rusty Swavelly.....Sedona 928.300.2949

## Grace in Prescott

### How St. Luke's Centering Prayer Group Began

by Keehna Sture

When I moved to Prescott last year, the words “Centering Prayer” were simply words. Yes, I had heard of Father Keating in the 1980s, when I was a Sister of Mercy, but my own practice of contemplative prayer was based on *Lectio Divina*, which had become a deep and meaningful part of my spiritual life, so I felt no urging to expand my vision until a grace-filled day in May, 2016, when, as a new parishioner of St. Luke's Episcopal Church, I met with Father Pierre-Henry Buisson to explore the interface between the needs of the parish and the God-given gifts that I was bringing to my new church home.

When Father Buisson shared with me that several parishioners had expressed an interest in establishing a Centering Prayer group at St. Luke's, I told him, with some trepidation, that I would consider being its facilitator, but that the “training” would need to be handled by someone who was experienced and well-equipped to teach the method of Centering Prayer.

As it turned out, Father Buisson had already been in communication with a deeply spiritual, grace-filled person—Linda Guy—a long-time practitioner of Centering Prayer who had moved to Prescott from Phoenix early in 2016. Even before Linda's relocation, she had been asked by Nancy Carmichael, a member of St. Luke's and a fellow spiritual director of Linda, to speak with Father Buisson about the parish's interest in establishing a contemplative prayer group, and what Linda might be able to do to “make it happen.” In response to Nancy's request, Linda graciously contacted Father Buisson to offer her skills, expertise, and experience to “incubate” and establish a Centering Prayer group at St. Luke's, whenever the seeds began to

show signs of taking root and embracing growth. After my meeting with Father Buisson in May, Father Buisson contacted Linda and asked that she and I collaborate in establishing a Centering Prayer group at St. Luke's. From our very first meeting, my concerns about our group understanding what Centering Prayer is, and how to do it, were put to rest. Linda proved to be the perfect mentor!

To formalize the training, Linda contacted a friend, Rusty Swavely, a certified instructor of Centering Prayer who lives in Sedona; Rusty generously offered to present Contemplative Outreach's “Introduction to Centering Prayer” at St. Luke's on August 20th, and to facilitate the first follow-up session the following week. The introductory session was publicized in local and social media, and 20 people attended. By the end of the follow-up sessions, which Linda and I co-facilitated, there was a core group of 6-8 people at St. Luke's who have been meeting twice a month since October for Centering Prayer.

To create a prayerful ambience in a small and intimate setting, Father Buisson gave the green light to converting a small classroom that was being used for storage into what is now called St. Luke's Meditation Room. With natural lighting, a fresh coat of paint, new blinds, and a beautiful cross of manzanita wood crafted by two artists from a woodcarvers' group that meets at St. Luke's, the room provides a welcoming atmosphere for those seeking silence and a place to be still.

So, even in little Prescott, grace abounds! With all the moving parts needed to get a new prayer group up and running, by what other means could the seed of an idea become reality in the space of five months?



# CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH® *of Phoenix*

SILENCE  
SOLITUDE  
SOLIDARITY  
SERVICE

## THE BLESSED TENSION

### Contemplative Prayer and Enlivening Incongruities

**November 11, 2017**

**9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M.**

**Central United Methodist Church  
875 N. Central Avenue, Phoenix 85004**

**Seating is limited  
Lunch provided**

#### Guest Speaker



**Dan Miller** earned a Master of Divinity and a Master of Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, and a Ph.D. in Theology and Personality from Claremont School of Theology.

Dan Miller is rooted and nurtured in the contemplative and Prophetic traditions. He attempts to help others weave lives of spiritual depth. He sees the hallmarks of an Integral spirituality as being mature, holistic, enlivening, responsible, liberating, and in service to love. His privilege and joy is to support others in the cultivation of a more genuine self and intimacy with God. He holds an appreciation and reverence for serious spiritual seekers. He has been blessed by mutually enhancing relationships with people from a variety of religious traditions and spiritual paths.

You do not want to miss this inspiring presentation.

#### Parking in church lot AND North corner of Phoenix Museum lot

**Fee is \$40.00. Payment is due at time of registration.**

**Register at [www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org) and pay via PayPal, credit card, or mail check made out to Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix to:  
Sister Rachel Torrez 8141 N. 16<sup>th</sup> Street #5 Phoenix, AZ 85020.**

**For more information or questions regarding scholarships contact Sister M. Rachel at [rtorrez@cox.net](mailto:rtorrez@cox.net) or 602 944-2728.**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ check for vegetarian lunch-**IMPORTANT** \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

## **United Day of Prayer: God is Love, the Heart of Creation**

**Saturday, March 18, 2017**

**9:30 am to 1:00 pm**

**Central United Methodist Church**

**1875 N. Central Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85004**

You are invited to join your local contemplative community for a unique day of enrichment. On this special day of the year, prayer communities worldwide join in love and prayer. We gather, center, share fellowship, view and discuss a new DVD by Fr. Thomas Keating, and enjoy light refreshments. Books will be available for sale.

Please register online at

[www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org).

Suggested donation is \$15 and proceeds are shared with the international office of Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. You may also call or email Sister Rachel Torrez at 602-944-2728, or [rtorrez@cox.net](mailto:rtorrez@cox.net).



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