



Dear Contemplative Community of Arizona,

How exciting to feel spring approaching in our amazing home state. In the Valley of the Sun, the mountains have a fuzz of green and desert bushes are blooming. At higher elevations you might still get snow! The Post Intensive Retreat at Santa Rita Abbey finished in a thick, heavy snowstorm that covered cars and roads and the nearby Santa Rita peaks. It felt miraculous.

This edition of our twice-yearly newsletter brings you some endings and some beginnings. Sometimes it's hard to sort out which is which. We remember a beloved member of the St. Theresa Catholic community, Dorothy Burns. We celebrate Rector Jim Clark who is retiring after twenty years of shepherding his congregation at Saint Barnabas on the Desert Episcopal Church on a contemplative journey.

We answer the question, "What If I Want to Teach Centering Prayer?" We give information in the article on how to call us if you feel that invitation within you.

You will find a review of the Centering Prayer Summit 2024 which honored the 40th anniversary of Contemplative Outreach, Ltd, with an emphasis on the profound spiritual kinship between Contemplative Outreach and 12 Step Programs.

Finally, we include an introduction to our presenter for this coming Fall Enrichment Day, Fr. Philip Chircop, SJ. He is an artist, lover of beauty and beloved retreat leader around the world. Surely, beauty is one of the heart-paths to God. **We will keep you posted as we finalize a date and a description of the day.**

Our faithfulness to Centering Prayer helps to heal the world. Have no doubt about that. God in Christ is with each of us in love that has no bounds and no ending.

Into Silence, Service and Solitude,

Your Chapter Service Team Your Core Community

Dust

**Instead of ashes—because
we know death is coming—**

**you draw orange blossoms
on my forehead, fragrant**

**incipient fruits. Because ashes
abound, you draw a rabbit**

**in a lettuce patch, a hungry
cottontail whose mother scolds**

**even as she feeds him tea, tucks
him under quilts. In lieu of ashes,**

**you draw a flock of Canada geese,
trundling across a city street**

**as if they have the right
to stop the cars. How can they**

**know a yellow yield-to-geese sign
guards them in their crossing?**

**Ashes, I want to refuse them,
just as I want to turn away from**

**war's broad cast. Dust, you
utter, drawing close my face.**

- Mary Stone

An Introduction to Fr. Philip Chircop Presenter at the Fall 2024 Enrichment Day



Fr. Philip is a Jesuit priest born on the Mediterranean Island of Malta. He has advanced degrees in Pastoral Theology, Communications and Spirituality. He has worked in high school, university, and parish settings in various capacities. More recently he has been mainly involved in retreat work, spiritual direction, as well as offering workshops, seminars and keynotes on any theme that has to do with being fully human and fully alive.

He is an artist at heart and madly in love with all things beautiful and soulful: music, painting, sculpture, photography, film, theatre, poetry, good company, good food, good wine and more. He strongly believes that beauty is a uniquely wonderful entry into the mystery of the God *“whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.”* God can indeed be sensed and experienced in all things if we have ears to hear and eyes to see, if we have the patience to have a long, loving look at the real that surrounds us.

Fr. Philip considers himself a seeker, exploring and employing new, fresh and creative ways to proclaim the Good News in the hope of helping fellow pilgrims and seekers to embrace real and radical changes that will lead to conversion and transformation.

The date and description for this event are not finalized. Watch for further information on the website www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org. Notices will also be sent to those on our email list.

Farewell to Rev. Jim Clark



Rev. Jim Clark, Rector at St. Barnabas on the Desert Episcopal Church in Scottsdale, is retired at the end of February 2024 after a 20 year tenure as the leader of the parish.

Jim’s dynamic leadership has resulted in a flourishing contemplative life program. He began by spending a few years deepening a friendship with Christ among his congregants. He encouraged a method of reading scripture in small groups called “The Art of Engaging Scripture”. He moved on to teaching many Centering Prayer Introductory Workshops and leading retreats. St. Barnabas has become a priceless gift to those attempting to “live ordinary life with extraordinary love,” as Fr. Thomas Keating used to say. On the church’s website (saintbarnabas.org) you will find listings for retreats, Quiet Days, a monthly Taize service, and Centering Prayer groups.

In recognition of Fr. Jim’s devotion to spirituality, the chapel has been named The Jim Clark Contemplative Chapel. He will be missed by his church and by the many who have been spiritually nourished there over the years.



“What if I Want to be Able to Teach Centering Prayer?”

There is nothing more central to the existence of Contemplative Outreach worldwide than to teach and support the practice of Centering Prayer. Its vision statement says: ***We embrace the process of transformation in Christ, both in ourselves and in others, through the practice of Centering Prayer.***

Those who desire to learn about Centering Prayer are directed to attend a Centering Prayer Introductory Workshop. This is where the seeds are sown for new prayer groups to take root and a daily practice supported and nourished.

The training to teach this workshop occurs in a **Presenter Formation for Centering Prayer**. This formation provides the participants time to become familiar with the material of the four conferences presented in the Centering Prayer Introductory Workshop. They also have an opportunity to present this material in a small group. Participants learn together and support one another.

The Presenter Formation usually takes place over two or more days. The formation is for service to the prayer and the community. Occasionally someone will participate in a Presenter Formation and discern a call to other aspects of service. Even if this is the case they will have benefited because their understanding and commitment has deepened and their hearts opened.

AZ Contacts

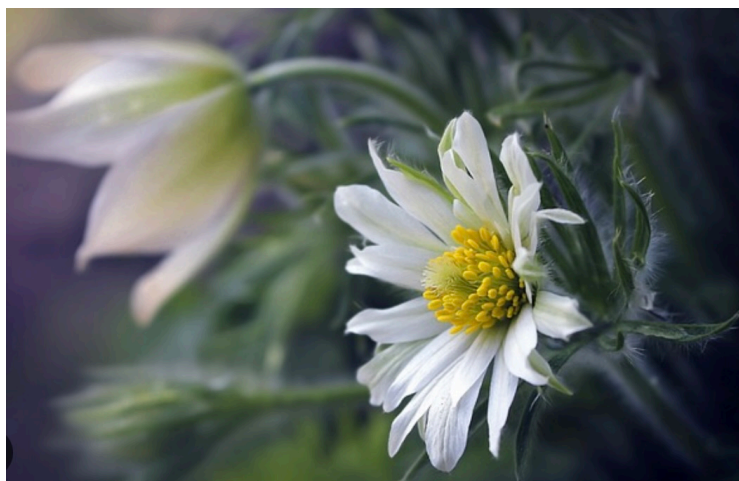
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The prerequisites for attending a **Presenter Formation for Centering Prayer** are:

1. Faithful to the daily practice of Centering Prayer for a minimum of 3 years.
2. Participated in a Centering Prayer Introductory Program.
3. Attended a five- to ten-day Centering Prayer Intensive Retreat (prior to completing the Presenter-in-Training phase).
4. Have read *Open Mind, Open Heart* and be familiar with *Invitation to Love* and *Intimacy with God*, all by Fr. Thomas Keating.
5. Have viewed most of the Spiritual Journey DVD series or read the transcripts.

If you are feeling invited to explore this training please contact Kathy Kramer-Howe. She will be able to answer questions about the prerequisites, content and scheduling. There are options in discerning someone’s readiness for the experience and for scheduling it.

Kathy Kramer-Howe is the local coordinator and welcomes your interest in the Presenter Formation for Centering prayer. You can reach her at kramerhowe@gmail.com or 602.421.0444.



Centering Prayer Summit 2024 – A Review

by Dave D. and Dave M.

A Centering Prayer Summit was held virtually on zoom January 20 - 21, 2024. It was organized by Keith Kristish and team, developers of Closer Than Breath. They bring important spiritual teachers of the contemplative journey together for a couple of days annually. Their website, www.closerthanbreath.com, has many great offerings to help those who are “hungry for spiritual depth, transformation and community”, such as virtual retreats, introduction to Centering Prayer and a weekly e-newsletter.

This year's summit honored the 40th anniversary of Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. and was titled **Answering the Cry of Creation: Centering Prayer Past, Present and Future.** Cynthia Bourgeault gave the opening address on the future of Centering Prayer. Fr. Laurence Freeman, Rev. Michael Battle, Caroline Oakes and MaryJane Yates had inspiring messages.

Five members of the National 12-Step Outreach Service Team (2 from Phoenix and 3 from St. Louis) were part of a panel, “Emotional Sobriety – Thomas Keating Meets Bill Wilson, - Finding Freedom Through the Contemplative Dimension of the Twelve Steps.”

When Fr. Thomas Keating started reading the writings of Alcoholics Anonymous co-founder, Bill Wilson, he made a lifelong spiritual connection. Bill's own struggles with depression led him to wonder how the 12 Steps could be used, not just for sobriety, but for emotional maturation. Bill asks the question in a January 1958 letter titled, “The Next Frontier: Emotional Sobriety, published in the A.A. Grapevine: “Why do so many who have achieved sobriety still suffer emotionally in their daily lives?” He is led to honestly examine the energy centers (control,

esteem and security) of childhood wounding that still exert demands on our works and relationships, (“looking for love in all the wrong places,” as Fr. Thomas used to say) and which must be healed through a deeper relationship with a Higher Power/God. Fr. Thomas recognized the beauty of the Steps and their compatibility with a contemplative dimension. You can read the full text of Bill's letter here <https://silkworth.net/alcoholics-anonymous/the-next-frontier-emotional-sobriety/>.

The entire event was beautifully done. It's exciting to see groups like Closer Than Breath spring up and bring in voices we don't always get to hear. The annual Summit is something to look forward to next year. We will alert the Arizona contemplative community once it is scheduled in 2025.

*The process
of conversion
begins with
genuine
openness to
change*

Thomas Keating



Remembering Dorothy Burns



9/25/1929 to 12/30/2023



Most of you never met Dorothy, who attended St. Theresa Catholic Church on Thomas Road and 54th Street, but she was one of those bright lights whose life it is good to celebrate. She was the third of 15 children born on a farm in Easton, Missouri. She was bright and ambitious from early on. Her father mortgaged the farm to enable her to get a bachelor's degree in chemistry. She went on to higher education in microbiology in Phoenix, AZ and worked all her life in the medical field.

After her husband left her with 8 small children, her life was never easy. She worked full time, raised her children, and still made time to serve her church. She provided home-bound communion and served as an eucharistic minister. She even washed, ironed and stitched clergy vestments. Ever faithful.

Once Centering Prayer was introduced at her church, Dorothy fell in love with it. No matter how weary she was she showed up for weekly prayer group. Once her children were grown she devoted a room in her small house to store

and distribute the books and resources kept by our local Contemplative Outreach chapter for sale or loan. She served several Centering Prayer Intensive Retreats by cooking, serving and leading prayer sessions. A deeply feeling woman throughout her life, she struggled when any of her 14 siblings struggled, not to mention her children, grandchildren and their children. She was there for them all. Ever faithful.

In her last months she consented to move to assisted living which she wryly called "finishing school." She still joined our weekly group on zoom when she could, including just a week before her death. She remained sharp, independent-minded, wise and honest. A member of the group said "She spoke such deep reality of love and suffering". The light of Christ only grew brighter in her so that even after her death her presence and voice felt as near as ever. She went on ahead and showed us the path. Thank you, ever faithful Dorothy.

Mary Leonard
Kathy Kramer-Howe



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March 8-9, 2024 United in Prayer Day

A free, globally-hosted 23-hour day of prayer accessible via Zoom

**In the global unity of silence as God's first language,
we hold vigil for suffering humanity and all creation,
and we honor Fr. Thomas Keating's birthday (March 7),
the 40th anniversary of the Contemplative Outreach community
and the growing presence of Christ among us.**

Join in silence and community at any time, as many times as you are able. Each hour will include at least 20 minutes of Centering Prayer, followed by an offering from the hosting group, which may include a video segment, the practice of Lectio Divina, selected readings, community sharing, chanting, etc.

As we participate in the 23 hours of United in Prayer, let us remember and hold in our hearts all the members of the worldwide Centering Prayer community who do not have access to Zoom / internet technology including those who live in remote areas and those who are incarcerated.

**No registration necessary.
The event begins on Friday March 8 at 9pm Eastern Time (UTC-5).**

**A detailed schedule will be posted on the website www.contemplativeoutreach.org
along with the Zoom link.**