



Dear Centering Prayer Community of Arizona,

The winter and cool nights are loosening their grip on our beautiful state. The news and cultural calendar come at us steadily and it is not hard to feel overwhelmed. We are grateful for the steady hand of our Centering Prayer periods, both alone and in group settings, for the unwavering acceptance offered in God's sacred Silence.

Contemplative Outreach, Ltd, our worldwide, grass-roots organization founded by Thomas Keating in the 1980's, celebrated our 40th anniversary last fall in Atlanta, Georgia. Fr. Keating chose Emory University as the repository for his works. You will find a heart-felt reflection by David D., a leader in the Twelve-Step Outreach team, in this newsletter. There is also information on the 2025 United in Prayer Day taking place for twenty-four hours between March 14 and 15, 2025.

There are several local opportunities for spiritual enrichment. They can be found on the Event Calendar. Among the offerings are a day with Jim Finley, PhD at Saint Barnabas on the Desert Episcopal Church, Jim McElroy on Etty Hillesum ("The Story of a Mystic") and a monthly gathering open to all 12-Step programs in Central Phoenix. In addition, you will find a reflection on what it was like to return to an Intensive Retreat after years away.

As many of you know, St. Benedict Monastery and the Snowmass Retreat Center in Colorado are now closed and are up for sale. As monks and sisters age and

professions dwindle, even the Himmerod Cistercian Abbey, founded in 1134 by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, will be closing. We have been graced to receive callings to live our ordinary life with extraordinary love and to be contemplatives in society. Our presence each year at Santa Rita Abbey in Sonoita gives the sisters great hope for the world.

In silence, service, and solitude,

Your Chapter Service Team



Event Calendar

For more information see www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org

Learning to Live a More Contemplative Way of Life

James Finley, PhD

Saturday, March 8, 2025

9:30am to 1 pm

*St. Barnabas on the Desert Episcopal Church,
6715 N. Mockingbird Lane, Paradise Valley,
AZ, 85253*

James Finley returns to Saint Barnabas via interactive livestream for what promises to be an unforgettable experience. Dr. Finley will share the teachings of the saints and mystics to guide us in the contemplative way of life.

Discussion will include the unexpected graces and obstacles that we encounter in seeking to follow this path. Also, the ways we are led out of darkness into light and are moved by grace to help others do the same.

Tickets are \$50. This is a live event in the sanctuary, not on zoom.

Etty Hillesum: Story of a Mystic

Jim McElroy

Saturday, April 5, 2025

9 am to 1 pm including snacks.

*Shepherd of the Hills United Church of Christ,
5524 E. Lafayette Blvd., Phoenix, AZ, 85018*

Etty Hillesum was a Dutch writer and spiritual seeker whose life was ended at Auschwitz concentration camp in 1943. She left behind a diary that was published as “An Interrupted Life,” and it has become an international treasure. Like Anne Frank, Elie Wiesel and Viktor Frankl, Etty faced the very worst of humanity and found roots of spiritual and humanistic resilience that nurture us today. Think of this as a day of retreat and community renewal.

\$25 suggested donation.

Saint Barnabas Spring Silent Directed Retreat

Thursday March 13, 2025 -

Sunday March 16, 2025

Redemptorist Renewal Center, Tucson, AZ

A Centering Prayer retreat at the beautiful Picture Rocks retreat center with spiritual reflections by Rev. Dan Burner.

Twelve Step Monthly Silent Saturday Gathering

First Saturday of each month

9-11 am

1st Congregational Church

1407 N. 2nd Street, Phoenix, AZ 85004.

A mini-retreat open to all 12-Step programs, a chance to deepen your 11th Step practice and reap the benefits of extended Silence.

AZ Contacts

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Atlanta, a Hurricane, and the Fortieth Anniversary of Contemplative Outreach

A Reflection by David D

The 40th anniversary Conference in Atlanta's Emory University began in the backdrop of Hurricane Helene. Many had to cancel because of difficulties traveling there, some speakers changed from in-person to zoom appearances. Still, many of us made it there before airports cancelled flights. In some ways, it seemed like an appropriate analogy to the journey of Contemplative Outreach over the past 40 years by consenting to God during adversity. One of the opening Session talks by Wendy Maree from South Africa was on the significance of 40 from a Biblical perspective where forty is referenced hundreds of times. Examples such as 40 days and 40 nights and periods of times where we wonder about before arriving in some place new.

The conference center was in a beautiful, wooded setting with Fall color just beginning. There were courtyards all around and the rooms where we did our group sits three times a day looked out to nature. Sitting together was such a memorable experience. At different times during the conference, we were led through Lectio, the Welcoming Prayer, and given revisions to the Introduction to Centering Prayer program to remind us of their transformative power.

There were many great talks throughout the conference. Fr. Bill Sheehan opened on Saturday morning remembering how he ended up at the first Llama retreat where Fr. Thomas Keating gave his original teachings on Centering Prayer and Lectio Divina. Here, Fr. Thomas developed the teachings on prayer as a relationship that develops over fidelity to the practice. He pointed out that Thomas Keating will be remembered for his teaching of spiritual development through human growth and development, along with the pure receptivity of this method of prayer.

Later that afternoon, there was a talk by Natanel Miles-Yepez D.D. who is Chair of Religious Studies and Director of the Keating Schachter

Center for Interspirituality at Naropa University. He spoke profoundly about the two pillars of Thomas Keating's work as being Centering Prayer and Inter-spiritual dialogue. He chronicled the time from 1981 after Thomas resigned as Abbott of Saint Joseph Monastery in Massachusetts, freeing himself to travel and engage more with Master teachers from other world disciplines and religions. In 1984, the same year Contemplative Outreach was formed, Thomas convened the first Snowmass Dialogue where he invited Zen, Tibetan, Buddhist and other Masters who practice silent meditation to come together. They focused on agreements of beliefs and common language to describe the experience of Silence, such as Ultimate Reality (often used in Alcoholics Anonymous). Natanel said the philosophy of such dialogue is taken from German linguist and philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who said, "A person who knows only his language, knows nothing of his." In the same way, a person who knows only her religion, knows nothing of hers. Thomas wanted to know the common heart of people who sat in silence. These dialogues have continued, a book published, and a few video recordings are available.

Many other interesting workshops and talks were by groups such as the Young Contemplatives, New Monastics, Prison Ministry, Extension Contemplative International, and two 12-Step Speakers. All of these were areas Thomas supported generously in the last 10 years of his life. In most of these areas, the Christian language could be modified to spiritual language to make Centering Prayer accessible to the particular population.

Speakers from the Candler Center spoke about the curation of Keating and Contemplative Outreach documents. So far, they have 105 boxes that include original drafts of books, photos, AV

materials from the first conferences at the Llama Institute, as well as later ones, minutes, bylaws, and materials translated into other languages. They are in the process of arranging content in a coherent manner, providing descriptions and storage in a safe, suitable environment. Because of the storm, the campus was closed, so we weren't able to see the collection.

The Board of CO Ltd presented the new structure framework they plan to transition to in the future from the current hierarchical management style. They refer to this as the Council of Servant Leadership. The change was based on Thomas' desire to rely on the wisdom and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The makeup of the council will be

from service teams and volunteers. At this time, there are 11 "types" of members. The Chapters are represented under Community Connections with one representative out of eleven on the Council.

Overall, I heard from many people there that this was the best Conference ever. A long-time member said it was the first truly de-centralized conference where it no longer relied on the top members of the Organism (Contemplative Outreach does not describe itself as an Organization). My feeling about the time there was, it was almost like being with Thomas for a few days. There were so many remembrances of him from long-time friends and ministries that spread because of him. I left with a close Presence of Thomas.

Beneficiaries of Divine Economy Funds

Last year, for the first time, a fund at the national office was endowed to assist local chapters in making the teachings of Fr. Thomas Keating more affordable to people attending an Intensive Retreat. The Arizona chapter offers two winter retreats at Santa Rita Abbey south of Tucson, and both were full in January and February 2025. Our chapter was a recipient of Divine Economy funds that reduced retreat fees by \$200 per person for the Intensive Retreat.

Although, I have attended the Post-Intensive Retreat for years, I made the decision to participate in the Intensive Retreat this year. Along with many periods of Centering Prayer in the magnificent silence of the Santa Rita foothills, we watched two hour-long videos per day. The videos were recently updated to span Fr. Thomas Keating's evolving thoughts over decades. Those included from early theories about levels of consciousness in human evolution, the inevitable effects of the Human Condition and to the almost unlimited potential available to each of us for growth into Christ's very heart.

As a Centering Prayer practitioner of many decades, I found myself enthralled to experience once again the dynamic presence of Fr. Thomas as well as the profound reassurances in his teachings. I could see his growth as he aged, sense the abiding well of silence within him, and the truth of his teachings. Included was the documentary made about him by his nephew, **A Rising Tide of Silence**, as well as the story of Brother Bernie, where our tears matched his as he shared that Bernie's care for him was just like the love of God.

To participate in the Trappist sisters' offices at Santa Rita Abbey is to remember that spiritual growth demands repetition and fidelity to teachings. Without that, our minds and intentions can gradually forget about God. I would happily attend another Intensive Retreat to be reminded of the sacredness of this journey, with or without the generous funds from the Divine Economy. And remember, our chapter always has scholarship help available!



In-Person Spring Enrichment Day ***With Jim McElroy***

Etty Hillesum: Story of a Mystic

April 5, 2025, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

**Shepherd of the Hills United Church of Christ
5524 E. Lafayette Blvd. Phoenix, AZ 85018**

Jim McElroy is a speaker, retreat leader and a member of the Twelve Step Contemplative Outreach community.

Etty Hillesum was a Dutch writer and spiritual seeker whose life was ended at Auschwitz concentration camp in 1943. She left behind a diary that was published as “An Interrupted Life,” and became an international treasure. Like Anne Frank, Elie Wiesel and Viktor Frankl, Etty faced the very worst of humanity and found roots of spiritual and humanistic resilience that inspire and reassure us today.

Think of this as a day of retreat and community

A donation of \$25 is requested but not required.

Register on-line at:
www.contemplativeoutreach-phoenix.org

Or mail registration to:
Jeannie Lashinske
5728 E Orange Blossom Ln
Phoenix 85018

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Make check out to *Contemplative Outreach of Phoenix*

For additional information contact: Jeanie Lashinske
at 480.423.1645 or email Jmlashinske@gmail.com



33rd Annual United in Prayer Day
March 14 - March 15, 2025



A free, globally-hosted 18-hour prayer vigil accessible via Zoom
in the global unity of silence as God's first language.

We hold vigil for suffering humanity,
all creation and the growing presence of Christ among us.
We honor Thomas Keating's birthday (March 7).

You may 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 and an offering from the hosting group.

As we participate in this community 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 is necessary.

The event begins on Friday March 14th at 9pm Eastern Time (UTC-4).

**A link to the current schedule can be found on the opening page of the website
www.contemplativeoutreach.org**



Contemplative Outreach, LTD.
5728 E Orange Blossom Ln
Phoenix, AZ 85018
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