

Dear Friends,

In the last issue we announced that COMW was hosting a discernment meeting on March 4th to discern a new Chapter Coordinator. As a result, I am pleased to tell you that Guy Semmes of Potomac, MD will serve as our new Coordinator. Please join me in welcoming Guy. Peace - Ron Barnett



Induction of new COMW Coordinator. Guy Semmes- L, Ron Barnett - R.

Greetings,

I am a builder by profession. With the assistance of the leadership team, I expect to build upon the solid foundation Ron created during his term. During my past six years as a member of the COMW Servant Leadership Team, I have watched Ron wisely and competently lead our chapter from its loose structure to its becoming a solid organization. He has kept the Contemplative Outreach mission always clear and central. I hope to do the same.

The preparation and commitment that it took to host Father Thomas Keating's visit here last May mobilized all of us and also increased public awareness of COMW. More people are now aware of what COMW does to support prayer groups, facilitators, and individuals in their spiritual journey. We are receiving more and more requests for information, retreats, workshops, etc. Our Chapter now supports and is supported by over 40 Centering Prayer groups.

There are now many programs that Contemplative Outreach and COMW are offering locally to support you in your spiritual growth. Some wonderful programs are listed in this newsletter. I hope you will dive in and experience the possibilities. Through prayerful listening and under the guidance of Ron Barnett, these programs have arisen as a

response to requests expressed by the Maryland/Virginia/DC contemplative community. I truly hope that they will help and encourage you to continue to grow in your relationship with God. In addition to taking advantage of this year's offerings, I invite you to listen to your heart to see if you feel called to volunteer with us.

In these turbulent times, contemplative prayer is the element of the Church that reminds us of our common life in God and holds the core Christian message without the need to justify or defend. Through the Centering Prayer practice, contemplatives open and consent to God's presence in every situation. In my experience, contemplative life is the bridge between all denominations and religions.

May God's love be present to you and in you now and always,

Guy Semmes

Theological Principle #12 of Contemplative Outreach:

"We cultivate and foster a spirit of unity and the utmost charity throughout the spiritual network".

New Website!

Check out our new website at <http://www.comwcp.org> that was designed by Phil Stone. We can now offer you more information about Contemplative Outreach Metropolitan Washington offerings and other information. If you would like to add something to the website, please contact Carol Leach at 410.263.1752, carollleach@aol.com.

Prison Ministry Offers Freedom Personal Reflection

Editor: Centering Prayer has made a profound difference in the lives of prisoners. A book entitled The Way of the Prisoner Breaking the Chains of Self through Centering Prayer and Centering Practice, written by Jens Soering, tells how Centering Prayer enables him to survive his long term incarceration with its attendant suffering. The story of his transformation in God's love inspires us to examine our own lives and metaphorical prisons. COMW invites you to join us in bringing Centering Prayer into the prison.

Here are reflections by *Dana Semmes* about her prison ministry experience.

Centering Prayer opened me to profoundly realize God's love for me. Realizing that God's transforming love is available to everyone, I wanted to share Centering Prayer with others, particularly with those feeling discarded and despised by society. Only by experiencing God's love is there real hope for peace and growth in any of our lives. Without this understanding and motivation, I could not have begun a prison ministry.

I was drawn to St. James AfterCare Ministry (Aftercare) in Potomac, Maryland. Aftercare is an ecumenical mentoring program where a volunteer meets with an inmate one-on-one as a Christian spiritual companion once a week for at least three months before and for at least three months after the inmate's release. This Stephen's Ministry based mentoring is designed to help an inmate transition to society after incarceration through the mentor's supporting her/his growing relationship with God. It appealed to me because of its thorough training, thirteen-year track record, and solid support and ongoing education for mentors. I have been part of the Aftercare Ministry now for five years.

When I first began, my biggest concern was a strong support group to help me deal with my fears of working with "criminals". Since then, I have moved through these fears and comfortably mentored three special women. I have been able to incorporate the practice of Centering Prayer in my mentoring. Helping people grow in their faith and watching in wonder as they are healed and strengthened by prayer is a gift that increases my own faith.

The mentoring led to my being invited by the Montgomery County Correctional Facility to lead a three day Introduction to Centering Prayer for a group of women residents facing very long prison sentences. Their counselor hoped that Centering Prayer could give them a spiritual tool to cope better with the fear and despair they were facing. This, in turn, has led to an invitation to offer a similar workshop for the men. My husband, Guy Semmes, and I would like to accept the invitation. The training would be most effective if it were followed with an ongoing prayer group. If you would like to help, please respond to the call for volunteers below. This ministry may be part of the spiritual journey God is calling you to take.

Invitation to Participate In Prison Ministry Project

*When I was in prison it was you that came to see about me.
Matthew 25:36*

The Prison Ministry Project is still in the process of being formed. Volunteers are still needed to bring Centering Prayer to the new Montgomery County, Maryland jail in Clarksburg. We are exploring the possibility of providing regular quarterly or biannual half-day Introductory Workshops led by two commissioned presenters and supported by a regular weekly Centering Prayer group facilitated by volunteers on a rotating basis.

Volunteers could make a commitment of once a month or every six weeks, for example. The weekly program might consist of 20 minutes of Centering Prayer, viewing of a Spiritual Journey tape or a book reading, and discussion. The final format would develop over time and in conjunction with Jail Addiction Services guidelines.

If you feel called to help with this project, contact Guy Semmes at home (301)983-1857 or work (301)840-9121 ext 15 or at guy@hopkinsandporter.com. Please put "Prison Ministry" in the subject line.

Update on The Living Flame Program

As we reported in our last issue, COMW is offering the Living Flame program for the first time in metropolitan Washington DC beginning October 2006 and ending May 2007.

A team has been working diligently to pull it together. We now have the topics and presenters lined up as follows: Lectio Divina/Sr. Maria Tasto; Refinement of the Centering Prayer Practice/Matthew Flatley; Formation of Emotional Programs for Happiness/Mary Dwyer; The False Self in Action/Marge Rafferty; Divine Therapy/Ann Mazza; Night of Sense/Susan Komis, and the Welcoming Prayer/Therese Saulnier.

The program will be hosted by **Falls Church Presbyterian Church** and will be held on Saturdays from 9:00 am until 4:00 pm. The cost is \$315 for the entire program if paid in full by August 15, 2006 and \$350 after that date. A nonrefundable deposit of \$100 confirms your reservation. Payment in full is due by September 15, 2006. The fee covers speakers, supplies, coffee and refreshments. Lunch is not included.

For more information, check out our website. If you wish to register or need more information, please contact Isabelle Robinson at (703)421-0464 or at imjrobinson@comcast.net. Space is limited, so please register early.

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a **companion practice** to Centering Prayer. By **praying the scriptures** through Lectio Divina, God begins to dwell in us in proportion to our capacity to receive as we grow in union with the Eternal Word. A lectio divina workshop is being planned.

If you would like to assist with preparing for a Lectio Divina workshop or might consider hosting a workshop in your church or parish, please contact Laurel LaCivita at (703) 370-3305 or at Laurel_LaCivita@ita.doc.gov.

Personal Reflection on Past Offerings

Here are reflections from Ellen Kadow about the recent Contemplative Outreach **United Annual Day of Prayer**.

Members of Washington area centering prayer groups met at Andrew Chapel United Methodist Church in Vienna VA on March 18, 2006 to participate in Contemplative Outreach's United Day of Prayer. We enjoyed two periods of centering prayer and watched a video, "Living the Contemplative Life" by Fr. Thomas Keating. Gigi Ross and Martha Thomas deftly planned and facilitated this program and left us ample time for

reflection and lively discussion. It was a moving experience to be united with others, praying in the same manner across the country.

Here is a poem by *Seamus Dockery* about his experience at Holy Cross Abbey.

Centering at Holy Cross Abbey

The stars were still awake when we awoke,
All night the Holy Spirit was dusting our dreams, clearing
buried debris.
Before dawn we gathered, summoned by the bell.
Wake up sleepy heads.
Together we each settled on bench, on pillow,
some on knees bent who knows how?
The others sat erect, poised, calmed into stillness, awaiting
Emmanuel:
God with us, within us.

Three times the tiny gong was struck, now begin intent,
consent.
No sound without noticed long,
as within each of us a secret sacred word mutely called on
God.
Even that word faded to oblivion.
Nada, nada, nada and at heart's core there was I am who am
Soul of my soul.
Not myself and my truest Self.
No need to speak.
Shhhhhh my beloved. Be still and know that I am God

Pilgrims, thank you for your light beamed on my dark path.
You kept me from the ditch once again.
Together we found our way on the gravel
under Virginia's roof of stars that stopped us in our tracks
to look up into eternity.
Thank you for teaching me to walk by following your
footsteps,
at your pace, not mine.
I even ate with less haste and stopped to wonder why the
hurry?
No one filled my empty cup for a long time. Thank you.

In the days ahead, until we meet again
on the road to Emmaus and at the breaking of the Bread,
Sit very still, very often, till we dance forever in His presence
in the company of all the saints and angels.
Then all the stars will turn back to suns
and those rolling hills will rumble with laughing.
One chorus at last, singing the universe to bliss eternal -
and the cats at the entryway will purr too and the patient cattle
romp,
I hope.

Happenings

In Search of . . . One Good Northern Virginia Group
COMW has received a growing number of inquiries from people interested in finding a Centering Prayer group that meets in **Alexandria**. Unfortunately, we are not aware of any group that meets there. Susanne Whitt, who recently relocated to Alexandria from Oregon, has generously agreed to facilitate the process of keeping a database of those in search of a group in Alexandria. Therefore, if you are interested in forming a Centering Prayer group in Alexandria, and would be willing to join with others looking for a group in Alexandria, please contact Susanne Whitt at susannew@full-moon.com.

Introduction to Centering Prayer

The Benedictine Pastoral Center, Bristow, Virginia
June 3, 2006 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

Leaders: Bob Gullo and Moira Notargiacomo

Cost: \$50, includes lunch

For information contact The Benedictine Pastoral Center at (703)393-2485 (call between 9 and 1) or see their website at www.benedictinepastoralcenter.org

Other News, Etcetera

Volunteers Needed: COMW is seeking a volunteer to manage the Chapter's **database**. If you are interested, please contact Laurel LaCivita at (703) 370-3305 or at Laurel_LaCivita@ita.doc.gov. COMW is also seeking a volunteer to manage the Chapter's **e-mail list**. If you are interested, please contact go7@mindspring.com.

Invitation to Local Centering Prayer Groups: COMW invites local Centering Prayer groups to make announcements concerning Centering Prayer events in upcoming COMW newsletters. Contact the editor, Moira Notargiacomo at mismoira@verizon.net or (301) 977-2206.

Additions or Deletions from the E-mail List: If you would like to be added to or deleted from our e-mail for the COMW newsletter, forward your request to go7@mindspring.com.

Contemplative Outreach Vision Statement

Contemplative Outreach is a spiritual network of individuals and small faith communities committed to living the contemplative dimension of the Gospel in everyday life through the practice of Centering Prayer. The contemplative dimension of the gospel manifest itself in an ever-deepening union with the living Christ and the practical caring for others that flows from that relationship.

Our purpose is to share the method of Centering Prayer and its immediate conceptual background. We also encourage the practice of Lectio Divina, particularly its movement into contemplative prayer, which a regular and established practice of Centering Prayer facilitates.

We identify with the Christian contemplative heritage. While formed by our respective denominations, we are united in our common search for God and the experience of the living Christ through Centering Prayer. We affirm our solidarity with the contemplative dimension of other religions and sacred traditions, with the needs and rights of the whole human family, and with all creation.