

Contemplative Outreach of Indianapolis

Winter 2023 Newsletter



Greetings and Happy New Year, All!

Contemplative Outreach of Indianapolis is looking forward to a new year of regular and new programming. We'll continue with our 2nd Saturday *Lectio Divina* sessions on Zoom. Our 4th Saturday centering and presentation programs will start up again on Saturday, January 28, with John Drake sharing his knowledge with us about Julian of Norwich.

A new feature this year will be our quarterly book discussions, starting on Saturday, March 25. We'll read and discuss Fr. Thomas Keatings' *The Human Condition*. See the calendar for more information.

Within these pages you'll see that our "What Centering Prayer Means to Me" feature continues with an offering from John Drake. Lindsay Miller shares with us a few words about the Weekend Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat that took place at Benedict Inn in October. I share some thoughts about a book I've read and drawn inspiration from: *The City of Tranquil Light*. On the last page, I've included some resources you can find either online or through a podcast app on your smartphone.

Best wishes to everyone in this New Year!

Peace,

Karen Spear
Communications
Servant Leadership Team

CALENDAR

2nd Saturdays—9:00-10:00 a.m. via Zoom

- January 7; February 11; and March 11
- Join us for centering prayer and *Lectio Divina*
- Reminder will be sent the Tuesday prior; Zoom link will go out Friday prior
- Use [this link](#) to access 2nd Saturdays readings from COI Public Folder in our Google Drive. (It's a good idea to bookmark this link for future reference).



4th Saturdays—9:00-11:00 a.m. in person and via Zoom

- *January 28—John Drake on Julian of Norwich*

Have you heard of the 14th century mystic Julian of Norwich? Can you imagine that her message could still be relevant to the 21st century? On January 28th, I will answer these questions and more. Julian has seen a recent renewal of interest for her unique approach to the problems of the 14th century that can be guidelines for us today. You will want especially to hear her explanation of the Trinity and her descriptions of her visions.

- *February 25 —Mary Kendall on Mary Mrozowski's The Audacity of the Divine*

Mary Mrozowski was one of the pioneers of the centering prayer movement and the originator of the Welcoming Prayer. Mary was Fr. Thomas Keating's early partner in bringing centering prayer into everyday life. Judy Halbreich, Mary's daughter, animated her mother's rich contemplative life, inspired teaching, and vibrant humanity in her book, *The Audacity to be Divine*. Join us on February 25 as we journey into the life and ministry of Mary Mrozowski.

- *March 25—Book Discussion: The Human Condition by Fr. Thomas Keating*

Book discussion nominations are now open: In 2023 we are going to use one 4th Saturday program for a book discussion. The focus will be to deepen and broaden our collective view of how a silent meditation practice can further develop our spiritual life. The Service Team invites your book nominations for consideration.

Contemplative Nature Walk

- The CO Indy Chapter is hosting its next contemplative nature walk for the spring equinox on Monday, March 20. See details on p. 6.



WEEKEND INTENSIVE CENTERING PRAYER RETREAT—OCTOBER 2022

Those who attended our three-day fall retreat at The Benedict Inn in Beech Grove in October so enjoyed our several sessions of centering prayer; teachings of Cynthia Bourgeault and Thomas Keating; an incredibly beautiful weekend for walking the labyrinth and beautiful grounds; delicious meals; forming new relationships; and more.

Each participant was assigned to a private room with the bathroom down the hall. Men stayed on the 3rd floor, women on the 2nd floor.

Our next fall intensive centering prayer retreat will be October 2023. More information will be published soon. Hope you can come!

Lindsay Miller

Attendees

Front Row: Lindsay Miller; Jan Yudt; Linda Farley; Marianne Bernard; Mary Kendall; Marilyn Webb; Julia Clement-Voight; Mary Beth Riner

Back Row: Chris Haynes; Don Nicholas; Glenn Whitmill; Bruce Rogers



Don and Linda share with the group an image from the NASA James Webb Space Telescope collection titled "Cosmic Cliffs in the Carina Nebula."

Linda selected this image while praying about the beauty of Holy Wisdom and particularly with Proverbs 8:22-31. The energy and excitement of sitting with and holding this scripture deep within produced a love song centered around the beauty of Wisdom and the birth of creation that poured forth, with Wisdom being beside God all the while.

WHAT CENTERING PRAYER MEANS TO ME

John Drake

I have been a daily practitioner of centering prayer ever since I attended an Introduction to Centering Prayer Workshop at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in 2009. I remember going through the workshop and realizing how this approach to prayer could help meet my need for quiet and connection. I started attending Silent Retreat Days at Fatima Retreat House.



Quiet has always been a natural tendency for me. Prayer helped me focus that tendency into a regular and scheduled discipline. I realized in the first year of practicing that I seemed calmer and less stressed by local, state of Indiana, and world problems. It is not that I quit paying attention; but I realized that doing centering prayer added positive energy in the world. Centering prayer also opened opportunities for me to be silent with strangers. I still remember discussing with members of our chapter the outline of what a typical day of an Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat looked like. I was concerned that six periods of centering prayer a day would just be too much.

The first intensive retreat I attended was for chapter leaders of Contemplative Outreach chapters across the United States. The outline of the day was explained and did not seem so hard. By the end of the first day, I got into the rhythm of the retreat. We would pray for two sessions of centering prayer before breakfast. Given that I am not a morning person, I was concerned I would fall asleep. Instead, I found myself waking up at 5:00 a.m. and walking the grounds of the retreat center. The retreat rewired my normal expectations for how I would react to early morning prayer. As I drove home from the retreat, I remember thinking this was like a piece of heaven for me.

Practicing centering prayer gave me the opportunity to speak to our chapter on various subjects. I had done public speaking before, so it was not entirely new. I found myself seizing the opportunity to present and lead a workshop. If you allow it, God will move you via centering prayer!

TRIBUTES TO JOHN DRAKE'S SERVICE TO CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH, INDIANAPOLIS

John continues to provide valuable service to our chapter as treasurer. His experience as an accountant helps to keep us in compliance with legal regulations and using best practices in managing our financial resources. In addition to this service, John is an active presenter known for his excellent research that makes for engaging programs, via Zoom and in person. I continue to rely on John's wisdom in chapter leadership and, particularly, his focus on keeping things simple. Thank you, John,

Mary Beth Riner

When I was asked about sharing about John's service to our Contemplative Outreach community, I was so happy to be included! What struck me about John so many years ago was his intensity and his searching for God and God's calling. I was drawn to his heart when he shared, and when I served our CO of Indy Chapter in a leadership role, I asked John to join our leadership team. John was always faithful to his treasurer tasks, but he also was attentive to listening deeply to the needs of our community. I am very grateful to John for all his years of service and also consider John a spiritual friend! May God bless you.

Linda Farley



Contemplative Nature Walks

*Spring Equinox March 20, Summer Solstice June 21,
Autumn Equinox September 23, Winter Solstice December 21, 2023*

Getting outside into fresh air can bring joy and peace as the sun shines on us, the wind blows across our skin, and we see new life, or life in new ways.

Wind

Mary Beth Riner

The same wind that blows across my face blows across the face of all people everywhere.

It is the same wind that blows across all the continents, countries, cities, and communities.

In this wind is the Spirit of Oneness. Let us turn our face to the wind and be filled with the Oneness of all our brothers and sisters.



Walking Tips

Preparing:

- Decide your place, pace, and time.

Beginning:

- Stand still for a few moments, take some deep breaths, and set an intention of being present. Consider bringing to mind a very brief scripture passage, or a sacred word, to support your effort to be present in a relaxed way.

Walking:

- As you begin, set a pace that allows you to pay attention to the environment. Let your self notice the ground as you take steps. Consider how you are both blessing the ground and being blessed by the ground.
- Notice what draws your attention. Look for what shimmers or what the Japanese poet Basho called “a glimpse of the underglimmer.” Become aware of the total environment and receive what may come as gifts (sights, sounds, wind, colors, scents, other persons, other beings, etc.)
- Develop a sense of being in a sanctuary, in the presence of God. Pause regularly to simply receive the gifts. Breathe them in. Let these gifts have space in your heart. Then continue on until something else catches your attention.

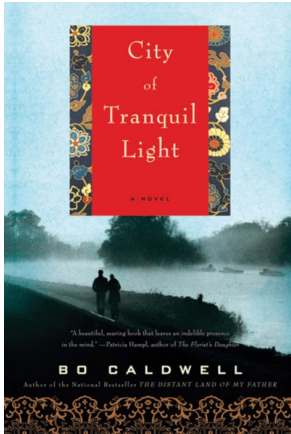
Ending:

- Stop and remain standing for a moment. Savor and appreciate the opportunity to walk on the sacred ground in the presence of God.

Alternative:

- If it is not feasible for you to be outside, consider gazing out a window and noting the environment with a contemplative attitude.

Review: *The City of Tranquil Light* by Bo Caldwell
Karen Spear



Bo Caldwell's novel *The City of Tranquil Light* follows Will and Katherine Kiehn on their spiritual journey as Mennonite missionaries in Kuang P'ing Ch'eng in China in the 1930s to 1940s. A tale both beautiful and harrowing, Caldwell makes evident Will and Katherine's great love of God and of the Chinese people and describes the harsh conditions in China at that time.

Will Kiehn is a young Mennonite growing up surrounded by the faith of his family and community. Just before Will is to attend college, Edward Geisler, an American Mennonite missionary to China, visits his community. Will is drawn to Geisler's testimony and is soon on his way to China as a missionary. He meets Katherine, the woman who will soon be wife, on the way over.

Will and Katherine's adventure has all the usual topics of a missionary tale: the harsh traveling conditions; the difficulties of living in a non-developed country; the fear of violence under conditions of political instability. What sets *City of Tranquil Light* apart from the usual China missionary story is the integrity, faith, and grace of the two main characters.

Will and Katherine didn't settle into a major city in China with Western accommodations. They went to an area in central China with the greatest need, the city of Kuang P'ing Ch'eng, the City of Tranquil Light. There they set up their ministry, with Will preaching the Gospel, and Katherine, a nurse, setting up a health clinic. Then they waited for the people of Kuang P'ing Ch'eng to come. And come they did. At the start, most probably came out of curiosity or medical need. But soon, the Kiehns had a robust ministry going and began to befriend and eventually love the people to whom they ministered.

But this is China in the era of warlords and revolution. The city and its populace suffer greatly at the hands of rebels and warlords, at one point nearly being burnt to the ground. Will and Katherine suffer personally and with the people of the city. Captured by a warlord at a particularly difficult time for him and Katherine, Will exemplifies Jesus's admonition to be "shrewd as a snake and innocent as a dove" in dealing with the warlord, who could at any time take Will's life. Eventually and paradoxically, Will and the warlord become deep and loyal friends.

The tone of the novel is deeply contemplative. Will and Katherine exhibit an integrity and depth of spirit that is inspiring. Caldwell's storytelling invites us to admire and want to emulate these two wonderful people.

Near the end of the story, Will is reflecting on his life in China—his true home—as an old man in California. What he has learned in his long and faithful life is that "[God] does not ask me to be perfect, or even good. He simply asks me to be His, which to me is the heart of His Good News: that I am deeply and passionately loved exactly as I am, despite the faults that grieve me most, by a God who delights in me more than I can know—a God who created me so He could love me."

RESOURCES

Do you have an iPhone? Have you ever noticed an app on the phone that looks like the image to the right? If so, you have a valuable source of talks, lectures, and stories to bring to your contemplative practice.

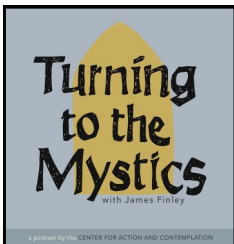


I never thought I had the time or patience to listen to a podcast. But one day I listened to Jim Finley's talk on the "Tuesdays With Merton" podcast, and I knew I needed to tap into the gentle wisdom of this man on a regular basis. I began to listen to his podcast "Turning to the Mystics" while I did my morning stretching and exercises.

On your iPhone, click on the Podcasts app. If you don't see a place to search, go to the search icon (the magnifying glass) at the bottom right of your screen. Type in the podcast you want to listen to.

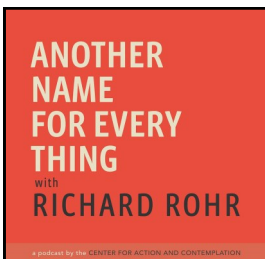
You can also access podcasts on your Android phone. Go to the Play Store and search for "podcast player" to find an app. One such app is Podcast Republic. Once you've downloaded and opened the app, you can search for the podcast you are interested in.

Or you can just go to the website for the podcast on your computer. Below is a description of a few podcasts that address the contemplative life. Click on the icons to go to the site and start listening!



Jim Finley teaches 6 different mystics in this 6-season podcast, beginning with his fascinating story about how he entered the Abbey of Gethsemani and learned at the feet of Thomas Merton. In consecutive seasons, he guides us in readings from Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, Guigo, the author of the Cloud of Unknowing, and Julian of Norwich. Season 7 of the podcast will start this month.

"The Tuesdays with Merton" podcast is a webinar series presented by the International Thomas Merton Society and the Center for Spirituality at St. Mary's College in Notre Dame on the second Tuesday of each month. You can listen to past podcasts or you can register to participate in the live webinar—or both. Click [here](#) to register for the upcoming webinar on January 10 at 8:00 p.m. Click on the icon to access the archived podcasts.



This podcast from Richard Rohr is a "trialogue" among Fr. Richard and two of his students, Paul Swanson and Brie Stoner, about Fr. Richard's book *The Universal Christ*. As the teaser puts it: "Another Name for Every Thing with Richard Rohr is a conversational podcast series on the deep connections between action and contemplation."

There are many more resources available online and on your phone, so be bold in trying out new podcasts!