

# Contemplative Outreach of Indianapolis

## Summer 2022 Newsletter



Greetings, All!

There's a lot going on in your Indianapolis Contemplative Outreach chapter this quarter! Check out the calendar on p. 2 for our usual 2nd and 4th Saturday offerings, as well as an Introduction to Centering Prayer workshop coming up on Saturday, September 24; a Weekend Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat from October 21 to October 23; and this quarter's Contemplative Nature Walk.

We were delighted to be back in person at St. Luke's for the April 4th Saturday programming. Take a look at the photo montage of our joyous gathering in person on April 23. Please note that 2nd Saturdays are still on Zoom.

Last quarter, Mary Beth Riner wrote about what centering prayer means to her and suggested that this might be a feature in future newsletters. In that spirit, I have written an essay about my experience with centering prayer and why I consider it one of the great gifts of my life.

Finally, we continue our last-page spread of suggested spiritual writings, this quarter from Mary Beth Riner, the coordinator of Contemplative Outreach of Indianapolis and a member of the centering prayer group at North United Church in Indianapolis.

Peace,

Karen Spear  
Communications  
Servant Leadership Team

## CALENDAR

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

- July 9; August 13; and September 10
- Use [this link](#) to access 2nd Saturdays readings from the COI Public Folder in our Google Drive. (It's a good idea to bookmark this link for future reference).



### ***4th Saturdays—9:00-10:15 a.m. in person and via Zoom***

- *July 23—Lectio Divina Part 3*

Engage with a small group as we explore the practice of *Lectio Divina*, a method of heart-to-heart conversation with God involving reading, reflecting, responding, and resting in the words of Scripture. Even if you already practice *Lectio*, you will find this workshop will deepen your practice and will bring the scripture texts into your everyday life.
- *August 27—Circles of Trust*

Parker Palmer introduces the circle of trust as a safe space to invite the “shy soul” to emerge and dialogue with other shy souls. Learn more about Palmer’s vision for dialogue and join in a brief practice of a circle of trust.
- *September 23—Introduction to Centering Prayer Workshop*

Join us for this Introduction to Centering Prayer workshop at the St. Luke’s United Methodist Church. While this workshop introduces the practice of centering prayer, experienced practitioners will find it helpful also. For details and to register for the workshop, see [flyer](#) (Intro Workshop Brochure, Sept 2022).

### ***Retreats***

- August 21-26: 6-Day Intensive/Post-Intensive Retreat in Belleview, IL, offered by the St. Louis chapter of Contemplative Outreach—see [flyer](#) (COSTL-Aug2022-flyer) and [website](#) for information and to register.
- October 21-23: Weekend Intensive Centering Prayer Retreat at the Benedict Inn and Retreat House in Beech Grove, IN, offered by the Indianapolis chapter of Contemplative Outreach—Click this [link](#) for more information and to register.



### ***Contemplative Nature Walk***

The CO Indy Chapter is hosting its next contemplative nature walk for the autumn equinox on Thursday, September 22. See details on p. 5.

### *Photo Montage: In-Person 4th Sunday at St. Luke's Methodist*

It was a joy for us all to return to in-person meetings (with an online Zoom option) on April 23, 2022. These photos go around the circle of participants and also feature our tribute to Linda Farley and Mary Kendall for their years of devoted service to the Indianapolis chapter of Contemplative Outreach.



Anthony Lee, James Dinius,  
Linda Farley, Mary Kendall



Mark Robbins, Greg Clapper,  
Jane Lee, Jodi Clapper, Donna  
Sandage

Marilyn led us in a lovely tribute to Linda and Mary and welcome to Mary Beth and other new members of the team. Click to read the [prayer](#) (Prayer for CO 4/-3) she offered.



Diane Burns, Marilyn Webb,  
Mary Beth Riner, Ginger Kern,  
John Drake



Linda Farley and Mary  
Kendall displaying  
thank-you gifts for their  
service to COI



Karen Spear (taking a  
break from the camera)  
and Marilyn Webb

## The Gift of Centering Prayer

By Karen Spear



I was 13 and a born-and-bred Episcopalian when I had an Emmaus moment that opened my mind and heart to faith. During a family vacation, my evangelical cousin was arguing with my brothers about the existence of God. I wanted nothing to do with the argument, but in our beds that night, I started asking her questions about God and Jesus. As we spoke, “my heart burned within me” as I recognized the truth she was speaking. Faith became one of the greatest gifts of my life.

My cousin nurtured me in my young faith; at the same time, I was quite sure I would not go the evangelical route. Nevertheless, to this day we remain “sisters in Christ.”

As a teenager and young adult, I poured my heart out to God. God became an emotional rock and anchor for me, perhaps compensating for an upbringing that focused on achievement and performance. As important as the emotional relationship was for me, I also needed to understand my faith and bring the light of faith into my understanding.

In my early 30s, I moved to Nashville, TN, to pursue a PhD in theological ethics. I joined the downtown Episcopal Church, where the rector was on sabbatical in Snowmass, CO, learning centering prayer at the feet of Fr. Thomas Keating. A few months later, I attended a church welcoming reception, where the rector, having returned from sabbatical and knowing I was a graduate student, asked me how my studies were informing my spiritual life. I responded that I felt dry and desiccated as a bone. He immediately invited me to the centering prayer group he had started.

My first taste of centering prayer was like a homecoming. It was a huge relief to put aside intellectual thought and rest peacefully in God’s presence. I didn’t have to think; I didn’t have to put things into words; I didn’t have to perform or achieve. All I had to do was rest. It was enormously freeing.

It was also more than that. I felt nurtured and cared for as I sat silently before God. I felt all the questions and worries and fears fall away and fall into place.

I found centering to be much easier to do in a group than alone. This was confirmed for me at a spirituality workshop at my church in Valparaiso, IN, in the mid-90s. I was in a small church sanctuary where a number of the participants were centering. The support I felt from being present in prayer with others was palpable. I became a firm believer in the importance of physical presence with others while centering. Lonely for that presence, I started a centering prayer group at St. Thomas Aquinas after I was received into the Catholic Church.

I am grateful for the gifts of my life, my faith, and centering prayer, in that order; and I’m grateful for the physical presence and support for the journey that the community of Contemplative Outreach, Indianapolis, provides.

## Contemplative Nature Walks

*Spring Equinox March 20, Summer Solstice June 20,  
Autumn Equinox September 22, Winter Solstice December  
21, 2022*

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.

A contemplative walk in nature can foster our sense of connectedness to the natural world. It can create space for gratitude and honoring the creator of the world in which we live.



As a contemplative experience, the walk centers our awareness on our natural environment - the earth, wind, water, sun/moon, and all living beings.

"The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself." — Henry Miller.

### *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 yourself 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:

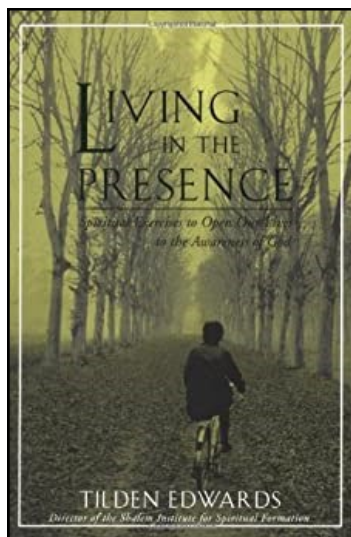
- If it is not feasible for you to be outside, consider gazing out a window and noting the environment with a contemplative attitude.



## WHAT WE'RE READING

This quarter, Mary Beth Riner offers to us her spiritual reading at this time. Mary Beth is the coordinator of Contemplative Outreach of Indianapolis and a member of the North United Methodist Church centering prayer group.

If your group is interested in sharing what your members are reading in their personal prayer time, please contact Karen Spear at [kspear@marian.edu](mailto:kspear@marian.edu).



Tilden Edwards

*Living in the Presence:  
Spiritual Exercises to  
Open Our Lives to the  
Awareness of God*

[Review](#)

### Seeking Content for Newsletter from Friends of COI

Do you feel called to share something of your faith and your centering practice with our centering prayer family? Would you like to write a review of a book you are currently reading? Would you like to share with us what centering prayer has meant for you?

As the editor of the newsletter, I am always looking for ways to improve the newsletter and provide opportunities for our members to contribute. You might consider contributing in these ways:

- Writing a book review
- Writing an essay of 450-500 words about what centering prayer means to you
- Reviewing or summarizing a retreat, conference, event that helped you on your spiritual path.

Should you feel so called, contact Karen Spear at [kspear@marian.edu](mailto:kspear@marian.edu).