
CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE



Spring 2016

Sitting Together

by Rev. Geoffrey Butcher

I enjoy poetry. Much of it I find difficult to understand, but I am fond of poets like Billy Collins, and often read several poems before going to bed. One in his collection, *horoscopes for the dead*, caught my interest, and I thought how it might apply to a centering prayer practice even though it is a secular poem. See what you think.

The Chairs That No One Sits In

“You see them on porches and on lawns, down by the lakeside, usually arranged in pairs implying a couple who might sit there and look out at the water or the big shade trees. The trouble is you never see anyone sitting in these forlorn chairs though at one time it must have seemed a good place to stop and do nothing for a while. Sometimes there is a little table between the chairs where no one is resting a glass or placing a book facedown. It may not be any of my business, but let us suppose one day that everyone who placed those vacant chairs on a veranda or a dock sat down in them if only for the sake of remembering what it was they thought deserved to be viewed from two chairs, side by side with a table in between. The clouds are high and massive on that day.

The woman looks up from her book. The man takes a sip of his drink. Then there is only the sound of their looking, the lapping of lake water, and a call of one bird then another, cries of joy or warning—it passes the time to wonder which.”

The congregation I serve has a nineteenth century church with a tower, bells, and steeple. It is a lovely place for worship. The congregation was founded 180 years

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Walking Stick

by Rev. Bill Combs

Come the first Tuesday
each January
at roughly 6:57 a.m.
in a room walled with glass and love
the bark comes off.

All of one piece this year,
like most.
Sometimes the husk peels
in layers, like lifting away
parchment pages
or prejudice.

The first time – repurposed from a forest floor –
I cried out at the glistening
underneath, thinking it blood.
“No,” you laughed, blowing me dry,
“an amniotic dew.”

Bare, grained, ridged where borers worked.
“Why?”
“To be fresh and new and smooth to the hand.”
“Why?”
“Before you serve you must be.”

And so the bark comes off that I might be.
And I might be that I might serve:
A lean-to when weary –
A third foot when crossing streams
pocked with tipsy stepping-stones –
A hand-hold for steep ascents –
A brake for deep descents –
A prod for the occasional sleeping bear –
A make-shift tent pole
dug in against the dark and cold.

In all of this the bark grows back;
it’s what we walking sticks do.
And so I return each year
to have your thumbnail dig deep,
to have the bark come off,
to glisten until blown dry,
to be for you.

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Contemplative Opportunities

10th Annual Meeting ~September 17, 2016
CENTERING PRAYER: A WAY of LIFE

Our 10th Annual Gathering of Contemplative Outreach of Middle Tennessee will be held at Holy Family Catholic Church, 9100 Crockett Road, Brentwood, TN, on Saturday, September 17. Registration begins at 9:00 a.m. The event will end with a Centering Prayer sit around 2 p.m.

Centering Prayer: A Way of Life will be the keynote address given by Fr. Carl Arico. Fr. Carl is a founding member and current Governing Board member of Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. Since its beginnings in 1984, Fr. Arico has been an integral part of the organization's growth and development.

Please register now by going to our website: www.centeringprayermidtn.com. The cost is \$35 before September 1 and \$45 on or after that date. Light breakfast items and lunch will be served. This year, there are three options for lunch - a chicken salad sandwich, a gluten free vegetarian salad or bring your own lunch

Hosting a Workshop

If your church or group wishes to host an Introductory Centering Prayer Workshop or a Lectio Divina Workshop, please contact our Workshop Coordinator, Janis Lovecchio at Janis.lovecchio@holymfamilycc.com or 615-373-4351 at ext. 235.

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Upcoming Retreats at St. Mary's Sewanee

May 7	Welcoming Prayer Workshop
May 28	Introductory Workshop
May 29-June 5	8 Day Centering Prayer Retreat
July 30	Introductory Workshop
July 31-Aug 7	8 Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Dec 9-11	Advent Centering Prayer Retreat

Reading Scripture Two Ways

by Carolyn Goddard

Getting into Scripture can be challenging. There are at least two possible flight plans: one takes an informational approach, the other a formational. Both are helpful on the spiritual journey.

Looking into the historical background of a particular book of the Bible is a good point of departure. Recently I read James Carroll's *Christ Actually: The Son of God for the Secular Age*. Most of this book explores the impact of the Jewish-Roman wars on New Testament writings. Carroll claims, "The Roman war against the Jews interrupted the evolution of the meaning of Jesus, decisively channeling that meaning away from Judaism and ultimately setting the Church against the Synagogue which set Jesus against his own people" [245].

Like many modern scholars, Carroll wants Christians to be knowledgeable about the context behind early Christian writings. Awareness of "how the texts about Jesus were written at the start, how they were interpreted early on and how they can be understood today" involves taking an informational approach into Scripture.

Yet I suspect only taking an informational approach would mean missing much of the richness of Scripture. Lectio Divina offers another way into Scripture. A short passage is read multiple times. Each reading is meant to take the listener to a deeper level of consciousness.

First, a participant listens for a word or a phrase that tugs at his or her attention. The second reading prompts reflection on what that word or phrase stirs up inside the participant. Hopefully by the time the passage is read a third time, the participant is figuratively circling around his or her heart, responding at a more intuitive level. The final reading leads into silence for the ultimate destination is to come to rest in grace.

Christians are invited to avail themselves of both intellectual practices that inform and enlighten and intuitive practices that form and deepen the light of Christ. I wish all of you a bon voyage.

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MIDDLE and EAST TENNESSEE PRAYER GROUPS

Antioch	St. Ignatius	Carnnie Harmon Church Office	615-471-1077 615-367-0085	Fri 9:30 am
Brentwood	Holy Family Catholic Church	Irene Neilan Church Office	615-371-1015 615-373-4696	Mon 9:40 pm
Chattanooga	Center for Mindful Living	Dr. Barbara Ray	423-490-0735	Mon 1-2 pm
Chattanooga	Church of the Good Shepherd	Rev. Margaret Caldwell	423-290-1640	Wed 4:30 pm
	Church of the Good Shepherd	Beth Chamberlain	423-821-2755	Tue 11:15 am
Chattanooga	Grace Episcopal Church	Rebecca Williams	423-843-0657	Fri 1:00 pm
Chattanooga	St. Paul's Episcopal Church	Barbara Ray	423-490-0735	Wed 12:30 pm
Chattanooga	St. Peter's Episcopal Church	Joani Koch	423-877-3140	Thur 4-5 pm
Franklin	St. Paul's Episcopal Church	Scott Faulkner	615-595-1072	Mon 7:00 pm
	St. Paul's-Lectio Divina	Scott Faulkner Church Office	615-595-1072 615-790-0527	Tue 4:00 pm
Franklin	First United Methodist Church	Helen DeBuse	615-337-9108	Fri 7:45 am
Hendersonville	St. Timothy Lutheran	Audrey Pessoni	615-824-6244	Wed 6:00 pm
Johnson City	St. John's Episcopal Church	Frances Jackson Church Office	423-946-3345 423-926-8141	Tue 6:00 pm
Knoxville	Church of the Ascension	Fr. Rob Travis Lynn White	865-588-0589 865-693-6275	Thur 4:30 pm
Knoxville	St. John's Cathedral	Rev. Canon Tom Rasnick	865-525-7347	Wed/Fri 8:30 am
	St. John's Cathedral	Rev. Canon Tom Rasnick	865-525-7347	Thur 5:30 pm
Knoxville	John XXIII Student Center	Beverly Froning	865-607-3627	Fri 11:00 am
Mt. Juliet	Providence United Methodist	Maria Braun Kasey Hitt	615-758-5965 615-598-5350	Thur 10:00 am
Murfreesboro	St. Paul's Episcopal Church	Sandra Clemmons	615-867-6318	Tue 6:00 pm
Nashville	Cathedral of the Incarnation	Church Office	615-327-2330	Sat 9:30 am
Nashville	Christ Church	Arlene Wilson	615-336-1766	Sun 9:45 am
	Christ Church	Mimi Shimmin	615-298-2483	Tue 5:30 pm
	Christ Church	Laura Copeland	615-500-4683	Thurs 12:15 pm
Nashville	Christ the King	Martha O'Brien	615-484-0934	Fri 8:00 am
	Christ the King-Lectio Divina	Carolyn Goddard	615-438-3216	Mon 8:30 am
	Christ the King-11th Step	Melissa Hammel	615-202-5242	Wed 5:30 pm
Nashville	First Presbyterian Church	Sandra Randleman	615-298-9502	Wed 4:00 pm
Nashville	South Minster Presbyterian	Helen Blakely Church Office	615-819-0515 615-833-1565	Wed 11:30 am
Nashville	St. George's	Bets Ramsey	615-463-2583	Mon 4:00 pm
Nashville	The Cloisters	Martha Likins	615-352-0025	Wed 1:15 pm
Nashville	VU Center/Integrative Health	Jean Jackson	615-585-4287	Mon 7:00 am
Nashville	Westminster Presbyterian	Rev. Guy Griffith Summer Hours	615-292-5526	Wed 9:00 am Thur 11:00 am
Oak Ridge	Home Residence	Janice Watkins	865-335-9921	Tue 7:00 pm
Sewanee	Otey Parish	Jennifer Michael	931-598-5094	Mon 7:00 pm
Sewanee	St. Mary's Sewanee	Janet Graham	931-598-0822	Tue 3:30 pm
Winchester	Trinity Episcopal	Laura Ellen Truelove	615-881-2492	Tue 11:00 am

For further information on retreats:

www.centeringprayermidtn.com

www.contemplativeoutreach.org

www.StMarysSewanee.org

St. Mary's Sewanee: 931 598-5342

ago. In the same neighborhood are other old churches and many beautiful Victorian homes, selling now for practically nothing since what little construction going on in this town of 7,000 is in newer neighborhoods. The population stays about the same from year to year, and those in old homes do their best to maintain them. But few want to purchase these homes anymore. The owners grow old, perhaps move to a nursing home, or die. It's a scene where people seldom sit on porches or on front lawns. Chairs on porches are usually empty.

After I read this poem I let my mind wander thinking about the old porches on Russellville homes – usually quiet with aging furniture, weathering a new century. If by chance a young couple were to approach and sit on grandma's porch, instead of looking for friends to join them for a conversation, the two are busy with iPhones texting others rather than engaging in conversation. Grandma is likely to be in a retirement home.

An aging couple might wonder why they are still alive, and ponder quietly, "Wouldn't it be nice to sit on the porch together with a drink and a book...to share a story while observing the birds?" Times have changed, and moments of easy reflection are often missed. Perhaps a future scene in this scenario would include a bulldozer,

tumbling the frame of the house to the basement, leaving the porch as fill. Who knows, a Pizza Hut or McDonald's might buy the lot. Time passes with speed giving little thought why it is running.

Sitting together is a simple act when we can experience the presence of God in a mystical way – beyond words and emotions, especially in silence. Two or three who meet together share, without saying a word, the most intimate part of their lives. The God within each moves from person to person, and the room is filled with the Spirit. The self, often bolstered to be a commendable image to others, is for the moment forgotten. The only intention, the only agenda, is to be present for God. We take off our disguises, even if it makes us feel naked and vulnerable. We then welcome the presence that is already within us. When you are home alone you might even sit in a loveseat – room for two – you and the Spirit. Any speaking has no sound, only the warmth of tender, loving arms, embracing you with love. This Love may come by surprise -- as your life. The image of God and the naked self meet. You are safe, surrounded with healing love that comforts your hurts and relaxes your anxiety. Barriers are down. You are completely vulnerable...with nothing, yet everything.

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The Woods Waters

by Jean Jackson

As I watch the woods waters flow I wonder where they came from and where they will go?
Teach me the questions, oh Lord, and sit with me while I wait in silence for answers –
knowing the questions are the more important part. Indeed they are the art, the heart.

The woods waters would teach me to dance and skip,
all while I sat to watch them.

The woods waters would teach me to dance and sing,
when I paused for a moment to hear their songs.

The woods waters would teach me to dance, sparkle, and shine,
reflecting the light of nothing and everything.

Thou leadest me today beside wild, running woods waters.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

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Be still and know that I am God

Psalms 46:10