



CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH ONTARIO

SILENCE SOLITUDE SOLIDARITY SERVICE

OUR NEWSLETTER



SUMMER 2016 – N°6

A Word from the Editor

Over the first five months of this year, we have been extremely busy preparing the conference/retreat in Niagara Falls, ON — COO 2016 as we called it — and now we are in the “debriefing” mode. In general, the comments were very positive. “Praying together is always Spirit-filled,” said one participant. Unanimously, you want another one in a few years — except one person who wrote: “At 84, I want to experience it now.” So, we have already started and we’ll keep you posted. Your observations, comments and suggestions were many and varied; we’ll definitely take them into consideration. (It’s hard, though, to meet everyone’s request as some are conflicting.)

The retreat had a visioning component which revealed that you do want a “core structure,” as someone put it, i.e. an umbrella organization over the three (at least for now) Contemplative Outreach regions in Ontario: Southwestern, Central and Eastern. That’s precisely what Contemplative Outreach Ontario is all about and that’s what Carolyn Gratton founded about twenty years ago.

Actually, she wanted so much this organization to expand and to bear fruit that she bequeathed to us, Contemplative Outreach Ontario, “all [her] contents,” including some money. This is certainly a clear mandate for us. Three people — Gregor Sneddon from Eastern Ontario, Marlene Kelly-Kolotylo, from Southwestern Ontario and myself from

Central Ontario — are now collectively in the process of getting organized and managing Carolyn’s gifts on your behalf and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. You will be advised in due course about our progress in this respect.

In the meantime, enjoy the sun of the Summer months, get a good rest, pray for peace... and don’t forget to share the road when you drive!

Marie-Noëlle Maillard
logos302@sympatico.ca

Theological Principles

We affirm our solidarity with the contemplative dimension of other religions and sacred traditions. (Principle 11)

Through the continuing practice of Centering Prayer, we experience a deepening commitment to the needs and rights of each member of the human family and an increasing respect for the interdependence of all creation. (Principle 12)

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SOUTHWESTERN

As I write this article for the summer Newsletter we are enjoying beautiful sunshine and the unfolding and flourishing vegetation of Southwestern Ontario. The farmers on the other hand are suffering from dry conditions. Similar to the two contrasts we often find in our life, isn't it?

The "Second Wind (or Breath)" conference in Niagara Falls was a very meaningful, inspiring, renewing, and spiritually enriching experience for the attendees. It was an enriching experience to spend the time with fellow "Centering Pray-ers" from the various areas of the province and to benefit from the deep spirituality of both Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler and Father Carl Arico in their presentations and by their presence and sharing throughout the weekend. We are looking forward to the opportunities for sharing the information and experiences of that retreat experience with those who were not able to attend, in the events of the coming year.

Over the summer months many of the Centering Prayer groups in our area take a break and resume in September when most activities start again. In the meantime, we silently integrate the experiences of the past year and prepare to begin the next year with renewed life and energy.

Upcoming Events in Southwestern Ontario

Introductory Workshop in Leamington on October 22, 2016

Introductory Workshop in London on September 24, 2016

Advent Reflection Day on November 26, 2016

Lenten Reflection Day on February 25, 2017

United in Prayer Day on March 25, 2017

Weekend Centering Prayer Retreat on May 5-7, 2017.

Facilitators' Meeting will be held in Chatham on October 18, 2016, a. m.

Service Team meeting will be held in Chatham on October 18, 2016, p. m.

As we become engaged with the follow-up from the Niagara Falls Conference we will be planning events to address the issues as they unfold.

For information and to register please contact Marlene (Kelly-Kolotylo) by e-mail at kolkel@sympatico.ca

CENTRAL ONTARIO

Following the death of Peter Donovan in August 2015, the Contemplative Outreach Central Ontario (COCO) region had to undertake a few changes, since there were only two people left on the leadership team, Johnson Ling and Marie-Noëlle Maillard. A letter asking for help was sent to all the facilitators of the region. The response was encouraging and, as of now, the new Servant Leadership Team is comprised of Marilyn Brandon, Mary Catherine Doyle, Johnson Ling, Marie-Noëlle Maillard (coordinator), Janet Sidey. Laura Davison, who first volunteered, had to give up, at least temporarily.

We are all deeply committed to continuing serve the Contemplative Outreach community in Central Ontario.

Upcoming Events in Central Ontario

Annual Summer Potluck Dinner, Saturday, August 20, 2016, from 5:30 p.m.

As last year, Marie-Noëlle will host this tradition in her home (or garden, weather permitting), 302 Pacific Avenue, Toronto, 416 769-6278 (logos302@sympatico.ca). Details on how to participate will be circulated separately. Or just call or send an email.

NEW! Special Invitation for the Near North People

End of Summer Potluck Lunch

Saturday, August 27, 2016

11:00 a. m. - 3:00 p. m.

An invitation from the Beeton group under Marilyn Brandon

Place: 31 Maple Avenue West
Beeton, ON

Call (905) 729-3923 or send an email to brandon3923@sympatico.ca

Introductory Workshop to The Cloud of Unknowing

Saturday, September 24, 2016

10:00 a. m. to 4:00 p. m., with Nada Conic

This event is organized by the Toronto West-End group but is open to whoever wants to deepen his or her knowledge of this foundational book for those who choose to engage in the spiritual journey. The method of Centering Prayer, or Prayer of Consent, comes directly from that book written by an anonymous English monk in the 14th century.

St. George's on-the-Hill, 4600 Dundas Street West (white steeple, between Royal York and Islington, north side), Toronto

\$25.00 at the door. Bring a bag lunch.

Contact: Janet Sidey at janetsidey@hotmail.com

SPECIAL!! Two Facilitators Formation Workshops (two levels)

October 15-16, 2016

With Nestor de Armas, member of the Contemplative Outreach Facilitator Formation Leadership Team.

Level 2 - Deepening Topics: Soul-friending and Twelve Principles of Spiritual Leadership

Saturday, October 15 at St. Leonard's Church, 25 Wanless Avenue, Toronto, from 9:30 a. m. to 4:30 p. m.

\$45 Early Bird Special before August 20, 2016, \$50 after

Level 1 - Empowering facilitators to form new facilitators in basic skills, locally. *For experienced facilitators.*

Sunday, October 16 at 302 Pacific Avenue, Toronto from 10:30 a. m. to 3:30 p. m.

\$20 Early Bird Special before August 20, 2016, \$25, after

On both days, bring a bag lunch.

This is an exceptional opportunity, given the presence of Nestor de Armas.

Facilitators: do not hesitate to invite members of your group who could benefit from the Saturday workshop (Level 2).

Contact information: Marilyn Brandon at brandon3923@sympatico.ca

Introduction to Centering Prayer

Saturday, November 18, 2017

with Elyse Strathy and Johnson Ling

Contact information: Johnson Ling at jr.ling@rogers.com

The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine
233 Cummer Avenue
North York, ON

Retreat at Saint John The Divine

May 5-7, 2017

with Gregor Sneddon

The Sisterhood of St. John the Divine
233 Cummer Avenue
North York, ON

EASTERN

Contemplative Outreach Eastern Ontario (COEO) experienced another rich year of prayer and community. Our series

called "Pilgrims' Way" continues to nourish us, and many new seekers on the journey. Our days usually consist of a theme, sometimes a guest speaker, a few sessions of Centering Prayer and open space. As always we have some liturgy with music accompanied by Tim Kehoe.

Our biggest news is that I have stepped down as Coordinator, a position I have held since 2004. During this time we have established several groups in our region and host an annual Lenten Retreat as well as the Pilgrims' Way series. I have been blessed to have met so many wonderful people and have been deeply enriched by our Servant Leadership Team. I will continue to serve as a "member-at-large" on the team, but making way for fresh leadership moving forward.

I am thrilled to announce that **Susan Kehoe** will be carrying the mantle as Contact Person as our leadership team discerns how best to shape ourselves in the exciting and changing context of Contemplative Outreach.

Susan worked for many years in palliative care chaplaincy with the frail elderly. She has been engaged in retreat design and facilitation for over 20 years. She is a trained spiritual director with an abiding interest in all things contemplative, whether it is Centering Prayer, mindfulness meditation, yoga or organic gardening.

Married and mother to three young adults, Susan tends a walking meditation path in her garden labyrinth, writes and is active in exploring how to live a more sustainable life. In the last three years, she was an active member of the Leadership Team of COEO and the host of a weekly CP group at St. Luke's.

What we gather in contemplation, we give out in love - Meister Eckhart

Welcome Susan!

Upcoming Events in Eastern Ontario

Our Servant Leadership Team has carved out a rich program for the coming year, including the following events (tentative):

September 24, 2016: Introductory Workshop
Christ Church, Aylmer, QC

October 29, 2016: Mercy
St Luke's, Ottawa, ON

December 3, 2016: Discernment and Holy Listening
Christ Church Cathedral, Ottawa

December 7, 2016: Advent Quiet Day: Lectio (S. Kehoe)
Galilee Centre, Arnprior, ON

January 28, 2017: Mystics in Action
St Luke's, Ottawa, ON

March 9-12, 2017: Lenten Silent Retreat
Galilee Centre, Arnprior, ON

Please do check out our website www.coeo.community and "like us" on Facebook!

Wishing you a joy-filled summer, with Paul, "I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen." (Ephesians 3:18-21)

Gregor Sneddon

From the COO Resource Centre

Be still, and you shall know that I am God.
(Psalm 46:10)

In his book, The Heart of the World, Fr. Thomas Keating develops our understanding that no matter what our past, backgrounds, belief systems, cultures, upbringing, etc., through entering into contemplative prayer we transcend all. We come to the realization that the ascended Christ, did not pass into some “geographical location, but into the depths of all creation” and in dwelling in all creation, Christ is “transforming it and bringing it back, in union with Himself, into the bosom of the Father.”

This little, though profound, book reflects on some of the characteristics that enrich the contemplative experience. It reminds us that, “every Christian, by virtue of the grace of baptism, has the vocation to oneness with the Father, through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit.”

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Like most, if not all, books, I would highly recommend keeping a journal or daily reading with a partner or a group of three or four people. Spend whatever time you can each day. This enables the essence of any book to be studied, pondered, consumed and to transform the very fabric of one's being. Reading a chapter or a small section at a time and sharing with others provides us with a different perspective, widening boundaries in thinking and diminishing barriers, as our understanding and knowledge grow. Together, through this daily spiritual development and the sacraments, we achieve the “purpose of extending Christ's presence throughout time and space.”

All quotes in this article are taken from the book, The Heart of the World

Lourdes Crabtree
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Beatrice Bruteau on Silence

Relaxing our compulsion to talk can be very illuminating. We will be obliged to ask ourselves whence this urgency arises. What insecurity about our existence makes us want to chatter about trivia? Do we have to reassure ourselves that we are not isolated? That we are living in a common world? Do we need to draw the attention of other people to ourselves, as if their recognition of us helps sustain us? Do we keep distracting ourselves by a running commentary on superficial events lest we fall back into a realization of the fundamental mystery of our existential situation?

When we undertake to keep silence for a given period, as for instance on a silent retreat for a weekend or for eight days, if the silence is a problem for us, we can pay attention to what *kind* of discomfort we are experiencing, what we feel we are lacking, what we are afraid of. We can notice what we do to compensate for the speech-silence. Do we try to catch others' eyes and smile or wink, or make gestures? Do we try to stay in sight of others? Do we read books or engage in imaginary conversations?

Or, do we find the silence tranquilizing, liberating, even exhilarating? Do we instinctively keep our eyes to ourselves, go off alone in the woods, spend time gazing out over the landscape? Do we find that even our usual internal conversation is quieting down? Perhaps all sorts of interior movements are coming to a halt, settling into stillness and repose. And we ourselves seem to be drawing to the center, as if to the lowest and most natural place to come to rest.

What about our prayer? Is God just somebody to talk to? Are we pouring out to God all the words we are holding in, not speaking to fellow human beings? That's not silence. See what happens if you stop talking to God, too. Be vividly in God's presence, but don't say anything. And

don't imagine God talking to you, either. Both of you: be quiet, just be together and enjoy it. What happens?

The practice of silence forces us to deeper levels of reality. Deprived of distraction, we must either panic or come to a new kind of authenticity. To avoid the horror of existential isolation, we must open ourselves to experience our union with the natural world, with the human world, and with God, without the cover-up that prattling had afforded us. Like the proto-amphibian stranded by a receding flood, we must learn to breathe in a new medium. We must learn to breathe *trust*, the unspoken communion.

In *Radical Optimism: Practical Spirituality in an Uncertain World*, Sentient Publications 2004, pp. 30-31

If for any reason you wish to receive future newsletters directly, please contact the editor. Conversely, if you don't want to receive them anymore, please advise the editor.

Readers' Comments and Contribution

Wherever you are in Ontario, if you want to share something with other members of COO, such as a reading or a book or give us the name of a speaker you appreciate, or contribute to *Our Newsletter* in any way, please contact the editor.

So, don't hesitate to communicate with us, whenever you have the inclination to do so. We value your opinion. Many thanks. Merci beaucoup.



This newsletter is being sent to all facilitators. Facilitators, please forward this Newsletter, in turn, to all members of your groups. Group members: please feel free to forward it to interested friends.