

## **Spiritual Enrichment and Formation for Facilitators of Centering Prayer Groups**

26-27 February 2021

10/3/15

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# **Welcome!**

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## **Purpose of this Workshop**

To empower us to better facilitate our Centering Prayer Groups, to deepen our understanding of Contemplative Outreach, and to enable you to support and encourage others to participate, even facilitate.

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Workshop Overview
FRIDAY EVENING

- PRINCIPLES OF FACILITATING CENTERING PRAYER GROUPS
- FACILITATOR ATTRIBUTES, SPIRITUALITY AND SKILLS

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Workshop Overview
SATURDAY

- FAITH SHARING
- GROUP DYNAMICS/HANDLING QUESTIONS
- HOLDING SPACE
- ESTABLISHING GUIDELINES AND AGREEMENTS AND GROUP AGREEMENTS
- PRACTICAL ASPECTS, TOOLS OF FACILITATING
- FACILITATOR HANDBOOK, WEBSITE
- ZOOM HOSTING SKILLS
- CLOSING

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Principles of Facilitating Centering Prayer Groups
Bob Mischke
Denver, Colorado

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### Centering Prayer Groups

Regular meetings of a Centering Prayer group always include at least one period of Centering Prayer of 20 to 30 minutes. Regular meetings may also include one or two of the following:

- Faith sharing
- Reading and discussing books by Fr. Thomas Keating
- Group *Lectio Divina* experience
- Spiritual Journey Series (videos and transcripts)

(This is all in the handbook)

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### Centering Prayer Groups

#### *Reflecting on the Vision and Theological Principles*

*(May be done as Lectio Divina)*

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### Contemplative Outreach Vision

The intent of Contemplative Outreach is to foster the process of transformation in Christ in one another through the practice of Centering Prayer.

*Be still and know that I am God.  
Psalm 46:10*

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul,  
and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor  
as yourself.  
Luke 10:27*

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## 14 Theological Principles

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### Theological Principle #1

1. Contemplative Outreach is a community of individuals and Centering Prayer groups committed to living the contemplative dimension of the Gospel in everyday life.

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### Theological Principle #1 Commentary

1. *The fundamental purpose of Centering Prayer and of Contemplative Outreach is to further the knowledge and experience of God's love in the consciousness of the human family. Contemplative Outreach provides basic instruction in Centering Prayer and additional programs to sustain the development in contemplation and the process of transformation.*

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Theological Principle #2

2. A commitment to the daily practice of Centering Prayer is the primary expression of belonging.

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Theological Principle #2  
Commentary

2. *The daily practice of Centering Prayer is the essence of belonging to the community.*

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Theological Principle #5

5. The indwelling Divine Presence affirms our innate core of goodness.

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## **“Two Things Happen in the Inner Room”**

Divine Indwelling  
(Basic Core of Goodness)

Divine Therapy

(Fr. Thomas Keating)

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## **Thomas Keating**

Video on Inner Room

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## **Our Basic Core of Goodness**

“The spiritual journey is not about getting something but about awakening to something that you already have.”

“The acceptance of our basic goodness is a quantum leap in the spiritual journey.”

Open Mind Open Heart (Fr. Thomas Keating)

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### Theological Principle #11

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

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### Theological Principle #13

13. Following the teachings of Jesus, we endeavor to exercise leadership in a spirit of service, utmost charity, and unity.

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### Theological Principle #13 Commentary

13. *Utmost charity is more than ordinary charity. It is to love one another as Jesus has loved us, that is, with all our faults, limitations, and at times outrageous behavior. It is to forgive completely and from the heart everything and everyone, including ourselves. This is the path to unity.*

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### **Theological Principle #13 Commentary (concluded)**

*Leadership is a necessary function of the human condition and of society. Following Jesus' example and teaching, we aspire to exercise leadership as a way of serving, of taking the lowest place, and of living ordinary life with extraordinary love.*

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## **Ten Guidelines for Contemplative Outreach Service**

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### **Guidelines for Contemplative Outreach Service**

5. All who provide Contemplative Outreach services do so in consideration of, and in balance with their personal, family, and professional responsibilities, which come first.

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## Guidelines for Contemplative Outreach Service

7. We reach decisions through prayerful discernment, aiming toward consensus especially in matters of major importance.

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## Why do we have Centering Prayer groups?

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## Centering Prayer Groups

- Support
- Encouragement
- Continuing Education
- Accountability
- Discernment of the Practice is sharpened
- Shared experiences

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## Centering Prayer Groups

“The purpose of the meeting is spiritual refreshment and mutual encouragement in the practice.”

*Open Mind, Open Heart*, pp. 173-174.

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## Centering Prayer Groups

“The primary purpose of the Centering Prayer group is to help sustain the commitment to a regular practice of Centering Prayer.”

*Facilitator Handbook, Section 2*

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## In Summary

Centering Prayer is what we have in common and our centering prayer groups how we gather. Facilitating these groups is a sacred calling.

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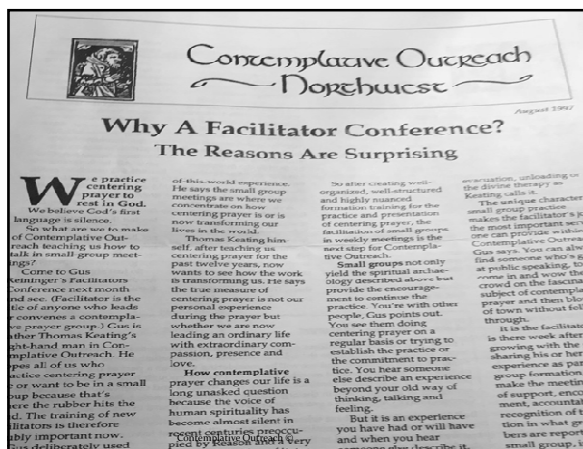
# Spirituality, Attributes, and Skills

## Part I: Spiritual development and growth

Michele Jankanish  
Seattle, Washington

03/11/19

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## Purpose of this Section

### Spirituality, Attributes, & Skills

This evening (Part I):

- Explore the basis of spiritual development and growth

Tomorrow (Part II):

- Discuss ways to improve skills in:

- Spirituality
- Attributes
- Spiritual Preparation
- Growth

- Facilitating Faith Sharing
- Listening, Questions
- Group dynamics

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## Spirituality of the Facilitator

- Primary intention  $\Rightarrow$  Live ordinary life with extraordinary love
- Basic commitment  $\Rightarrow$  Regular, consistent practice of Centering Prayer
- Primary task  $\Rightarrow$  Share the prayer!
- Primary keepers of the Vision  $\Rightarrow$  Maintain the integrity of the Centering Prayer method and its conceptual background

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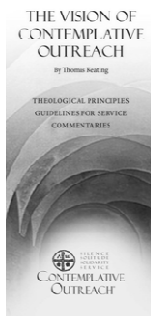
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## Keepers of the Vision

Centering Prayer,  
Contemplative  
Outreach, and its  
Vision support and  
sustain our intention,  
commitment and  
task.

Use the Theological  
Principles that  
support the Vision.



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## Spirituality of the Facilitator (Cont.)

- The Spirit provides the corresponding grace in your role as Facilitator; the Spirit leads you to service.
- Contemplative service:
  - the "God in me" serving the "God in others"
  - the transmission of the "heart" of the message to others.
- Facilitators give freely without expectation or return.
- We place our intention to serve before God and simply consent.

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## Spirituality of the Facilitator (Cont.)

- Facilitators are open and willing to listen to the promptings of the Holy Spirit so they will grow in charity, flexibility and accountability.
- Facilitators strive to be collaborative and seek win-win solutions; to be resilient and recover quickly from change.
- In the spirit of humility, remain teachable. We are always beginners on the spiritual journey. The journey continues into eternity.

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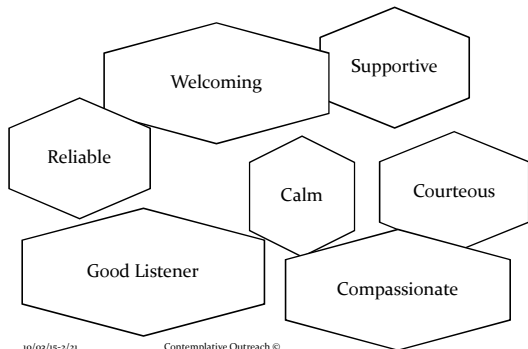
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## Desired Attributes



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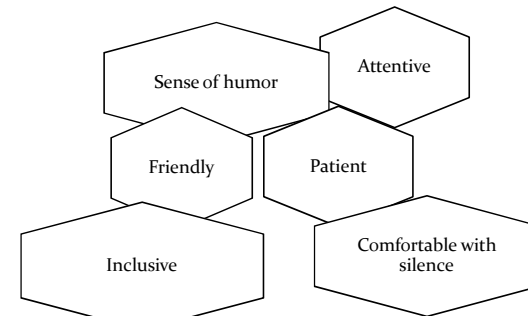
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## Desired Attributes



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## Spiritual Preparation

- Ask ourselves:
  - Place intention before God & consent?
  - Intend to serve with utmost charity?
  - Respectful of what is accomplished through group sharing?
  - Patient in achieving these benefits?
  - Respectful of others' opinions & ideas?
  - Genuine interest in what others say?
  - Respect personal feelings?
  - What motivates me to offer contemplative service as a facilitator?
  - Am I willing to grow closer to God through CP?

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## Exercise 1

### Personal Reflection Worksheet

1. Do I listen well in most situations?    1    2    3    4    5
2. Am I able to respond to ideas and personalities in a non-judgmental way?    1    2    3    4    5
3. Do I put people at ease in a group?    1    2    3    4    5
4. Am I sensitive to the needs and feelings of others in a group?    1    2    3    4    5
5. Do my personal feelings and prejudices interfere with my listening and communicating skills?    1    2    3    4    5
6. What have you learned about yourself that you can use to help the members of your Centering Prayer Group support one another in transformation in Christ? – Share from a few on Saturday morning. In the next couple of days, take time to write down specific ways you can apply your strengths and specific behaviors you would like to develop whether you are new, experienced or thinking about facilitating.

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## Growing as a Facilitator

- Commitment of Facilitator to Centering Prayer
- Be silent yourself
- Tolerate conflict & differences
- Communication is careful listening, rather than smooth talking
- Unanswered questions OK
- Don't need to be expert
- Avoid dogmatism
- Inspire volunteerism & give group control

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## Faith Sharing

**Eileen McCaffrey Schuman**  
**Whippany, New Jersey**

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## What do we facilitate?

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## We Facilitate Faith Sharing

- FAITH SHARING is not a theological discussion; no speeches, homilies, or dissertations are required. It is not an information model.
- FAITH SHARING is not an answer to anyone's problems; nor is it a place to vent frustration. It is not a therapeutic model.
- FAITH SHARING is my experience of God in my personal history or journey of life. It is a mystery model.
- FAITH SHARING is living in the messiness and vulnerability of life; sharing the joys, sorrows, hopes, and fears of the human journey and God's faithfulness in that journey.
- FAITH SHARING requires reverential listening in prayerful silence; "my experience" is the content and "my experience" is not discussable or debatable.
- Consider having a discussion with your group about Faith Sharing and reach some consensus.

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## Spirituality, Attributes, and Skills

### Part II: Listening, questions, group dynamics

Michele Jankanish  
Seattle, Washington

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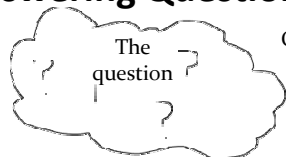
## Answering Questions

Who answers?

An Answer?

Group?

No Answer?



Questioner?

Don't know

Avoid giving advice

Wait on the Spirit

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## Questions

- Confirm you heard the question
- "That is a great question!" Then ask them for their answer.
- If you don't know the answer, never be afraid to say so. Reference Keating books or someone with more CP experience.
- Sometimes there is more than one answer and it can be helpful to ask for input from the rest of the group

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## Questions

- With certain open-ended questions, often of a more personal nature, remind the group that advice giving is not something we encourage in a prayer group
- Sometimes the question cannot be answered and the person who asks may have to wait for the Spirit to provide an answer in the Spirit's own time

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## Group Dynamics

**Some people come  
in your life as  
blessings.  
Some come in your  
life as lessons.**

**- Mother Teresa**

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## Group Dynamics

How would I effectively respond to any awkward or uncomfortable situation with utmost charity toward .....?

- Rambler
- Highly argumentative person
- Skeptic
- Overly talkative person
- Silent or inarticulate person
- Scholarly theologian
- Person sharing too private an experience
- Theoretical philosopher
- Weeper

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### Group Dynamics–Small group discussion

- The purpose of this exercise is to gain insight into possible approaches to difficult dynamics that may be going on in your Centering Prayer group.
- Select someone to be your group's facilitator for this exercise and a note taker.
- Share a difficult dynamic going on in your group. Group members are encouraged to share their personal experiences in a similar situation.
- You are not trying to solve the problem, but sharing similar experiences and insights that might be helpful to the speaker. Ultimately, it is up to the speaker to prayerfully discern the appropriate response. We will come back in the large group with time for a few groups to share.

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### Holding Space Jim Bailey Santa Fe, New Mexico

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### Holding Space: The Art of Being Present with Others

by Adam Brady

<https://chopra.com/articles/holding-space-the-art-of-being-present-with-others>

- Safety
- Compassion
- Suspended Self-Importance
- Witnessing
- Attention
- Practice Acceptance
- Non-judgment

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**Agreeing on a Group Purpose and Guidelines for Sharing**

**Eileen McCaffrey Schuman**  
Whippany, New Jersey

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**Group Purpose**

- Why are we here (in our group)?
- A purpose is:
  - A homing beacon not a straitjacket
  - Can help avoid conflict if developed through consensus

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**Developing A Group Purpose**

- Ask your members why they come together
- Guide your group to come to consensus on why you come together

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### Sample Group Purpose, v1

*We come together as a community for personal and individual prayer, to experience God's presence in quiet and peace, and to support each other in this transformational journey*

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### Sample Group Purpose, v2

*Purpose: To support the Centering Prayer practice in the context of a small community that prays together and participates in faith sharing.*  
--page 23, Facilitator Handbook

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### Sample Group Purpose, v3

*Why we gather: The purpose of our group is to consent to the presence and action of God within each of us through the practice of Centering Prayer, and to nurture an open, supportive, and inclusive environment. All are welcome.*

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## Guidelines for Sharing

- Establish guidelines early
  - Give each member a copy of “starter” guidelines
  - Have an open discussion on the guidelines:
    - Discuss what each guideline means
    - Agree whether or not it is a good guideline for the group
    - Incorporate additional guidelines
    - Keep them under a dozen
  - You want to end up with strong consensus and have the Group own the guidelines
- Maintain guidelines consistently
  - Read the guidelines (pass it around) at each meeting
  - Ask for consensus they still work

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## Sample Guidelines for Sharing

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## Sample Guidelines for Sharing, v1

- Listen from the heart
- Accept each other as we are, without judgment
- Seek understanding rather than agreement
- Maintain confidentiality
- Speak from personal experience
- Silence is welcome

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### Sample Guidelines for Sharing v1, cont'd

- Stay on topic
- Respect one another's time when speaking (*speaking stick*)
- Wait until all have chance to speak before speaking a second time
- Refrain from giving advice
- Listen without disagreeing or criticizing
- Members give Facilitator permission to remind them when they stray from the guidelines

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### Sample Guidelines for Sharing, v2

**Group Covenant:** As a member of this community:

- **I listen to others from my heart.**
  - Within each person is a core of goodness, of strength, and of love.
  - I put aside superficial feelings for other persons and their opinions.
  - I try to understand the heart of what others are sharing.
- **I listen to others with a nonjudgmental attitude.**
  - I try to hear the other's perception of reality. I may not agree with it, but I can affirm that person's right to a different point of view.

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### Sample Guidelines for Sharing v2, con't

- **I listen to others with love.**
  - With the grace of God, people have within themselves all they need to discover truth and life.
  - My loving concern can assist that discovery for both of us.
- **I listen to others with respect for their freedom.**
  - This group does not exist to give advice, but to encourage growth and insight.
  - We do not have to be of one voice or of one mind.
- **I listen to others with shared trust.**
  - A basic level of trust encourages conversation to extend beyond the superficial, knowing that personal thoughts will be kept confidential.

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### Sample Guidelines for Sharing v2, con't

- **I speak from my own unique experience.**
  - I will use the pronoun "I" when I share my point of view.
  - I will learn to trust that what I have experienced is important and worth sharing with the group.
- **Together we seek understanding, not agreement.**
  - We will help one another use and act on what we have come to understand.
  - No one can act for another, but as we share from our experience, we can discern creative possibilities.

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### Sample Guidelines for Sharing v3-1

***We try to:***

- Begin at the agreed-upon time (7 pm on Tuesdays)
- Accept one another as we are
- Listen attentively and open-mindedly, without interruption
- Refrain from judgment
- Allow for silence within discussions
- Offer caring and support as God heals
- Enable anyone to share – or to remain silent- within the confines of our meeting time (finish ~8:15 pm)

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### Sample Guidelines for Sharing v3, con't

***We keep our sharing in the group absolutely confidential.***

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## Practical Aspects and Models of Facilitation

Eileen McCaffrey Schuman  
Whippany, New Jersey

03/11/19

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## Models of Facilitation

- Co-facilitators who backup each other if sick or traveling
- Different facilitator based on group format, e.g., leading prayer, Lectio, books/videos, etc.
- Members take turns leading prayer or leading discussion of books, videos, etc.
- Sign-up rotation of facilitators

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## Variety in Prayer Groups

- Always centering prayer!
- Only centering prayer? How many periods?
  - Lead-in to centering prayer – Music? Reading? Gong how many times?
- Add:
  - Lectio divina? What modality – eg, scholastic/monastic
  - Educational/spiritual formation materials
    - Preferred modality: reading, auditory, visual
    - How to choose them
    - Any sharing?

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## Variety in Prayer Groups

- When, where, and how long we meet
  - Different physical space for prayer and educational/spiritual formation material, faith sharing, chit-chat?
  - Do you enter or leave in silence? With informal discussion?
- Importance of handling transitions
  - E.g., how to open, move to centering, transition from centering to *Lectio Divina* or enrichment materials, how to close

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## Variety in Prayer Groups

- Would changing how we gather or group format address any issues that arise in group?
  - Group running too long?
  - Not stopping chit-chat when it is time for prayer
  - Straying into chit-chat during faith sharing
- Size of group
- Participants' background
- Open/closed group

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## Welcoming New People

- Assign someone to welcome walk-ins?
- Introduce selves; consider a sentence on what CP has meant to you
- Ask if they have done CP or other meditative practices
- Explain the four guidelines and why we follow them.
  - Provide the Method of Centering Prayer Brochure (link to pdf or hard copy) and explain them in brief
- Same for *Lectio Divina* if you do it in group

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### Welcoming New People

- Read/summarize group sharing guidelines before any discussion
- Offer to put new person on group email list
- Call or text before the next meeting?

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### Be Prepared! The Practical Aspect

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### Why Prepare the Practical

- Avoid the need to spend time on it during group
- Transparent to group members
- Creates of feeling of being in good hands; well organized, well run

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## Preparing the Practical

- Start on time
- End on time
- If hosting on Zoom
  - Test technology in advance
  - Have a backup who can take over in case of technical difficulties
- If in person
  - Set up the space – arrange chairs, lighting, candle/icon if you use them
  - Timer/centering prayer app; gong/singing bowl

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## Preparing the Practical

- If in person
  - Have extra copies of any book/reading material you are using
  - Set up any video/internet connection ahead of time
  - Relationship with the physical site of meeting – eg, church, pastor/rector, whoever owns building
  - Keys, security codes if needed
  - Copies of sharing guidelines, Method of CP brochure
- More in Facilitator Handbook and your handouts

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## Facilitator Handbook and Contemplative Outreach Website

**Jim Bailey**  
**Santa Fe, New Mexico**

03/11/19

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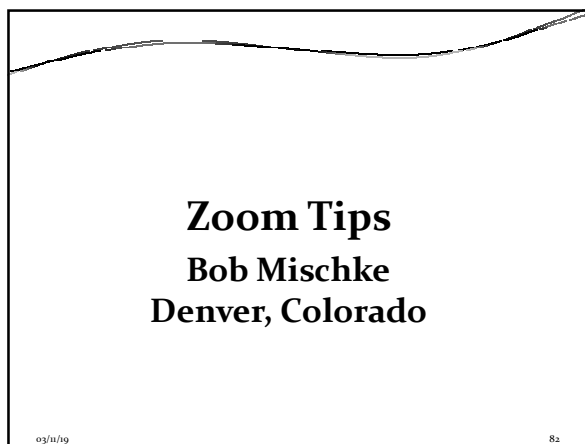
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**Zoom Tips**  
**Bob Mischke**  
**Denver, Colorado**

03/11/19 82

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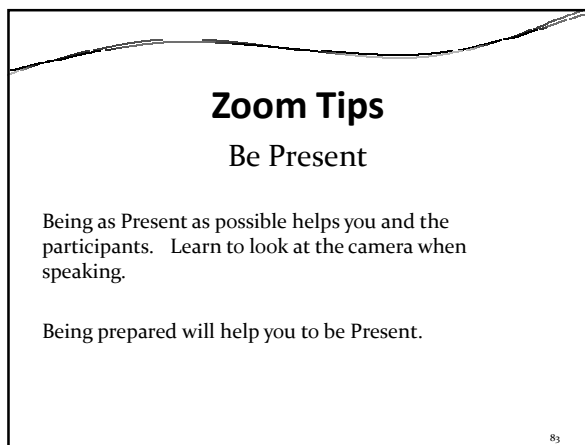
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**Zoom Tips**  
**Be Present**

Being as Present as possible helps you and the participants. Learn to look at the camera when speaking.

Being prepared will help you to be Present.

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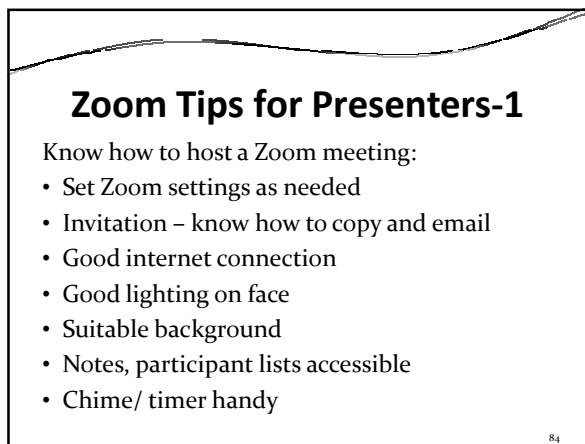
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**Zoom Tips for Presenters-1**

Know how to host a Zoom meeting:

- Set Zoom settings as needed
- Invitation – know how to copy and email
- Good internet connection
- Good lighting on face
- Suitable background
- Notes, participant lists accessible
- Chime/ timer handy

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## Zoom Tips for Presenters-2

- Open the room early and invite participants to join a few minutes before start time.
- Welcome everyone
- Remind participants to mute when not speaking
- Know how to Screen Share, Co-host and Record
- Have all Documents ready for screen sharing
- Be familiar with Stop Video, Chat, Speaker view, Raise Hand features in order to remind participants of these

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## Zoom Tips for Participants-1

- Private, quiet space
- Good lighting for face
- Suitable background
- Download Zoom app:  
<https://zoom.us/download>
- Join a few minutes early
- Turn sound off tablets, phones
- Mute yourself when not speaking

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## Zoom Tips for Participants-2

- Learn to look at the camera when speaking
- Turn off video when getting up, leaving
- Avoid eating during meetings
- Learn to use Gallery View, Speaker View, Raise Hand, Chat features

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## **Remember the Purpose of Our Centering Prayer Groups**

“The purpose of the meeting is  
spiritual refreshment and mutual  
encouragement in the practice.”

*Open Mind, Open Heart*, pp. 173-174.

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