

Chapter Planning and Prayerful Discernment

This document describes the process to follow when a chapter wants to prayerfully consider how the Holy Spirit is inviting the chapter to foster and support the gift of centering prayer going forward.

Welcome everyone and thank them for their participation in today's program. Briefly review the schedule for the day:

- I. Centering Prayer,
- II. Vision and Theological Principles,
- III. Planning Process
- IV. Options for proceeding: Discernment or Closing

I. Begin the gathering with Centering Prayer.

II. Vision and Theological Principles: to help establish a unified vision, read the Contemplative Outreach Vision at the end of Centering Prayer. Prepare the group ahead of time that this will be done by reading the Vision slowly two times with a pause between each reading and a pause at the end for people to reflect **silently** on what they have heard.

Then, read a Theological Principle and Commentary slowly two times with a pause between each reading and a pause after the second reading. This time, however, after the second pause invite the people to share what word or phrase touched them during the reading. Repeat this process with a second Theological Principle and Commentary and then with a Guideline for Service and Commentary.

III. Planning: After a short break, transition to the planning section of the gathering by inviting people to write down on a note card something that supports their practice of centering prayer. Ask each person to share their response with another person and then place their card in a central basket or bowl.

Then begin the whole group interactive planning session facilitated by members of the chapter coordinating team. Use a flip chart or white board to record the comments from the group.

1. Celebrate our strengths

-What sustains your centering prayer practice?

List responses from the group on flip chart or white board. If using white board, take photo with phone.

2. **Identify our needs:** Invite participants to identify needs for the three primary responsibilities of the chapter (listed below).

- What needs do we have to **sustain the Centering Prayer Introductory Program?**
- What needs do we have to **support the Centering prayer groups?**
- How can we **support Facilitators?**

In addition to the primary needs, ask for additional suggestions for programming, current or future.

Now ask participants to pause and silently consider: "Is the Spirit inviting us to do anything more?" Add

responses.

3. Prioritizing our needs

- Invite the participants to review the needs listed.
- Highlight by marking needs related to the three primary chapter responsibilities
 - Sustaining centering prayer introductory programs,
 - Supporting centering prayer groups,
 - Providing support and enrichment for facilitators.
- Prioritize needs as immediate or long term.

4. Complete Call to service:

Begin with a contemplative reading of **Guideline 5 for Contemplative Outreach Service with Commentary**:

**All who provide Contemplative Outreach services do so in consideration of their personal, family, and professional responsibilities, which come first.
*Those in leadership carry out their service by first taking into consideration their own personal, family, and professional responsibilities.***

Considering today's discussion about the current needs of this centering prayer community, where is the Holy Spirit calling you to serve?

Distribute a Call to Service form and provide time for each person to prayerfully complete the form.

IV. Options for proceeding:

- Option One: When a Prayerful Discernment Process for selection of new leadership is part of the program, schedule a break and collect the Call to Service Forms. This Break gives the leadership the opportunity to view the availability of individuals for various service positions prior to the discernment process. After the break, begin with a period of centering prayer so that prayerful discernment flows from the Centering Prayer in community. Then follow the Prayerful Discernment process described in the attachment.
- Option Two: Schedule a follow-up session and close the program with a period of centering prayer.
- Option Three: End the gathering with an appreciation ceremony recognizing the many ways participants have shared the gift of centering prayer and supported the service of the chapter.

Attachments:

- Suggestions to consider
- A Call to Service form
- Prayer to the Holy Spirit
- Prayerful Discernment
- A time of appreciation & acknowledgement

Prayerful Discernment

At the conclusion of the Chapter Planning segment of the day, there is a transition to the Prayerful Discernment Process. A brief recap of the morning Chapter Planning is a segue into Prayerful Discernment. Even if a coordinator has been previously determined, it is still valuable to go through this process.

Facilitator

A person is designated by the group to facilitate the prayerful discernment process for new leadership in advance of the day. The designated facilitator prepares by becoming familiar with the guidelines of the process as follows:

Purpose/Function of a Chapter

Prior to the beginning of the group discernment process for leadership, a brief discussion should take place with members of the chapter who will participate in the discernment process to fully understand the purpose, function and objective of a Contemplative Outreach Chapter.

A handout defining the role and responsibilities of Chapter Coordinator should be reviewed by the group so there is shared understanding of the role for which leadership is being discerned.

(a brief summarized version of the role of Coordinator may be forwarded to chapter members with publicity information for review prior to the Chapter Planning Day).

Reflection

Prior to the discernment process, the group members are asked to reflect on the questions listed below in order to be prepared to answer them. These questions should be read aloud to the group and 5-10 minutes given to silent reflection on the questions/statements and their response.

Centering Prayer

A prayer to the Holy Spirit is offered asking for guidance and help to choose the Coordinator (*or other role you are interested in filling*) that will serve Contemplative Outreach in a way that will best serve the intention of God's will for the Outreach community. A period of Centering Prayer follows.

After 20 minutes of Centering Prayer, the facilitator asks each person in the circle to respond to the following statements:

First round raises coordinator, second round coordinating team, don't need to reread questions.

1. My commitment to Centering Prayer and to Contemplative Outreach is.....

2. I am (or am not) able to serve as the Coordinator for our local Chapter....

State the reason why you are able and willing to accept.

If unable to accept the recommendation, please continue to respond

3. I would like to recommend _____ to serve as the Coordinator (or other role) because (give reasons why you think this would be the best person to serve as Coordinator (or other role)).

Note: If three or four names emerge as potential candidates, each person is asked if they wish to serve. If more than one says yes, a ballot election may be initiated. The person who receives the most votes is selected.

Closing: Stand up, hold hands and say the Our Father. Then hug all around.

Please contact Ruth Hofmann at rchofmann47@msn.com for additional materials for this program

Suggestions for Chapter Planning and Prayerful Discernment for Chapters

This page includes a variety of suggestions for facilitating the Prayerful Planning and Discernment for Chapters gathering. Choose to implement any suggestions that will benefit the members of your chapter. (The numbering of each suggestion corresponds to the numbering on the “Prayerful Planning and Discernment” document.)

Preliminary preparation: When organizing this event, consider

- Forming a service team to plan and implement the event.
- Asking several members of the coordinating team to lead the event. For example, one person gives the welcome, another could lead the centering prayer sessions. Another person could facilitate the group planning sessions, and another could serve as a scribe writing down on a whiteboard or flip chart all of the responses.
- Plan how you will Record the input from the whole group.
 - If using a white board with limited space, take a cell phone picture of each step and then erase that input and start with a clean board for the next step.
 - Another option is to use a Super Sticky Easel Pad by Post-It with 30 sheets that are 25 X 30 for \$42.98. Each sheet can be torn off when completed and posted on the wall.

II. Vision, Theological Principles and Guidelines for Service with Commentary.

One way to help people become familiar with this document would be to offer a “contemplative reading” of the Vision and one, two, or three Theological Principles.

- Theological Principles 13 and 14 may be particularly appropriate, but local chapters can decide which ones they want to focus on at this time.
- It is helpful to give everyone attending the gathering the brochure with the Contemplative Outreach Vision, Theological Principles and Guidelines for Service.
- Also, this practice can be done at other chapter gatherings, so that over time the chapter reads the whole document together in this prayerful and deep listening manner.

III. Planning Process:

When inviting people to write down something that supports their own centering prayer practice, it might be helpful to give several examples ranging from personal practice to chapter support. Some examples might be:

- I have a specific time and place for doing my daily centering prayer
- I attend a weekly centering prayer group
- I attend chapter enrichment days
- I study the Spiritual Journey DVDs

Before identifying needs, it can help to focus responses by reviewing the purpose of a the chapter:

To offer the Centering Prayer Introductory Program.

To form Centering Prayer groups.

To provide support to Centering Prayer groups and their facilitators.

Sometimes breaking into groups of 7-9 people makes it easier for everyone's ideas to be heard. Each group can identify a scribe who will report to the whole group when it re-assembles.

IV. Closing ceremony. Here are some ideas

Take time to acknowledge everyone's service at this event and overall within the chapter. Perhaps ask have people to stand up who have served the chapter in a particular way. Here are some examples, but each chapter will have its own list.

- Centering Prayer group facilitators
- Communications volunteers: mailings, website, phone calls, etc.
- Commissioned presenters
- Hospitality volunteers
- Eleventh Step facilitators

Another way to acknowledge the gift everyone brings through their commitment to sharing the practice of centering prayer is to end by sharing the light from a central candle. Distribute unlit candles to all. Ask one person to light their candle from the central candle. As the person returns to their place in the circle, they share their light with the people on their right and their left. As each person receives light for their candle they pass it on to the person on their other side until the light has spread all around the circle.

Contemplative Outreach Chapter Support Team

Thank-you for your interest in organizing this chapter event. It is suggested that a service team be formed to plan and implement the event. A Contemplative Outreach Chapter Support Team member is available to answer any questions you might have about planning the gathering. Please contact Ruth Hofmann.

Rchofmann47@msn.com for additional materials.

February 11, 2019