

Guidelines for Hosting a Centering Prayer Introductory Program

Thank you for your interest in hosting a Centering Prayer Introductory Program. This document describes how to organize a Centering Prayer Introductory Program which includes presentation of a *Centering Prayer Introductory Workshop* and follow up *Continuing Sessions*. If you decide to host the program, your local Contemplative Outreach chapter will work with you to meet the needs of your group.

The Centering Prayer Introductory Program: An Overview

The Centering Prayer Introductory Program includes two parts:

- 1) An Introductory Workshop (4-5 hours) which is presented by one or more experienced and commissioned presenter(s) from a local Contemplative Outreach chapter and
- 2) A series of four to six 90-minute Continuing Sessions which include a period of Centering Prayer, a video, and discussion.

The Centering Prayer Introductory Program is described in a brochure published by Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. To download a black and white copy of the brochure, click on this link: [Centering Prayer Introduction Brochure](#). Color copies of the brochure may be purchased at this website: [Color Brochure Order Page](#).

The Centering Prayer Introductory Program brochure includes the following:

Centering Prayer is a receptive method of silent prayer that prepares us to receive the gift of contemplative prayer, in which we experience God's presence within us, closer than breathing, closer than consciousness itself. This method of prayer is both a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship.

The Centering Prayer Introductory Workshop familiarizes participants with the method of Centering Prayer and its conceptual background and offers two opportunities to experience the prayer. The workshop consists of four presentations.

1. Prayer as Relationship
2. The Method of Centering Prayer
3. Thoughts and the Use of the Sacred Word
4. Deepening our Relationship with God

Following the Introductory Workshop, Continuing Sessions are offered to workshop participants to provide support during the time when participants are establishing their Centering Prayer practice. Details about the Continuing Sessions will be offered by the workshop presenter.

At the conclusion of the Continuing Sessions, participants are encouraged to start a new group or join an existing one. Centering Prayer groups usually meet on a weekly or bi-weekly basis and can provide valuable support to those committed to a daily practice of Centering Prayer.

Guidelines for Hosting an Introductory Program for Your Organization

The following guidelines include ideas from many Contemplative Outreach chapters. They are intended as **suggestions** you might want to consider as you plan a Centering Prayer Introductory Program for your church or other organization. You may adapt these guidelines as needed.

Before You Begin

- Contact the leadership of your church or organization to introduce the Centering Prayer Introductory Program and to express your interest in hosting the program for your community.
- *The Centering Prayer Introductory Program* brochure and these guidelines are helpful to use as a guide to the planning process.

Follow these steps below for organizing all aspects of the program including scheduling, room set-up/hospitality/volunteers, registration and finance, and promotion/publicity.

Four Steps to Hosting the Workshop and Continuing Sessions

1.	<p><u>Scheduling</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact the local chapter coordinator to select the dates for the Introductory Workshop and the Continuing Sessions.• <u>Centering Prayer Introductory Workshop</u> – Typically, the workshop is scheduled for four to five hours on a Saturday. This includes 30 minutes for registration and breaks. Alternative schedules, such as including lunch or offering the workshop on four evenings, can be arranged.• <u>Continuing Sessions</u> –The recommended format is four to six weekly sessions, with each session being 90 minutes in length. Starting these sessions one week after the workshop is recommended. If the weekly sessions are not feasible, half-day or full-day sessions or retreats may be offered.• A schedule can be adapted to meet your individual needs.
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2.	<p><u>Room Set-up, Hospitality & Volunteers</u></p> <p><u>Room Set-Up</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select a meeting space conducive to silence. • Create a prayer circle separated from the presentation space if possible. Create ambience in the center of a circle of chairs by placing a small table with a cloth, candle, Bible, etc. • Check with the presenter regarding equipment needs: podium, television, DVD player, etc. <p><u>Hospitality</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name tags, coffee, tea, water, juice and snacks could be available when participants arrive. • Planning for lunch is optional. If the workshop extends into the afternoon, participants may be invited to bring a lunch or it could be provided by the hosting organization. <p><u>Volunteers</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers from the host community may be needed for the following tasks: preparing and serving refreshments, setting up chairs and tables, welcoming participants, registration, and clean up following the workshop.
3.	<p><u>Registration and Financial Considerations</u></p> <p><u>Registration</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compile a registration list with full name, phone number, e-mail address, and payment amount, along with the number of scholarships provided. Make note of cash and checks. • Keep the local Contemplative Outreach contact person informed of the registrations. • Provide final copies of the registration list for the local Contemplative Outreach contact person and the lead organizer(s) of your program. <p><u>Financial Considerations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A registration fee is suggested for attendance to the program and is determined by the local hosting organization along with consultation with the local chapter. • If possible, plan for a contribution to the local chapter and/or Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. • Contemplative Outreach relies on contributions to help offset administration costs as well as supporting our outreaches and to offer scholarships for many of our programs. • Scholarships to cover the registration fee may be provided by your organization or the local chapter, as available. • The registration fees collected should cover expenses, including: printing, mailing, cost of facility, presenter travel and stipend, refreshments, and lunch (if provided). • Many chapters include the book, <i>Open Mind, Open Heart</i> (the basic text on Centering Prayer) by Thomas Keating.

4.

Promotion

Reaching out to your members and beyond is a vital aspect of getting people to attend your Centering Prayer Introductory Program.

- Begin advertising the Centering Prayer Introductory Program 6-12 weeks in advance. It is recommended to remind the community several times before the event.
- Distribute the Centering Prayer Introductory Program brochure to promote the program. This brochure succinctly describes Contemplative Outreach, Centering Prayer, the content of the Introductory Workshop, and options for the Continuing Sessions.
- In all advertisements, be sure to include: date, time, location, cost, registration information, and a contact name with e-mail address and phone number for those persons who may have a question about the content of the program or about Centering Prayer.
- Use as many resources as possible to advertise within your church or organization (for example, bulletin, bulletin insert, school/church newsletter, bulletin boards, church council meetings, adult education meetings, and webpages).
- Contact neighboring churches and ask if they are willing to include the announcement of the Centering Prayer Introductory Program in their Sunday bulletins.
- Additional resources for publicity include: newspapers (diocesan or other regional Christian newspapers), free section in community newspapers, library and church bulletin boards, local chapter newsletters, etc.
- Below are two examples of bulletin or newsletter announcements that may be adapted by you and used for publicity.

Centering Prayer Introductory Program

Contemplative prayer is God’s personal and unique gift to us and has been a part of our Christian heritage for centuries. If we are open to the gift of contemplation it may profoundly affect our daily life. The Centering Prayer Introductory Program serves to explain the gift of contemplative prayer and deepening of our relationship with God. The method of Centering Prayer will be presented and time will be allowed for practice of the prayer. Discover the meaning of Psalm 46: “Be still and know that I am God.”

The program will be presented on (DATE) from (TIME) in the (LOCATION). The registration fee is (\$XX). The program will be presented by experienced practitioners of Centering Prayer who are commissioned to present the program by Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. (www.contemplativeoutreach.org).

For more information or to sign up, please contact (NAME/PHONE/EMAIL).

Centering Prayer Introductory Program Planned for (DATE)

Do you seek the still, quiet voice of God? The Centering Prayer Introductory Program will help us to understand the Indwelling Presence of God within each of us and our intimate relationship with that Presence. The method of Centering Prayer will be presented. We will explore the benefits of Centering Prayer in ordinary life and experience two periods of Centering Prayer practice. All are welcome to attend!

The program will be presented on (DATE) from (TIME) in the (LOCATION). A donation of (\$XX) per person is requested. The program will be presented by experienced practitioners of Centering Prayer who are commissioned to present the program by Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. (www.contemplativeoutreach.org).

For more information or to sign up, please call or e-mail (NAME/PHONE/EMAIL).

For further information about hosting a Centering Prayer Introductory Program, contact your local Contemplative Outreach Coordinator. To find your local coordinator, search under “Community” at <http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/> or call 973-838-3384.