



Contemplative Outreach

THE LIVING FLAME PROGRAM GUIDELINES *Through Zoom Technology*

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What Is the Living Flame Program?

The Living Flame (LF) program is designed to heighten the awareness of the dynamics of Centering Prayer in the context of the spiritual journey and to offer guidance for staying faithful to one's Centering Prayer practice. It is an opportunity to share the conceptual background of Centering Prayer as well as experiential insights at a deeper level and to build a community committed to its daily practice. The LF program asks that the participants have an established Centering Prayer practice.

The LF program is hosted by Contemplative Outreach chapters or local communities. It includes seven full-day offerings of in-depth spiritual study, usually presented over a seven-to-nine-month period, by commissioned presenters from the Contemplative Outreach. The program:

- offers encouragement and support in a small community Zoom setting;
- heightens the awareness of the transformation process;
- helps discern when psychological skills can be helpful tools;
- provides the opportunity to give and receive spiritual companionship.

The Living Flame Program began in 1993 as the inspiration of the then coordinator of the Tampa Bay area, Monica Freeman. After much prayer, preparation, consultation and approval of the faculty of Contemplative Outreach and the blessing of its founder, Thomas Keating, the first Living Flame was held in Bradenton, Florida, USA. Since that time, it has been presented in many areas of the United States including Orlando; St. Louis; Long Island, New York; Milwaukee; Los Angeles; San Diego; Portland; Chicago; Newark; Cleveland; Pittsburgh; Indianapolis; Hartford; Washington, DC; Louisville. More recently, the program was offered in Iceland.

Living Flame through Zoom Technology

The Living Flame Service Team in conjunction with Contemplative Outreach leaders is now offering to present the Living Flame program using Zoom technology.

When using Zoom, a chapter or local community would continue to experience Living Flame with a daily schedule similar to the traditional LF schedule; this would include presentations, periods of Centering Prayer, small group discussion, and group interaction. The presenter would present at designated times and be available on Zoom to answer questions of the group. Note that the person facilitating the day would need experience as a Zoom meeting host and participants would need computer access.

Living Flame through Zoom technology may be helpful because of the distance and travel costs, and also for smaller chapters or groups that do not at this time have a sufficient number of members to support having the Living Flame program in-person. Other situations may also warrant the use of Zoom, for example, during the time of the pandemic, when groups could not meet in person.

How To Begin

These Zoom guidelines have been written to assist in planning and implementing the Living Flame program using Zoom technology with the assistance of the CO Living Flame Service Team.

To begin the planning process a CO chapter coordinator or group representative should contact the CO Living Flame Service Team leader to let her/him know of the interest and to ask any questions. The CO LF Team leader will review the use of Zoom technology and encourage the reading of these LF Program Guidelines thoroughly, sharing them with those who are interested at the chapter or group level.

A chapter or group considering this program is encouraged to appoint an on-site coordinator. **One or more persons on the site team needs to be proficient in hosting a Zoom meeting because the Living Flame Zoom sessions are to be facilitated by someone in the chapter or group. Tutorials are available on the Zoom website.** It is extremely helpful for a team to be formed to assist the on-site coordinator in the tasks required to implement the LF program.

What Next?

Listed below are the steps involved in the planning and implementation of a Living Flame program using Zoom:

- Using the information in these guidelines, the on-site coordinator and his/her team should determine a tentative budget that would be required to hold a Living Flame 1 program in their chapter or area. Note that funds are available from Contemplative Outreach Ltd; review the procedures located on in these guidelines for requesting these funds. Also note that participants may request individual scholarships for attending the Living Flame through the established CO guidelines.
- The LF brochure is a helpful tool to begin discussions and discernments about the Living Flame program using Zoom, in order to determine the level of interest and commitment for hosting and participating in the program.
- The local LF team will then select the seven dates for the monthly LF presentations; these are submitted to the CO Living Flame team leader.

- The CO Living Flame team leader will contact the LF presenters to determine who is willing to present the various topics. The CO LF team leader will then send the chapter or group the list of presenters and a brief bio of each presenter.
- The chapter coordinator or site coordinator will need to have or purchase a Zoom Pro Account.
- Using the information in these guidelines, the on-site coordinator and his/her team should finalize the budget required to hold the Living Flame 1 program and discern the fee to be charged to each of the participants.
- It is suggested that persons who wish to participate in the Living Flame program have an established Centering Prayer practice and be familiar with Thomas Keating's writings, particularly *Open Mind*, *Open Heart*.
- The local team prepares and sends publicity communications (letter/email/other) detailing the contents of the LF Program, noting the suggested participation prerequisite and noting the availability of scholarships. Participating members will need to have access to a computer with camera and audio capabilities for Zoom use.
- Additional tasks for the LF on-site coordinator and team include the following:
 - Creating a registration process.
 - Sending an introductory email to registrants, welcoming them and giving instructions regarding Zoom access. (The format and link for the invitation to “join a meeting” are provided by Zoom.) The CO LF team leader is available for further instructions if needed.
 - Providing participant materials for the LF program which include:
 - schedule of dates
 - list of participants
 - CO Vision brochure
 - Centering Prayer brochure
 - schedule of the day (see the example in these guidelines)
 - Living Flame brochure
 - Small group Covenant Guidelines
 - Obtaining in advance the handout materials the presenter needs to have emailed to the participants prior to his/her presentation.

Tasks for the LF Day

On each scheduled day of the Living Flame, the role of the on-site coordinator, or one of the team members, includes the following

- Hosting the Zoom meeting and making sure that the day goes smoothly. It is important that the host and co-hosts (if applicable) understand the details of Zoom facilitation, including allowing participants into the Zoom room, muting and unmuting participants, moving participants into small breakout groups, screen sharing, etc. Past experience shows it can be helpful to have dry-run or practice session to help participants, the host, and the presenter feel comfortable with the Zoom procedures. In this way no time is lost during the actual day of presentation.
- Keeping a master list of attendance, if desired.
- Making sure the stipend check is mailed to the presenter.
- Obtaining evaluation information from each of the participants, which is then summarized and sent to your liaison from the CO LF team (if you have been assigned one) or to the CO LF team leader. This evaluation can be completed either by emailing participants the Evaluation Form, found in these guidelines or by emailing a link to a Google form which can be made available to the site coordinator. Contact Living Flame team leader, Judy Sharer at jsharer@bbtel.com for access and prompts for your Google Form.
- Helping the presenter and the participants to stay on schedule.

Other Suggestions for the LF Day

Check-in Times:

The on-site coordinator will open the session on Zoom. The coordinator will ask the participants to offer a brief "check-in" that expresses his/her thoughts or feelings about the day. The coordinator might model this by keeping his/her thoughts to a couple of words. At this time, the coordinator will introduce and welcome the visiting presenter.

Centering Prayer Periods:

A short psalm or part of a psalm in keeping with the spirit of the day is recommended before the Centering Prayer periods. Usually, the on-site coordinator or a member of the coordinating team leads the prayer or solicits volunteers to do so. The periods of Centering Prayer in the morning and again in the afternoon are an essential part of the program.

Lunch: a break will be taken for lunch.

Small Groups:

Using Zoom, the participants are placed into small breakout groups, either randomly or determined, for a more intimate experience of sharing during the seven sessions. Ideally, 4-5 members will be in each group. This will encourage bonding in the Spirit throughout the months of the Living Flame program. These groups will be invited to review and accept the Small Group Covenant guidelines (found later in these guidelines) for faith sharing that will be in their materials.

The presenter of the day will give the small groups one or two focusing questions to keep the group on the topic.

Closing:

At closing, participants are invited to give any brief reflections or feedback from the day with a "check-out" similar to the opening "check-in." This is an appropriate time to express gratitude to the presenter and allow him or her to give any final words about the day.

Site Coordinator Zoom Tips

Here are some helpful Zoom tips written by Mike Potter for site coordinators.

1. Have a designated Zoom administrator involved early in the planning.
2. Prepare a detailed schedule that lists each task to be performed by the presenter and by the Zoom administrator so that transitions are clear.
3. Agree on all screen sharing and who will do the sharing. A “burning candle” video loop (on YouTube) for Centering Prayer and a countdown timer for breaks may be helpful.
4. Conduct a practice run-through of the schedule on Zoom with the Zoom administrator before the event.

Statement regarding the Recording of Living Flame Sessions:

The facilitator may record the session via Zoom with the understanding that it will be deleted after an appropriate amount of time for viewing (consider 10 days). The permission of the presenter is required.

Reasons for this recommendation:

- The presentation is the focus of each day’s program but that focus is reinforced and deepened by the interactions that occur within the group, including the question-and-answer periods, the small group break-out sessions, and the final group check-out time.
- Each of the Living Flame programs – LF1 and LF2 – is meant to be a series, with each talk building on the previous one, or at least applying what was shared in previous sessions to new material. That sense of spiritual journeying through each Living Flame is an important component of the Living Flame.
- The Living Flame Program is meant to build community among the participants of a CO chapter or local community.
- The integrity and purpose of the Living Flame program as a whole is assured. Once a recording is made, its distribution is uncertain.

Financial Aspects of Living Flame Program

The following is a Financial Estimate for 25 participants:

Fixed Costs for the Living Flame Program for one year (7 sessions):

Presenters' stipend $\$250 \times 7 = \1750.00

CO LF Team Leader Stipend \$150

Zoom pro account \$14.99/month or \$150/yr.

Total Fixed Costs = \$2050.

In addition to the Fixed Costs, there are variable or optional costs that may be incurred when presenting The Living Flame Program. These may include expenses such as printing and copying, postage, etc.

Using the above figures based on 25 participants, the fixed costs per person per year would total \$82.00, or roughly \$12.00 per person per session. The variable costs will be different for each chapter or group.

The chapter coordinator or local community will have to consider all of the local conditions and apply them in order to have a more accurate reflection of the total actual costs. Actual costs will then determine the cost per person to attend The Living Flame Program. It is suggested all monies be collected from participants before the start of the series to ensure meeting all expenses.

Scholarship Information

1. Contemplative Outreach Budget Allocation for Chapters

Contemplative Outreach has, within its current budget, funds that can be provided to help CO Chapters who are unable to provide all of the funding needed for the Living Flame Program in their area. Chapters who would like to apply for these funds are invited to contact the CO Living Flame Service Team Leader, to indicate their interest.

- The CO LF leader will send the chapter the Living Flame Program Guidelines for them to review.
- The chapter will review the financial aspects of the program,
- Determine their own budget,
- Determine how much of their budget they think they would be able to provide toward the LF program.
- Make a request of the Living Flame Service Team for the amount of money still needed.

Based on the number of requests and the amounts needed, funds will be allocated to the chapters who are ready to hold a Living Flame program.

Hosting the program on Zoom, with no travel expenses for presenters, is more affordable for chapters or local groups and may allow international groups to more easily participate.

2. Individual Scholarships (forms submitted by the chapter)

Scholarships from Contemplative Outreach can be used for attending the Living Flame. Applicants are invited to apply through the regular scholarship procedures of CO which are as follows:

Contemplative Outreach will match a scholarship amount awarded by the local chapter. All scholarship applications are to come from the sponsoring chapter to Contemplative Outreach, Ltd. Scholarship application forms and procedures are available at office@coutreach.org. Scholarship funds are distributed after the applicant has attended the LF program.

Administration of the Living Flame Program

Judy Sharer is the CO Living Flame Team contact person. Judy was the on-site coordinator in Louisville, Ky. for Living Flame 1 and 2. She is commissioned by Contemplative Outreach as a presenter for the Centering Prayer Introductory Program and for Lectio Divina. If you are interested in more information about The Living Flame Program and would like to consider hosting it in your area, please contact her at: 270-304-7684 jsharer@bbtel.com

The Living Flame Service Team members are: Rickey Cotton, John Ettensohn, OMI, Ruth Hofmann, Karlye Keleher, Judy Sharer and Marilyn Webb.

Living Flame Daily Schedule using Zoom

The basic daily schedule can remain the same for each of the sessions and for both Living Flame 1 and 2. The prayer periods in the AM and PM are an essential part of the day. The presentation conference times might be adjusted by the presenter of the day, according to the nature of the presentations.

***Suggested Schedule of the Day**

Welcome & Check In (30 minutes)

Centering Prayer (30 minutes)

Silent Break (5-10 minutes)

Conference (60 minutes)

Lunch (as needed)

Centering Prayer (30 minutes)

Conference (60 minutes)

Silent Break (5-10 minutes)

Breakout Groups (30 minutes)

Closing and Check-out (20 minutes)

*Time periods for Check-in, Breaks, Lunch and Check-out can be adjusted by chapters.

Living Flame Small Group Covenant Guidelines

- *We accept one another just as we are, remembering that we come from different faith perspectives and that it is our Christian contemplative heritage that unites us.
- *We listen, rather than give advice – we relate from our own experience. (Use “I” statements).
- *We never criticize what others share.
- *We allow everyone who wants to share the opportunity to share. No one must share.
- *We listen attentively, without interruption, when someone else is speaking. In this regard we avoid any cross-talk or private conversations.
- *We keep the sharing in the small group absolutely confidential.
- *We gather to care, not to cure or remove the crisis or pain – God does the curing and healing.
- *We are conscious enough of the time so that no one person dominates the sharing. Equal access.
- *We remain on topic/or faithful to the questions posed by the presenter or facilitator.
- *We become a ‘caring community’ for our small group members.

Living Flame Evaluation for Zoom

The Living Flame Service Team has developed an electronic form (Google Form) for emailing to participants following each session. This option will be sent to your site coordinator at your request, along with instructions for accessing and sending, then viewing responses. If you choose not to use the Google Form, please use the form below.

We value your feedback. Your input and suggestions will help us to plan future workshops on Zoom.

1. Please give us your overall rating for today's session on Zoom. Select one:

Very Good___ Good___ Sufficient___ Insufficient___

Please comment if rating is "insufficient".

2. Tell us what was especially helpful or challenging within the Presentations, Small Group discussion, or Centering Prayer periods.

3. Do you have helpful comments or suggestions for the guest presenter?

4. Do you have comments for the local chapter service team?

5. Additional comments?

Name - optional _____