



## Unity in Contemplation

Thomas Keating

COURTESY OF W.T. BRYANT



IN DESCRIBING THE functioning of the Mystical Body of Christ, Saint Paul writes that everyone has a special role to play in that body: some are teachers, some preachers, some wonderworkers, some have the charismatic gifts (cf. 1Cor.12:4-31). To sum up our conference about Unity in Contemplation, let me paraphrase the description of the transformational process revealed by Father Bede Griffiths, OSB., the founder of Shantivanam Ashram, South India, to someone in a dream.

The first stage of the spiritual journey he reportedly affirmed, is to recognize that **there is an Other**. It is the realization that there is a Higher Power, some Source from which we come: in Christian terms, the eternal, creative Word of God vibrating in our inmost being. We are resonating to the fullness of the Eternal Word as he actualizes the infinite possibilities contained within the Father.

The second stage is to **become the Other**. This is to awaken to the Divine Indwelling within us through faith, hope, and pure love. In the Christian tradition, it is called the imitation of Christ.

The third stage is **there is no Other**. Since these words were spoken



in a dream, we have no way of knowing whether “other” is to be written in the lower or the higher case. Perhaps in fact there is no other--whether capital “O” or small “o”-- in the sense that the Ultimate Reality is beyond both “Other” and “other”. Neither presupposes that our uniqueness disappears into the abyss of God’s divine nature.

“There is no other” implies that you and I are not really who we think we are, not even our true selves created as the Book of Genesis affirms, in the image

and likeness of God. Saint Paul describes his union with Christ through grace in these terms: “I live now not I, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2: 18-20), to which the contemporary theologian, Raimon Panikkar adds the gloss: “Christ lives in me *as my deepest self*” (Italics mine).

Thus the Son of God made flesh is manifesting in our uniqueness and returning to the Father through us and in us. Just as the Son empties himself into the Father, so we are invited to let go of our idea of ourselves--our

self-identity--into the unfolding mystery of God manifesting in our ordinary everyday lives. Then Christ is not only living in us but as us.

Thus we might conceive of ourselves as a localized expression of the wave or vibration of the limitless created reality that is the Eternal Word made flesh. In that perspective, we can boldly surrender to the presence of God in us, because we know God sees the beauty, goodness, and truth of his Son in our spiritual destitution and nothingness. We are in the process of becoming one with Christ in his identification with the human condition: weakness, sin, and everything in us that is un-evolved and distorted. The grace of the Ascension is to return with and in Christ to the bosom of the Father, from whom the human family has come and to whom it is returning in the unity of the Holy Spirit.

*...Christ is not only living in us but as us.*





## *From the President*

Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler

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# 25 Years of Practice in Community

CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH WAS conceived in community at the original Lama Foundation Retreat in 1983. Living together on this remote mountain top in New Mexico, separated from family, friends and modern conveniences, our little community of 12 strangers spent 14 days in silence, with many periods of Centering Prayer practice and the opportunity to listen to the conceptual background for Centering Prayer – the Christian contemplative tradition - given to us by Fr. Thomas Keating. Secretly in the stillness of our hearts, the Holy Spirit was weaving our heart strings together while we opened ourselves during this two week intensive. We never noticed we had become so connected until our final evening when it occurred to us that on the very next morning we would return to our respective lives and leave one another. What now? How do we carry this transformative experience back home? How would we continue our commitment to our Centering Prayer practice without the support of our newly formed and now treasured community? As these questions whirled around in our heads, our hearts already knew that we could never be separated. For each of us in our own way, knowingly or unknowingly, had made a renewed commitment to Centering Prayer twice daily and to hold each other in our hearts, waiting for the Holy Spirit to guide our next movements.

We went home, connected in the silence, while the Holy Spirit was busy at work inspiring, opening doors, and dropping seeds of interest into others' hearts. I've come to realize that this particular experience at the



Lama retreat is not unique to our original 12; it is very same experience found at the end of every retreat and experienced in weekly Centering Prayer groups. The silence provides the opening for the Holy Spirit to activate the deep knowing that we are indeed one in God. The experience is the Mystical Body of Christ in us, around us and between us - and manifests in any group gathered for the sole purpose of transformation in Christ through Centering Prayer.

As a community, through our combined consent, we drop our defenses and our preconceived notions of who we are. We allow the transformation process to over take us, discovering the way of God and submitting ourselves to it. We don't force anything or control what happens. As we say yes to God's presence and action, love happens.

Over the years, many have come to Contemplative Outreach and recognize each other not by names, faces or physical presence but through our heart connections. Our presence to God in

Centering Prayer is transmitted in our presence to the activities of daily life. A reservoir of silence builds within us and ferments there and then finally ignites and touches others.

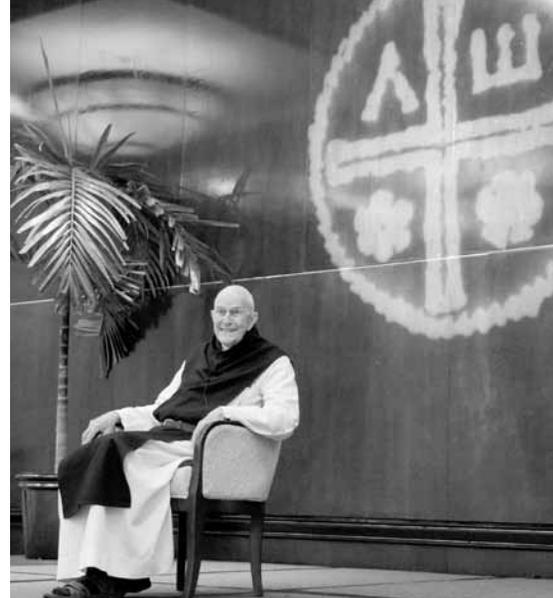
We haven't spread the good news of Centering Prayer or Contemplative Outreach with our lips, but through our own commitment to the practice first and foremost. Then, the action that is just right for each community emerges. We've been invited to give workshops, retreats, presentations and courses all over the world. Like a spider, the Holy Spirit has woven a web of connectedness fueled by silence and supported by the community of transformed hearts. I believe that this is the way of peace, love and Divine transformation – to surrender ourselves to the presence and action of God daily –and to open to the actions of the Holy Spirit who continues the weaving process, while joining us heart to heart, methodically, deliberately, one by one.

Each day, as the world-wide Contemplative Outreach community gathers together in the silence we share, we are known and welcomed as loved ones. I am together in God with my brothers and sisters who understand that oneness is the fruit of contemplative life. There are no separations in God.

*As we say yes to God's presence and action, love happens.*

*God's love has been  
poured into our hearts  
through the Holy Spirit  
that has been given to us.*

Romans 5:5



We are greatly blessed. We are greatly humbled. We give gratitude to God for the gifts of Centering Prayer and Contemplative Outreach. Who would have ever guessed that any of this could happen when the original 12 left the mountain top twenty five years ago? God knew... and our little community that was formed in silence responded to God's call, each in our own way. Now, the Contemplative Outreach community includes thousands and thousands of people and is growing everyday into a community of daily practice and quiet faith. The seeds of silence continue to gestate, uniting hearts, transforming wills and blooming love in the fertile ground of Stillness.



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Over the last 25 years Contemplative Outreach has been dedicated to transmitting the living tradition of the contemplative Christian heritage through the teachings of Father Thomas Keating and through programs and offerings that support the contemplative life for ordinary people.

We recognize that the renewal of the Christian contemplative tradition for our times is essential for survival in a world where suffering and division is everywhere. The external world doesn't offer solutions, only dissolutions. Our only real hope is to strengthen our interior world and to live a life in Christ.

The regular practice of Centering Prayer is a contemporary means of entering into the living tradition of transformation in Christ.

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Fr. Carl J. Arico

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# Prayer of Forgiveness

AS WAS SO beautifully stated in The Contemplative Life Program (CLP) booklet on Forgiveness **“Forgiving is one of the most difficult and complex gestures.”**

Why is it a complex gesture? Because it is not the normal reaction of humans; our tendency is to get even or withhold love and affection when hurt.

**“And yet, like love, it is one of the things which defines the essence of our humanity.”**

Love makes us different from the animal world. Animals can care. Humans can love. Loving is one of the hallmarks of our humanity.

“Forgiveness at its core is a divine gift of love, a movement of love so profound that it reveals the truth of our nature.” That is why Alexander Pope’s insight is so powerful – “to err is human, to forgive is divine.” His insights celebrate the two-armed embrace of forgiveness – there is no doubt that we will err – it is a characteristic of the human condition.

However, to forgive can only take place through the grace of God.

The challenge here is to clarify what we mean by forgiveness. Forgiveness is not a one time experience. It is a process that unfolds over time. Eventually, forgiveness becomes a stable disposition within oneself, a way of being, a way of life.

**And yet, the very fact that we do not forgive, or find forgiveness so difficult, reveals another essential quality of our humanness – free will.**



## *How we choose – what we will – defines the level of our being.*

When I facilitate workshops, I like to have the participants do a little exercise. I divide them into four sections and ask them to repeat after me.

Section one is asked to say “to err is human”

Section four is asked to say “to forgive is divine”

Then I ask section 2 to say “I don’t know how to do it”

And section 3 says “I don’t want to do it”.

So, in sequence:

“To err is human”

“I don’t know how to do it.”

“I don’t want to do it.”

“To forgive is divine.”

I then point out that there is no way of joining the wisdom of sections 1 and 4 without seriously dealing with section 2 and definitely with section 3...

In other words, there is no leaping from to “err is human” over to “forgive is divine.”

**We have a God-given ability to choose, to be and to do as we please, as we will.**

Forgiveness cannot just be a one-time act or decision, but a process that unfolds and reveals itself the more we consent and open to God’s presence and action in our lives.

How we choose – what we will – defines the level of our being.

Might it be possible to see our difficult relationships as some of our greatest gifts? Forgiveness is not so much about feelings as it is about freedom - an essential quality of the spiritual life. Forgiveness is not so much about the other as it is about ourselves. Our freedom lies not in changing the person or situation to meet our needs, but in letting go and trusting God. At this point, I often ask my workshop participants, “Would you rather be right or free?” In our heart of hearts, we long to be free, but often are not willing to give up being right first. In this way, we can see how we build our own prison.

What might be the effects experienced by faithfully practicing the Prayer of Forgiveness?

- Release from the burden of anger and bitterness that upsets our peace
- Removal of any hidden or overt effects of resentment in relation to others
- Release of the power of the Spirit beyond our comprehension which frees our bodies, our thoughts and our emotions
- Deepened relationship with the Living Christ
- The possibility of moving toward reconciliation

**In seeking to live a contemplative life in the modern world we are invited to make conscious, loving choices.**

I envision the Prayer of Forgiveness as outlined in the CLP booklet on Forgiveness as a symphony with an Overture, Four Movements and a Sending Forth.

*Our freedom lies not in changing the person or situation to meet our needs, but in letting go and trusting God.*

The **overture** is a period of Centering Prayer - clearing the way by consenting to God's presence and action in our lives, knowing that forgiveness is a divine gift of love; "Lord I cannot do this without you."

The **first movement** is the celebration and awaking of our whole being, opening to the healing presence of the Holy Spirit by relaxing and opening the body, acknowledging that the 'issues are in the tissues'; that our body stores the memories of what needs to be forgiven.

The **second movement** invites the person into our inner room in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Yes, the inner room – the room that we have been inspired to pray in the spirit of Matthew 6:6. In this inner room we welcome our guest and share the hurts that needs to be shared. The guest listens and then we tell them, "I forgive you" – repeating that

phrase of freedom as many times as needed.

The **third movement** invites the guest to share how we have hurt them – we wait and listen – already knowing on a deeper level some of what they are going to say. When they have finished we repeat as many times as needed "Forgive me".

The **fourth movement** we invite the guest to leave, letting them know they are more than welcome to come again if needed. This is a new beginning and we know in faith that the seeds of forgiveness have been planted. Spending some additional time with the Holy Spirit, we rest awhile to allow this experiential process of forgiveness to penetrate our being on a deeper level.

The **Sending Forth** - As you leave the inner room and return to your ordinary awareness a prayer is said for the guest and for the

possibility some day of being able to reconcile with them in God's time and in God's way.

For more information about and practice with the Prayer of Forgiveness ...  
[www.contemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org)

- The Contemplative Life Program praxis booklet on Forgiveness, in the online bookstore
- The online course "Forgiveness: A Growth in Love", a six week course in learning to let-go through the Prayer of Forgiveness.



# ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH

*Consenting to Divine Love:*  
25 YEARS OF CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH

Wyndham O'Hare Hotel, Chicago, IL  
September 24-27, 2009

*Featuring Fr. Thomas Keating, OCSO, founder of Contemplative Outreach  
and other presenters from the Contemplative Outreach community.*

### Three Options will be available for conference attendees:

• **OPTION 1 Full Conference:** Thursday afternoon September 24 to Sunday noon September 27. The full conference will include Centering Prayer, presentations with Fr. Thomas and Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler, President of Contemplative Outreach, workshops, regional meetings and time for networking. The Annual Business Meeting will be Sunday morning followed by a closing ecumenical celebration.

• **OPTION 2 Day of Enrichment:** Saturday September 26 with Evening Banquet and 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Program.

• **OPTION 3 Day of Enrichment:** Saturday September 26 without evening banquet and 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary program.

Conference reservations now open. Call (973) 838-3384 or visit [www.contemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org) for more details and to register.



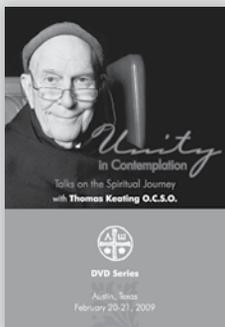
## PRISON OUTREACH ANNOUNCEMENT

The Contemplative Outreach Prison Outreach Database is now available online. The database is a list of those bringing Centering Prayer into prisons and jails in the United States.

You may find the listing online at [www.contemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org). Click on COMMUNITY and you'll see a link in the left-hand navigation. You can then search for prison activities by state. We will update this listing monthly as new programs come to our attention.

If you are offering a Centering Prayer prison ministry at a facility that is not listed, or know of someone who is working at a facility that is not listed, please contact:

Savario Mungo  
17235 Pebble Beach  
San Antonio TX 78248  
(210) 465-9591  
[smungo1959@aol.com](mailto:smungo1959@aol.com)



*Unity*  
in Contemplation

Talks on the Spiritual Journey  
with Fr. Thomas Keating

A two DVD-set of Fr. Thomas' recent talks in  
Austin, TX, February 20-21, 2009

NEW DVD!

**Talk One: The Divine Economy** Fr. Thomas' wisdom and wit resound on a timely topic ... a different kind of economy ... one you don't have to fix!

**Talk Two: The Christian Contemplative Journey** Fr. Thomas illumines the meaning of the cross, the Mystery of the Incarnation, the science of love and the infinite mercy of God.

**Q&A with Betty Sue Flowers** Betty Sue Flowers, the interviewer on the new *Heartfulness: Transformation in Christ* DVD series to be released in 2009, interviews Fr. Thomas in a delightful exchange inspiring hope for all regarding the fullness of life.

129 minutes total. \$29.95 USD. Now available in the online bookstore. Click on DVDs under the bookstore search field.

For more resources to support a life of practice and devotion, please visit the Contemplative Outreach website, [www.contemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org).



### On Lectio Divina ...

The word of God, sacred prayer, is relationship through committed presence. The forum Dei, the holy all-knowing faith received, and the response of the discipline of Scripture is worship. Listening becomes understanding, the knowable charity of contemplation and healing hope of humanity. The power of virtue seeking God in silence. The practice of Lectio Divina in the monastic tradition calls on community, offering Scripture, witnessed unitively, and present as authentic realization of God. I arrive in God through the mediated mysteries of prayer. Thank you through this teaching prayer of communion counseled in the love of God.

In Christ, CS



Courtesy of Ron Barnett





## In Gratitude

*Thank you to Susan Suspak and  
Cathy McCarthy, the former editors of the  
Contemplative Outreach News,  
for their many years of  
contemplative service.*



Courtesy of elpopphoto, LLC

## *Birthday Prayer*

Today of all days  
Let me worship you,  
Let me seek your face,

The one whose hand  
Carefully wove  
All that I am,

The one whose love  
Intended me  
From birth to grave.

Let me be willing  
Not to understand  
But simply give you praise,

For the gift of my life,  
The gift of my self,  
Today of all days.

*Andrea Mitchell  
Leeds, England*



*Please send your comments, suggestions and content submissions to Pamela Begeman at [clp@coutreach.org](mailto:clp@coutreach.org)*



# Calendar of Events

JULY - DECEMBER 2009



## CENTERING PRAYER MULTI-DAY RETREATS

4-DAY COMBINED INTENSIVE AND  
INTRODUCTION TO CENTERING PRAYER  
RETREAT

NOVEMBER 15-18, 2009  
Honolulu, HI  
Carol Alevizos • 808-536-6090  
cohi@lava.net

5-DAY CENTERING PRAYER RETREAT  
JULY 24 – 29, 2009

Rosaryville Spirit Life Center  
Ponchatoula, LA  
Vivien Michals • 504-944-4000  
Jennifer Standish • 504-897-1070

5-DAY CENTERING PRAYER RETREAT  
JULY 29 – AUGUST 2, 2009

Frenchville, PA  
Bethany Retreat Center  
Nicole Fedder • 814-263-4855  
bethanyadult@pennswoods.net

7-DAY CENTERING PRAYER RETREAT  
AUGUST 2 - 9, 2009

Francis House of Prayer  
Rancocas, NJ  
Sr. Marcy Springer, SSJ  
609-877-0509  
FHOP@verizon.net

7 DAY CENTERING PRAYER ADVENT RETREAT  
NOVEMBER 30 – DECEMBER 6, 2009

Cedarbrake Retreat Center  
Belton, TX  
Lisa Genung • 512-347-9673  
officemgr@consciousharmony.org

## CENTERING PRAYER INTENSIVE RETREATS

8-DAY INTENSIVE AND POST INTENSIVE  
CENTERING PRAYER RETREAT  
JULY 7 - 14, 2009

Portiuncula Center for Prayer  
Frankfort, IL  
Mary Maraist • 847- 945-0416  
mkmaraist2@aol.com

8-DAY CENTERING PRAYER INTENSIVE  
RETREAT

JULY 20 - 27, 2009  
St. Anthony's Retreat Center Hawaii  
(Outside of Honolulu)  
Carol Alevizos • 808 -536-6090  
cohi@lava.net

8 DAY INTENSIVE AND POST INTENSIVE  
CENTERING PRAYER RETREAT  
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11 – 18, 2009

DuPont Memorial House  
Retreat Center  
Rehoboth Beach, Delaware  
Lacey A. Gude • 301-229-1599  
LaceyAGude@aol.com

10-DAY INTENSIVE AND POST INTENSIVE  
CENTERING PRAYER RETREAT\*  
AUGUST 4 - 13, 2009

St. Benedict's Monastery  
Snowmass, CO  
Carol DiMarcello • 970-927-9376  
coc@sopris.net

\* **Full; waiting list available**

10-DAY POST INTENSIVE CENTERING  
PRAYER RETREAT  
AUGUST 7 - 16, 2009

Franciscan Spiritual Center  
Ringwood, NJ  
Cathy McCarthy • 845 534-5180  
cmccarthy001@hvc.rr.com  
www.centeringprayernys.org/



10-DAY POST INTENSIVE CENTERING PRAYER  
RETREAT

SEPTEMBER 8 - 17, 2009

St. Benedict's Monastery  
Snowmass, CO  
Carol DiMarcello • 970-927-9376  
coc@sopris.net

\* **Full; waiting list available**

10-DAY CENTERING PRAYER INTENSIVE  
RETREAT\*

OCTOBER 6 - 15, 2009

St. Benedict's Monastery  
Snowmass, CO  
Carol DiMarcello • 970-927-9376  
coc@sopris.net

\* **Full; waiting list available**

HEARTFULNESS: THE CONTEMPLATIVE  
CHRISTIAN JOURNEY

GARRISON INSTITUTE, NY

OCTOBER 23-25 OR OCTOBER 23-30

Weekend Retreat with  
Fr. Thomas Keating  
October 23-25, 2009

Weekend and Immersion Retreat with  
Gail Fitzpatrick-Hopler and  
Fr. Carl Arico  
October 23-29, 2009

Mary Anne Best  
maryanne@coutreach.org or  
www.contemplativeoutreach.org/  
garrison

8-DAY POST INTENSIVE CENTERING PRAYER  
RETREAT\*

OCTOBER 30 - NOVEMBER 6, 2009

St. Benedict's Monastery  
Snowmass, CO  
970- 927-9376  
coc@sopris.net or pjconout@rof.net

\* **Full; waiting list available**

CHRISTOPHANY RETREAT - TEACHING  
RETREAT WITH FR. THOMAS KEATING AND  
REV. CYNTHIA BOURGEOULT

OCTOBER 30 - NOVEMBER 8, 2009

Carondelet Hospitality Center  
Latham, NY  
Cathy McCarthy • 845 534-5180  
cmccarthy001@hvc.rr.com  
<http://www.centeringprayernys.org/>

10-DAY CENTERING PRAYER INTENSIVE  
RETREAT\*

NOVEMBER 10-19, 2009

St. Benedict's Monastery  
Snowmass, CO  
Carol DiMarcello • 970-927-9376  
coc@sopris.net

\* **Full; waiting list available**

10-DAY POST INTENSIVE CENTERING PRAYER  
RETREAT \*

DECEMBER 1-10, 2009

St. Benedict's Monastery  
Snowmass, CO  
Carol DiMarcello • 970-927-9376  
coc@sopris.net

\* **Full; waiting list available**

**FORMATION FOR PRESENTERS OF  
CENTERING PRAYER WORKSHOP**

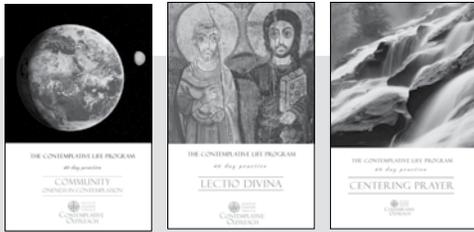
AUGUST 5 - 11, 2009

St. Benedict's Conference and  
Retreat Centre  
Canada

Presenter: Bonnie Shimizu  
204 - 339-1705

stbenscentre@mts.net





# THE CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE PROGRAM



The Contemplative Life Program is an in-home, self-directed program for those who wish to integrate practice, devotion, contemplative values and dispositions into their every day life.

One may participate from year-long subscriptions (seven booklet packages) or by purchasing individual booklets.

Read more about the program on the website at [www.contemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org) >Retreats & Workshops > Contemplative Life Program

> **Scholarships are available by emailing: [clp@coutreach.org](mailto:clp@coutreach.org)**

# Online, On-Demand Courses

SPIRITUALITY  
& PRACTICE  
RESOURCES FOR SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS

## *Now Available for Individuals or Groups*

Offered in partnership with Spirituality & Practice, two online courses are now available anytime, anywhere you have email and internet access.



### **Lectio Divina**

This online retreat focuses on learning the method of Lectio Divina and incorporating this contemplative way of praying the Scriptures into your daily practice.



### **Forgiveness: A Growth in Love**

This online retreat focuses on learning and practicing the Prayer of Forgiveness in various relationships and life events.

Each online, on-demand course is \$29.95 and includes email communications, audio teachings, guided practice and more.

For more information and to register for the course, go to [www.contemplativeoutreach.org](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org) > Retreats & Workshops > Programs.

These courses are also **customizable for groups** of people who would like to take this course together, like prayer groups or faith communities. For more information on customization, please contact Mary Ann Brussat at [brussat@spiritualityandpractice.com](mailto:brussat@spiritualityandpractice.com).



# Directory

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Barbara Sullivan  
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At the heart of each local community are prayer groups, which make up local chapters. The local chapters, in turn, support regional groups, which together create a global community of oneness in silence.

Eastern Region: CT, DE, DC, KY, MA, MD, ME, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, VA, VT, WV

Southern Region: AL, AR, FL, GA, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN

Midwest Region: KS, IA, IL, IN, MI, MO, NE, OK, WI

Southwest Region: CO, NM, TX, UT, WY

Pacific Coast/West Region: AZ, CA, HI, NV

Upper Northern Region: AK, ID, MN, MT, ND, OR, SD, WA

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*The spiritual radiation of a community depends on the commitment of its members to the transformational journey and to each other.*

*To offer one another space in which to grow as persons is an integral part of this commitment.*

THOMAS KEATING

*Open Mind, Open Heart, Guidelines For Christian Life, Growth and Transformation, #25*

  
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