

Contemplative Outreach of Central Missouri

GUIDELINES FOR ORGANIZING AN INTRODUCTION TO CENTERING PRAYER

Thank you for inquiring about hosting an Introduction to Centering Prayer Program. Contemplative Outreach of Central MO will work in full cooperation with you in preparing each step.

First, it's important that you ask permission to plan this program:

- Contact the leadership of your parish/organization and express your interest in scheduling this program.
- Offer this packet to these individuals as an informational aid and resource.
- Inform them of the Contemplative Outreach vision: to help the faithful in developing a deeper understanding of prayer and the contemplative journey, and of the *Ecumenical Christian Nature* of our outreach.

Second, after you have received permission to host the program, take the following steps:

- Working with the Workshop Coordinator of Contemplative Outreach, select the dates for the six-part program.
- Review the five steps to hosting an Introduction to Centering Prayer Program included in this packet.

At the conclusion of the introductory program on Centering Prayer, a support member of Contemplative Outreach of Central MO will be present to help determine if there is interest in forming a centering prayer support group for your community.

GOALS OF THE INTRODUCTION TO CENTERING PRAYER PROGRAM

This program teaches a contemplative process of transformation and how to integrate that process into our daily lives. The first portion of the program is divided into four parts:

- History of contemplative prayer/ Prayer as relationship with God
- The method of Centering Prayer/The practice of Centering Prayer
- Use of the sacred word during prayer/Handling Thoughts.
- The fruits of contemplative prayer/Extending the fruits into daily life

The ultimate goal of the Introduction to Centering Prayer program is to cultivate both an individual and a community response to the gift of contemplative prayer.

Parts two thru six of the Program offer support and community building. These sessions includes Centering Prayer, showing of a DVD by Abbot.Thomas Keating, ocsso (The Trappist Monk who founded Contemplative Outreach) and group discussion. They will help tremendously in the beginning weeks of the participants' Centering Prayer practice.

“Eternal life is this: to know you, the only true God, and Him whom you have sent ... Jesus Christ.” (John 17:3)

5 STEPS TO ORGANIZING AN INTRO TO CENTERING PRAYER

STEP ONE: SCHEDULING

- The initial portion or Part 1 of the program is often scheduled on a weeknight on two evenings. We'll need 2 - 3 hour sessions (such as on a Tuesday & Thursday in the same week, or on the same evening in two consecutive weeks). Another option is to do a full day Saturday presentation, usually scheduled from 8:45 - 2:30 pm. We are somewhat flexible as to how you would like to set it up.
- After the initial part one, parts two thru six follow immediately. They require 90 minutes each and are usually scheduled one time per week following the first part. After the dates have been selected, log them in your parish/ organization calendar and begin to publicize the program to your community.

STEP TWO: LOCATION & HOSPITALITY

- Select a meeting room away from outside noise and walk-through traffic, arrange the chairs in a semi-circle with a podium and microphone (if needed) at the front. If possible, create an intimate ambiance (e.g., candle, Bible, flowers).

- We encourage you to have coffee/tea, water and perhaps some juice available when the participants arrive. If you are planning a full day, Saturday presentation, you may also want to include more ample food for the arrival and refreshment break. Another option is to ask the participants to bring a brown bag lunch.

STEP THREE: FINANCES

- We ask that each person make a donation to Contemplative Outreach of Central MO as they can for the workshop.

STEP FOUR: PROMOTION

- Included in this packet is a copy of a sample bulletin announcement and an informational flyer. In all advertisements, be sure to include a contact name and your phone number for questions about the location-times-etc, and also our number for those persons who may have a question about Centering Prayer. Also included is a suggested registration form.
- Begin advertising the Program four-six weeks in advance; it is always best to remind the community several times before it begins.
- Use as many resources as possible to advertise within your parish/organization (e.g., bulletin; bulletin insert; school/parish newsletter; bulletin boards; parish council meetings; adult education meetings). You may also want to consider contacting the neighboring parishes/churches and seek permission to promote the program in their bulletins as well.

STEP FIVE: YOUR VOLUNTEERS

- Contemplative Outreach of Central MO will provide the Commissioned Presenter and a few volunteers to work our book table. Your community should provide ample volunteers to handle the check in/registrations, greeting the participants and hosts for the food and refreshments etc.

SAMPLE BULLETIN ANNOUNCEMENT

CENTERING PRAYER WORKSHOP. St. Mary's Parish & Contemplative Outreach of Central MO will host an Introduction to Centering Prayer Program on _____ from _____ in the parish hall. A donation will be appreciated for the entire six-part program.

Call Mary Smith @ the Parish office at 555-5555 for more information or a Registration Form -or- call Fr. Matthew Flatley of Contemplative Outreach of Central MO @ 573-202-3590 for more information about Centering Prayer.

-Or-

Discover the meaning of Psalm 46: Be still and know that I am God. Please join us for an Introduction to Centering Prayer Program presented by Contemplative Outreach of Central MO, on *(date)* at *(times)* in *(location)*. Call Mary Smith at 555-5555 for more information.

SAMPLE FLYER

Resting in God: Bringing Centering Prayer into Busy Lives

Join us as Contemplative Outreach of Central MO presents an: Introduction to Centering Prayer Program at _____ on _____.

Sample Copy:

Do you seek the small, still voice of God? This program will help you find the God within, and hear with the ear of the heart. At this introductory program on Centering Prayer, you'll learn about prayer as relationship, the simple method of Centering Prayer, how to deal with thoughts, and how the fruits of the prayer are manifested in your daily life. You'll also experience several sessions of Centering Prayer. The program is the foundation of our programming, and is conducted by presenters certified by the national office of Contemplative Outreach Ltd. to present these materials. The entire program consists of six parts.

-Or-

Contemplative prayer is God's personal and unique gift to us. If we are open to this gift, it will profoundly affect the way we think and act. This introductory program will examine this gift and its consequences.... and explain how Centering Prayer leads to greater inner stability, hope, peace and happiness.

-Or-

Throughout history, Christian contemplatives have sought and struggled to know the embrace of Divine Love. Eventually they discovered this Divine Love and were filled with an intense intimacy and strength, with peace and with wholeness. This same gift awaits us all. Discover the meaning of Psalm 46: Be still and know that I am God.

A donation is requested for the entire six-part program. To make reservations for this workshop, please fill out the form below and return to ----- at the Church Office as soon as possible. Space is limited!

SAMPLE REGISTRATION FORM

INTRODUCTION TO CENTERING PRAYER PROGRAM

(PARISH/ORGANIZATION NAME)

(DATE/PLACE)

Please return this form to:

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

E-mail Address _____

Phone _____

PLEASE FURNISH CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH OF CENTRAL MO WITH A LIST OF THE PARTICIPANTS NAMES AND ADDRESS AS WELL AS A FINAL COUNT OF PARTICIPANTS

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

We welcome your questions and comments. Please call Fr. Matthew Flatley with Contemplative Outreach of Central MO @ 573-202-3590.

PLEASE NOTE:

- We will require a DVD Player and television to screen a very brief DVD presentation at each part of the Introductory Program.
- We will also require a rectangular table to hold our books and publicity materials.