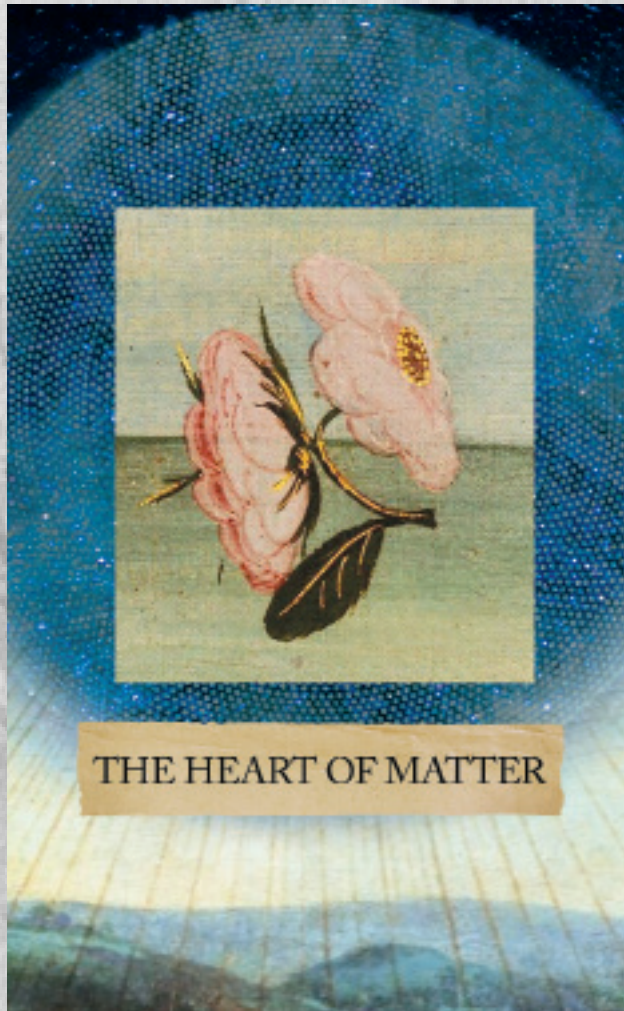




# THE MARK

July 2018  
Volume 30  
Number 7

A Publication of The Church of Conscious Harmony ❖ A Contemplative Christian Community



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# HERE TOGETHER

BY PETER HAAS

A cherished treasure in our home chapel is a hand carved wooden bowl filled with various rocks, which Shannon and I have picked up on our travels. I am holding one of them in my hand right now. It's a slim, flat, slate-grey stone I found in an alpine river in the Swiss Alps on a mid-summer afternoon twelve years ago this month.

Feeling the rock in my hands now transports me to that moment long ago; it's as if I can still hear the cascading waterfall nearby. I can still see in my mind's eye the alpine pasture on the other side of the river. For me, this small simple stone helps me feel and remember the heart of matter, and its goodness.

Many of the stones in our wooden bowl carry an equally vivid memory, from a different place and time. Sometimes I place a stone to my ear as if to listen to its silent witness. Sometimes I even kiss the stone, as if to acknowledge the sacred bond it conveys to me of the connection between where it came from and the experience I had there. The stones help me remember

the interconnectedness of my life and Life itself.

Recently, I had the honor of scattering the ashes of our beloved Susan Boulden. Before scattering her remains, I observed that human remains often look more like crushed coral than ash. As I scattered her ashes, I was reminded of just how earthy we are. Reduced by fire and heat, our bodies look a lot like a small pile of finely crushed gravel. It's humbling. Susan's ashes helped me remember my own certain death, and the extraordinary gift of not just being alive, but the invitation to live more consciously, more God-centered.

As best we know, our origins are a mixture of earth, star and Spirit. We are of the earth, but also God-breathed beings. What separates us from ash and rocks right now is that we are living matter, matter that is aware it is matter. *We are matter become conscious of itself.* We are at this moment matter reflecting on matter. We are not just inert matter – like the rocks, stones, ash and dirt – we are living matter. Elements fused by Spirit to become something more inexplicable than

the sum of its parts. We are conscious matter. Thinking matter. Feeling matter. Moving matter. Loving matter.

We are not alone in this gift of livingness. To varying degrees, other forms of matter also share in sentience and affection – animals, plants, trees, bacteria, microorganisms, fungi. We are matter imbued with life and light, as the Gospel of John so unforgettably announces:

*in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God ... and the Word became flesh.* (John 1.1, 14)

This is the incarnational life, to play our part in being the continuation of the life and light of God as en-fleshed matter. Not just living for itself; but turning toward a different destiny – a Eucharistic future as the mystical Body of Christ, living for All and Everything. Among the spectrum of life on planet earth, this evolution as Christ is something humans get to uniquely partake in.

We embody these ideas and

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encounter the heart of matter each time we partake in the Eucharist. When I consecrate the Eucharist, I take a small, flat piece of ordinary bread into my hand – and Spirit helps me recognize, realize and receive its moreness. Like the alpine stone in my hand right now, the bread helps me remember where I have been, where I come from and where I am going. Unlike the stone, I partake of the bread. It becomes a part of me. No longer just an object of matter in my hand, the bread becomes the heart of matter *in me* and *in us*, together at the same time.

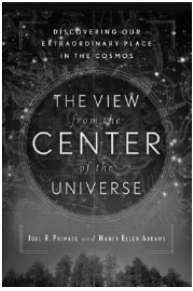
Etymologically, matter is mother. So, for all who are lonely or alone; for all who look up into the mid-summer night sky and wonder why we're here, why *anything* is here versus nothing at all; for all who have neglected your origin or forgotten your destiny; for all who find this present form of life too painful or hard, let us take courage and solace from the ancient stones and trees and all things living. We are here to participate in the great family of matter: to love her and to be loved by her; to remember we are here at home together in the heart of matter – forever and ever. Mother is calling us home, and it is here.

Few have conveyed this mystical connectedness more luminously than novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky, from the chapter entitled “Cana of Galilee” in his masterpiece *The Brothers of Karamazov*. In this scene, we join Alyosha, a young

man, in a moment of spiritual awakening following the death of his spiritual father. It's an example of a unitive event conveyed through the heart of matter – the earth and sky – that changed his life forever:

“Alyosha did not stop on the steps either, but went quickly down; his soul, overflowing with rapture, yearned for freedom, space, openness. The vault of heaven, full of soft, shining stars, stretched vast and fathomless above him. The Milky Way ran in two pale streams from the zenith to the horizon. The fresh, motionless, still night enfolded the earth. The white towers and golden domes of the cathedral gleamed out against the sapphire sky. The gorgeous autumn flowers, in the beds round the house, were slumbering till morning. The silence of earth seemed to melt into the silence of the heavens. The mystery of earth was one with the mystery of the stars. ... Alyosha stood, gazed, and suddenly threw himself down on the earth. He did not know why he embraced it. He could not have told why he longed so irresistibly to kiss it, to kiss it all. But he kissed it weeping, sobbing and watering it with his tears, and vowed passionately to love it, to love it for ever and ever. ‘Water the earth with the tears of your joy and love those tears,’ echoed in

his soul. What was he weeping over? Oh! In his rapture he was weeping even over those stars, which were shining to him from the abyss of space, and ‘he was not ashamed of that ecstasy.’ There seemed to be threads from all those innumerable worlds of God, linking his soul to them, and it was trembling all over ‘in contact with other worlds.’ He longed to forgive everyone and for everything, and to beg forgiveness. Oh, not for himself, but for all men, for all and for everything. ‘And others are praying for me too,’ echoed again in his soul. But with every instant he felt clearly and, as it were, tangibly, that something firm and unshakable as that vault of heaven had entered into his soul. It was as though some idea had seized the sovereignty of his mind—and it was for all his life and for ever and ever. He had fallen on the earth a weak boy, but he rose up a resolute champion, and he knew and felt it suddenly at the very moment of his ecstasy. And never, never, all his life long, could Alyosha forget that minute. ‘Someone visited my soul in that hour,’ he used to say afterwards, with implicit faith in his words. Within three days he left the monastery in accordance with the words of his elder, who had bidden him sojourn in the world.” 



## BOOK LOOK

### Scale in the Great Ray of Creation

Blaise Pascal (1623 – 1662), a mathematician, physicist and mystical theologian once expressed the existential impact of the new cosmology of his day: “I feel engulfed in the infinite immensity of spaces whereof I know nothing, and which know nothing of me. I am terrified ... The eternal silence of these infinite spaces alarms me.” Perhaps you have felt that way too, looking up into the vastness of the Milky Way galaxy on a summer night.

In *The View from the Center of the Universe*, we find a unique and sapiential perspective that helps us understand and see in broader cosmological perspective what Mr. Gurdjieff called “the terror of the situation” on planet earth, and how our situation relates to our location in the great Ray of Creation. Rather than a terror, *The View from the Center of the Universe* suggests that while there is no geographic center in an expanding universe, we are learning just how “central” human beings are to the universe in several unprecedented ways, directly intuited from recent discoveries in physics and cosmology. Rather than a terror of the situation, *The View from the Center of the Universe* articulates how there is emerging a deep optimism about our location in the universe and its ongoing formation.

You don’t need to be a scientist to read this book. It is very accessible and readable. In fact, if you have ever struggled to understand the cosmology of the Work of Inner Christianity, this book might help shed some light on the subject, particularly updating the Work concept of scale and the Ray of Creation with scientific precision and conceptual imagination.

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## COMMUNITY READING

for July-August

*Altered Traits*

by Daniel Goleman & Richard Davidson

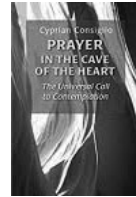
For the summer months, we turn to the blazing insights of Goleman and Davidson, two of the world’s leading brain and meditation researchers. Their findings are so profound and useful in our understanding of the dynamics of meditative prayer practices. Particularly, you won’t want to miss their important emphasis on the shift from *states* to *traits*. You will also notice many practical connections to key ideas in the Work of Inner Christianity. Explore! Enjoy! Evolve!

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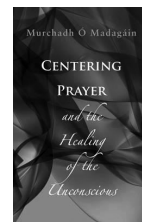
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## CCH BOOKSTORE

### SUGGESTED TITLES FOR JULY



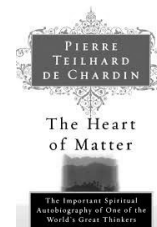
*Prayer in the Cave of the Heart*  
*The Universal Call to Contemplation*  
by Cyprian Consiglio



*Centering Prayer and the*  
*Healing of the Unconscious*  
by Murchadh O'Madagain



*Stars at Night*  
*When Darkness Unfolds as Light*  
by Paula D'Arcy



*The Heart of Matter*  
Includes Names of Matter  
by Pierre Teilhard De Chardin

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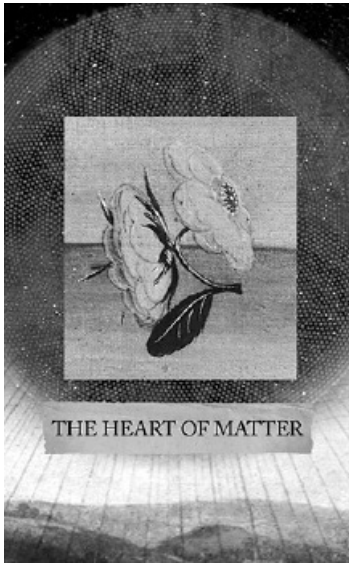
### BOOKSTORE AND LIBRARY HOURS

Monday-Friday

9:00 am-4:00 pm

Sunday

One half hour before and after service.



*In Your light, we see light.* Psalm 36:10

## ANNUAL AIM: EVOLVING AS CHRIST

THE HEART OF MATTER BY DONALD GENUNG

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The Redeeming Incarnation: ...

To create, to fulfill  
and to purify the world is,  
for God, to unify it by uniting it  
organically with Himself.

How? By ... becoming 'element,'  
... in the heart of matter, assuming  
... leadership of what we now  
call evolution.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin,  
*The Phenomenon of Man*

We take hold of God in the finite;  
... sensed as "rising"  
or "emerging" from the depths,  
born not in the heart of matter  
but *as* the heart of matter.  
Union with God must be effected  
by passing through  
and emerging from matter.

Ilia Delio, *The Omega Center blog*,  
August 17, 2017

This is the starting point:  
to feel the mystery of one's own existence ...  
and to feel the mystery of consciousness,  
and to feel the mystery  
of the minute organization of matter.

Maurice Nicoll, *The Mark*

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### **Divine Revelations in Nature**

When considering the word matter, nature immediately comes to mind. From childhood, I've enjoyed a wonderful relationship with nature and the celestial world. Many of my most cherished memories have come in this way. Of all possibilities, I'm grateful to have been raised in a rural area and had the opportunity to spend so much time in the out of doors, playing, farming, camping, hunting, scouting and working. My family didn't have much for financial

resources, but it didn't matter much when blessed with access to the enormous playground of nature.

This attraction to the natural world continued into my teen and adult years. As a scout, the merit badges that were the most fun and came the easiest were those that involved hands-on, outdoor subjects. Biology, chemistry, environmental sciences were always school favorites. After graduating from college in a nature interpretive education program, my first job was as a naturalist

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for a county parks department.

Many of us share a comforting attraction and unique relationship to the natural world. Although early in our lives, we may not have developed the capacity to observe and process our peak experiences of joy and wonder in nature. I certainly didn't. I simply was in the moment when those special times came to be. There was never a question in my mind as to what was happening and why. When it was gone, there was no questioning or pondering what it was. In short supply were people to talk to about it for learning more. But there was a longing for these special times when something in nature made a personal connection. Thus came my developmental tracking into the natural sciences. Though this longing kept me interested in learning more about matter (physics, chemistry, natural sciences, etc.), it also became a distraction. I began to be busy, professionally learning and collecting the names and details that science has given to species and matter, at the expense of the experience of awe in what was being named.

Contributing to this dilemma of development was the absence

of guidance in parochial schooling and church teachings. I have always been a part of a church. So, it never occurred to me that those special experiences of awe and wonder given at unexpected times were of a spiritual nature and had by many. They were revelations of God. Creation was revealing something of its nature. I continue to learn about the essence or heart of matter in me that resonates with the heart of matter revealed in the world. Clearly there is a mysterious connection or sameness emanating within creation that is known at some level.

In retrospect and thanks to The Church of Conscious Harmony, I've come to learn much more about what was happening. In a way, I needed to learn how to have my experience. From that, knowing what to look for exteriorly and interiorly has added more depth and awe to these experiences. In other words, consciousness and awareness have been added.

Perhaps it is for most people as it was for me, that often our first and most common revelation of God is given through the natural world. Seen once is all that is needed to recognize the Divine again and again in this way. It's like seeing

something immensely interesting for the first time; and the next time you see it, there is a familiarity from the memory of experiencing it before. For many, we are touched by the Divine through nature at an early age. I wasn't aware of what was happening to me at the time. I just loved being with nature. Still today, time in nature revitalizes my soul.

As I grew, there were two types of revelatory experiences. In my child and school years, the experience of the heart of matter was initiated by God and seen in nature. No nature, no experience. It was in a way, an exoteric revelation of the presence of God. Certainly, the realization was interior; but it was not about me, per se. God was being revealed through plants, animals, weather, landscapes, etc. Delighting in God's divine revelation in matter was a frequent companion and why I love being in nature today.

In my late twenties a much different experience was given. While camping and gazing at the night sky in all its glory for what seemed like hours, a personal and internal revelation was given. I recall losing my sense of particularity while gazing into the vastness of space. A state was experienced that

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was objectless – a state of awareness. There was nothing to be familiar with, including my body. It was like being in a completely empty space, without starlight or a personal body to reference. But this was a mind experience. When it was over, consciousness of particulars, my body, the ground, shining stars, etc. returned. The experience of formlessness continued as a new state of awareness in my memory. I was speechless and confused. Still, it was clear that some sameness animating all, in the celestial cosmos and a similar nature inside me was being revealed. It can be said now, though wasn't known then, that it was a revelation of God. Processing and reflecting on this and prior experiences have been an ongoing delight. From that day, and thanks to the prior experiences, all created matter was forever known differently. With it has come an ongoing wonder of what matter is and what animates matter. Formational teachings on the Trinity and consciousness would have been so helpful. But that wasn't to be at that time.

Perhaps this is where I've come to find the most meaning within the heart of matter. From

this later experience in concert with the revelations of the Divine in nature, there has come a realization of a commonality with all matter. Something in or of me was connecting with matter. My part was to be available. The 'seeing' is given by God as grace.

### **Extraordinary and Foundational Teachings Reveal Understanding**

In the many years with this Church, there has been an exposure to teachings that were new and so foundational in forming a deeper relationship with the Divine and helping to bring more understanding about the experiences described. These include study and practices relating to consciousness, teachings on the Trinity, Centering Prayer and culminating in the Eucharist. It is extraordinary to be a part of a contemplative community where awareness of the moment-to-moment presence and action of God within and beyond, are a part of our culture and common discussion.

Beginning with the study of the Work of Inner Christianity as presented by Nicoll in the *Psychological Commentaries on the Teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky* (studied each Thursday night at

CCH), I was enamored with its teaching of a cosmology. Here was my first exposure to a system that refers to matter ordered in octaves, with levels within the octaves characterized as notes. It begins with the Absolute and in scale describes a created world of order from the array of all galaxies, to the realization of our galaxy. Then comes a scale of stars leading to our Sun. Next is the scale of planets leading to Earth. This 'step down' or descending order continues into the mineral world. In all my college studies in the sciences and study of various Christian church doctrines, this was my first exposure to the study of matter as a union of creation and evolution. Of great importance, it began to bring light to the revelations of God in nature that had been given.

Also presented in the *Psychological Commentaries* is a teaching on the development of consciousness. In short, it begins with dividing our inner attention into two – as the observer and that being observed. Although this attention to consciousness has been the most impactful foundational study and practice extending into every aspect of my life, this too

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was so essential in unpacking revelations of the Divine. Until then, it was mystifying that I could realize the knower, knowing and known in union.

Also of profound importance has been Bernadette Robert's explanations of the Trinity. This is best referenced in her DVD, *Essence of Christian Mysticism*. In it she describes the various common revelations of God to man:

- 1) God in nature
- 2) God in ourself
- 3) God beyond nature and self
- 4) Oneness of Transcendent and Immanent, and more


These teachings have been essential in helping me understand and relate to the mystery of the heart of matter. Sure, I had the "Father, Son and Holy Spirit" Trinity teachings within my former churches. But the Trinity described as "Transcendent, Logos and Spirit" has provided much more substantial understanding of God and the created world.

The practice of Centering Prayer has illuminated the heart of matter in a unique way. As spiritual beings in a created form, dedicating a daily relationship with God by resting in silence has often reconnected me with the formless state of awareness described earlier

and given as a grace. At times during Centering Prayer, there has been an experience of no body or matter, as surrendering into silence replaces attention on the thoughts arising from the senses. Perhaps the experience in my late twenties was a preparation for having a relationship with God that transcends or precedes the realm of matter, but ultimately is the heart of matter.

The Eucharist has been for me the clearest sacrament for realizing new depths of the heart of matter. Bernadette expressed once that everything in Christianity can be explained in the Eucharist. Many of us have been touched by this form of blessed matter in mysterious ways. For me, the bread is the divine Logos becoming incarnate in me. There is a transforming power at the heart of it. I feel it at the material level of my body and I am delighted to experience the inner transformation of light energy that comes from it. It's more than physical. It is psychologically transforming me into its nature as love. Recognition and acceptance of the transforming mystery of the Eucharist has been transferred into much of the created material world I see. For me, the bread is also a reminder of the sacred nature that can be seen in all matter.

The writings of Teilhard de Chardin and other mystics have expressed Christ as the Heart of Matter. Modern discoveries in quantum physics continue to unpack the essence of matter in new and profound ways, as previously unknown sub-atomic particles are discovered and understanding of the universe changes accordingly. Curiously, as new technology allows scientific investigation deeper into the origins of matter, more wonder and questions arise at the immense mystery of its essence, formation and interaction.

As religion influenced by mystics and scientific discovery, evolve and converge, where will it all lead? I'm delighted with every story told of a scientist having a spiritual or conversion experience induced by their study of matter. My hope is that it leads humanity at large to realize the potential sameness and interconnectedness in all creation. Science may never be able to discover the initial beginning of the formation matter. But it can continue to expose the mystery at levels that evoke wonder, awe and a deeper faith in the living God, helping us to see and relate to all creation as sacred. 



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## GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE, GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION

Fr. Thomas Keating, in his seminal work  
*Open Mind, Open Heart*,  
lists 42 principles underlying  
the Christian spiritual journey.

Fr. Keating asks that these principles be read according  
to the method of Lectio Divina.

One principle will appear in these pages each month.

### GUIDELINE 6

The particular consequences of original sin include all the self-serving habits that have been woven into our personality from the time we were conceived; all the emotional damage that has come from our early environment and upbringing; all the harm that other people have done to us knowingly or unknowingly at an age when we could not defend ourselves; and the methods we acquired – many of them now unconscious – to ward off the pain of unbearable situations.

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## UPCOMING SUMMER SERMON SERIES:

### CENTERING PRAYER TUNE UP

July 1	Tuning Up Motivation
July 8	Tuning Up Dullness
July 15	Tuning Up Discomfort



## THE CHURCH of CONSCIOUS HARMONY

A CONTEMPLATIVE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

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*My Father is still working, and I also am working.* John 5:17

## LIVING THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY IN DAILY LIFE

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**Work Idea:** When it comes to discerning between things that matter and things that don't, we are wise to remember the Work idea that "things are on different scales." In other words, don't make a mountain out of an ant hill. We can work. We can make efforts to not let a little frustration escalate emotionally or intellectually into an eruption of negativity. We can remember that our life on earth is just one part of the great Ray of Creation – and, awakened from above, we are here to develop and evolve.

**Work Source:** Maurice Nicoll gives a substantive yet relatively short commentary on these ideas in Volume Four of his *Psychological Commentaries*. Here's a brief selection: "A man, a woman, must have *Magnetic Center*, which, briefly, is a sense or intuition of higher influences and of the impossibility of Nature's creating itself or of

life's being explicable in terms of itself. Now it is this feeling that the visible world – the minute part of total creation opened to our limited senses – is not the sum total of reality that makes it possible to do this Work in a spirit of understanding. For those who say that visible nature created itself, it is impossible to do this Work. Why? Because they have something upside down in their minds. Such people are like someone who, having a radio, take it to bits to find out where the music comes from. Are not "invisible" forces playing on the radio? And is not the radio *made* to receive them? Then how can you attempt to explain the radio in terms of itself? ... All esotericism begins with the idea that there is something *higher* ... not outside you in the visible world – but within you as a higher possible and existing *level* of yourself, not yet attained, but there

already." (*Commentaries*, 1275-1276)

**Practical Application:** Remembering scale may not eliminate a problem from our life, but it may help us see the problem from a new, broader perspective. For example, it's amazing how complaining about something in our day is immediately forgotten the moment we receive news of a loved one's unexpected death. The event of death immediately shifts us to a different scale of meaning and importance. What was just bothersome, now is forgotten. What had seemed like a mountain, now becomes an ant hill in the scale of life and death. In daily life, *Magnetic Center* plays a part in this process of shifting perspective. Without *Magnetic Center* we rarely remember scale. Without *Magnetic Center*, we often confuse the unimportant for the important, or focus our attention on A influences, oblivious to the

MULTI-DAY CENTERING PRAYER RETREATS  
REGISTER FOR A CONTEMPLATIVE RETREAT AT  
CEDARBRAKE RETREAT AND RENEWAL CENTER

July 27-Aug 1	6-day	\$545
Sep 14-19	6-day Welcoming Prayer	\$545
Nov 30-Dec 6	7-day Advent	\$675

“Simply being in the Silence, deep in the presence of His love, allows an opening within to experience and observe healings occurring, miracles happening, mysteries unfolding and intimacy increasing with my Beloved – all in the beauty and power of stillness. If you’re thinking about going on a retreat ... GO! You won’t regret it and hopefully you’ll be wishing for more of it! Even the synergy of being with others is powerful.”


V. Maddox

Contact the church office to register.

Double room prices. Single rooms, if available, are an additional \$10/night on a first-to-register basis.

possibility of B or C influences. **This month, practice living by a larger scale.** For example, when it comes to money, notice how often thoughts of scarcity lead to comparing your financial wellbeing to those who appear wealthier than you. Instead, shift scale and give thanks for what you *do* have in contrast to the billions of people around the globe who live on less than a dollar a day. To them, you are wealthy. It’s just a matter of scale.

**Further Resources:** An extraordinary demonstration of scale in our universe can be

seen at the Museum of Natural History in New York City in the Hall of the Scales of the Universe. If you’ve never been there, make a wish to go. You can also visit the hall online at [www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent-exhibitions/rose-center-for-earth-and-space/scales-of-the-universe](http://www.amnh.org/exhibitions/permanent-exhibitions/rose-center-for-earth-and-space/scales-of-the-universe). This exhibit embodies in a very practical and experiential way, the cosmology of the Work, especially the idea of scale and its relationship with the great Ray of Creation. 

For more experience with these teachings, you are invited to attend the Work of Inner Christianity class held Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at The Church of Conscious Harmony.

## JULY CALENDAR

Visit [consciousharmony.org](http://consciousharmony.org) for a complete listing of events

### SPECIAL EVENTS

Half-Day Centering Prayer Retreat  
July 14 8:30 am-12:30 pm \$10  
Please register at least 1-day prior by calling 512.347.9673.

Six-Day Centering Prayer Retreat  
July 27 - Aug 1  
Cedarbrake Renewal Center  
Pre-register in the church office.

### MONTHLY

1st Sundays  
Bring non-perishables for Caritas

### WEEKLY

Sundays  
Lectio Divina 8:00-9:00 am  
Prayer Circle 9:15-9:45 am  
Worship Service 10:00-11:30 am  
Youth Program 10:00-11:30 am  
Fellowship 11:30 am

Wednesdays  
Church will be closed July 4  
Contemplative Lunch noon-1:00 pm  
Contemplative Communion Service 6:00-7:00 pm  
Meditations on the Tarot 7:15-8:30 pm

Thursdays 7:30-9:00 pm  
Work of Inner Christianity Class

Fridays 7:30-8:45 pm  
Devotional Service

Saturdays  
Scriptorium noon-12:50 pm

### DAILY

Sunday-Saturday 7:00-7:35 am  
Centering Prayer Service in Theosis Chapel

Recordings of services are available through the Bookstore and online at [www.consciousharmony.org](http://www.consciousharmony.org)



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## BECOMING EVERYTHING

Creation is not a one-time event.  
It's always happening, and in a sense, being in God  
is always becoming. Becoming what? Everything,  
because He's constantly producing everything.  
Human consciousness is really God experiencing  
human consciousness and that means that we're  
a kind of icon of God

... and this is why humans are so important  
and so dignified, because God dwells in them.

Thomas Keating, *Interview with Rick Archer*, January 19, 2013

When I look at the heavens, the work of Your hands,  
at the moon and stars You set in place –  
What is man that You should be mindful of him?  
Woman that You should care for her?  
Yet You made them little less than gods,  
You crowned them with glory and honor,  
gave them dominion over the work of Your hands,  
set all things under their feet.

cf. Psalm 8:4-7