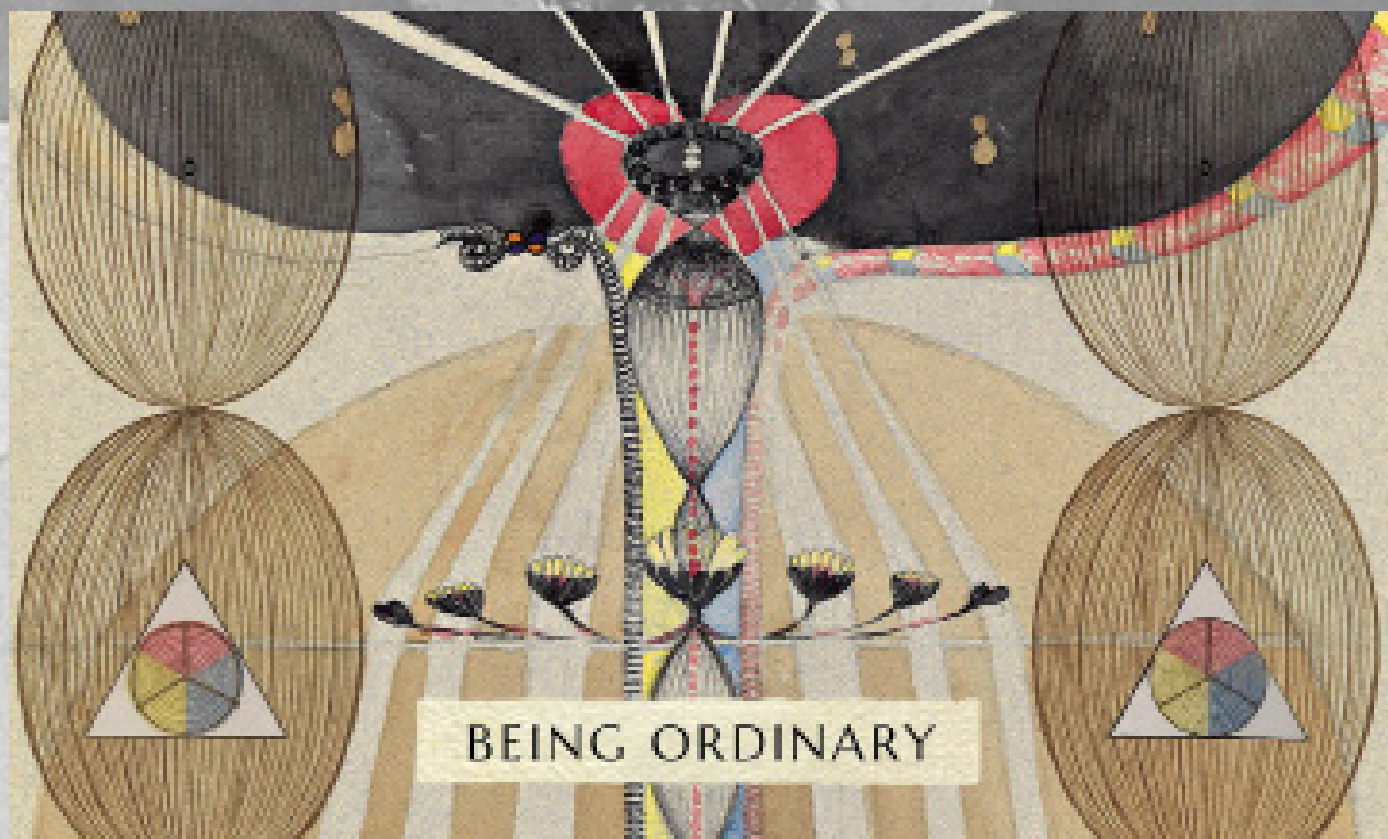


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THE MARK

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



BEING ORDINARY

BEING ORDINARY TOGETHER

BY PETER HAAS

Rounding the corner of summer, we enter the month of August, a month that brings associations to mind of our culture's many back-to-school rhythms. By September 1st, we will be two thirds through the year. Hard as it is to believe, our 2022 Annual Aim of *Arising as Embodied Life* is approaching its completion. Four months from now, we'll be in Advent – preparing for the feast of Christmas. What Work of Inner Christianity do you wish to focus on related to your embodiment in this last part of the year? What calls to you to explore more deeply? What questions can you ask to enhance your sense of wonder?

One aspect of embodiment that we all can give our attention to is our liturgical life in community. The Greek word translated into English as liturgy literally means *the work of the people*. Perhaps we can even say that liturgy is the Work of worship.

As you know, our inner Work requires us to set aims, make efforts and conscious intentions,

choose conscious suffering, and to uncritically self-observe to name a few core practices. No wonder coming to church to worship with others in person is an effort, now more than ever. There are many beneficial reasons to gather in person as the spiritual family and community that we name The Church of Conscious Harmony. Are there circumstances keeping you from being with us? Do you wish to return? Do you wish to visit for the first time? Do you wish to contribute to what we are becoming together? Do you wish to grow in deeper friendship and relationship with others on the Journey, to bless them and to be blessed?

Gathering in person on a Sunday morning both challenges the self and yet also feeds the truth of our Being deeper than the self. Some would say that it's a miracle anyone comes to church! On one level that's true, but gathering together in person is almost irresistible, once you have been a part of co-creating and participating in the center of gravity that arises in the sanctuary

as we worship together, a center that mutually supports one another as we live our lives of God devotion. It's also that way for our children and youth as they gather in the Fellowship Hall or Theosis chapel and teen rooms.

Have you ever considered our communal gathering in person for worship as the foundation of our community? What would we be without it? How would you be without it?

More than any other aspect or practice, being together in the energy field that emerges from our combined attention and embodied being together – from the vibrations of the music and chant, from the influences of the vaulted sanctuary – is the ordinary and intentional foundation of our community.

We are a church and the primary “thing” a church does is gather as a community of brothers and sisters in person to worship the living God, to attend to the wisdom of sacred influences embedded with the Scriptures, to encourage and care for one another, and to

partake in the Eucharist, together like a spiritual family. In Work terms, community worship is the opportunity to feel all the way up the Ray of Creation together at the same time in the same place in an intentional and patterned way.

A further aspect of embodiment in our worship is conveyed by the liturgical calendar, which calls these months from Pentecost to Advent *ordinary time*. The liturgical color

it will give way to burnt orange, brown grass and the colors of autumn, releasing one season's green to become another season's not-green, "dying" in late fall, for another season's rising. Life gives way for more life. Self gives way for more Christ. This is the ordinary pattern of the spiritual journey, and we can witness it playing out not just in the created order, but in the ordinary stuff of our day-to-day life.

new friends on the Way. Look in their eyes. Reach out to welcome them. Offer them warmth and kindness. Be generous of spirit to them. Give good counsel and share what the church means to you. Share your journey with them.

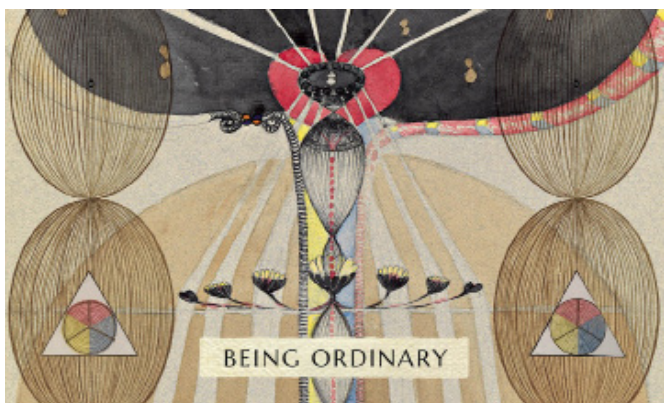
Everything living is growing. Green growth and new friends are one indication of a living spiritual community. Let's rejoice in the post-covid re-birth we are experiencing.

*Have you ever considered
our communal gathering in person for worship
as the foundation of our community?*

for this season is green, symbolizing the ordinary ways we grow and mature on the spiritual journey. It's not just Lent, Christmas, Pentecost, or the high, holy seasons of life where growth occurs. It's also in the ordinary day-to-day journey of worship and spiritual practice together. The color green is in its fullness in summertime, but soon,

The word green has an association with being new. Such as this example: a new recruit to the military is spoken of as being "green." It's a color associated with growth as well as with being new. So, our embodied community is green all over. Look around on a Sunday morning and notice all the green! We are blessed with many

Let's embrace the ordinary life we get to live together, and not pine for the past or how things used to be. Let's stand in wonder at what miracles are unfolding now. And be a part of the ordinary growth that can happen when brothers and sisters gather in harmony of mind, heart and body, this August and in the many seasons to come. ☸



*Now and always may Christ be magnified in my body,
whether by life or death. Philippians 1:20*

ANNUAL AIM: ARISING *AS* EMBODIED LIFE

BEING ORDINARY BY LEANN BILLUPS

Your body knows how to wake up. You only have to attend to its signals,
actively include the associations that emerge, move with body memories that need to complete,
and allow present-moment movement inquiries to inform you as to your direction.

From here, you step out into your daily life with not only ideas but also bodily capabilities. ...
At its heart, bodyfulness is a contemplative practice. Yet, contemplation and action inter-are ...

Practice can and should occur in specialized, often sacred circumstances,
yet bodyfulness, while making use of many freestanding practices,
finds its home in our embedded experiences of daily living.

Embedded practice: ...

How we reach out to pick up our child,
how we wait before eating to check to see if we are really hungry,
how we gaze at a troubled stranger, how we notice a gut feeling,
and how we breathe into a happy moment – all these experiences can be bodyful.

We access this bodyful state by practicing right now, during this breath,
feeling this sensation, noticing this small motion.

Right here. Right now.

Christine Caldwell, PhD, *Bodyfulness: Somatic Practices for Presence, Empowerment, and Waking Up in This Life*

In the past three to four years, I have been drawn to the simple and profound listening of *Lectio Divina* and the penetrating gaze of *Visio Divina*. In the same manner, I pondered the aim of August, “Being Ordinary.” Gazing at the image. Reading aloud from the quote from Christine Caldwell. The

first sentence catches my attention: “Your body knows how to wake you up.” How true!

When I turned thirty, while reaching high over my head into a cabinet, I sneezed, throwing my mid-to-upper back out, completely debilitating me and landing me in bed for a month. The first week,

my husband had to carry me to the bathroom for I could barely move let alone walk. Back clinics and visits to orthopedic surgeons gave me a great deal of knowledge as I began to understand that my recovery was truly up to me. This was the start of my relationship with my body and learning how

to wake up. I was introduced to the Integral Yoga Institute in New York City and had no idea where it would lead me. This was the first step in a thirty-five year journey of bodyfulness, an exploration that became intertwined and expanded through the initiation to Centering Prayer and the teachings of Fr. Thomas Keating, alongside the Work of Inner Christianity. As Judith Harris says in *Jung and Yoga*, initially,

“the body will exhibit symptoms until the psyche becomes strong enough to contain and carry the conflict ... a symptom is a natural attempt on the part of the psyche towards healing, towards wholeness.”

At the time, I was learning to manage the pain while moving through a career and rearing our two girls. My husband became accustomed to the call to rescue when I was unable to pick up our baby. This was coping, with little understanding, but it was my wake up. Years later, I recognized the next step from Caldwell’s quote, “You only have to attend to its signals.”

In returning to my Texas roots, I sought out different teachers and practices to increase my body awareness; and a burgeoning interest in body movements, chanting and the studies of who we are in these bodies began. This was my

first glimpse of the integration of what the Work calls the moving, emotional and intellectual centers.

Texas had been home again for five years when I noticed a nudge from a fellow yoga practitioner. She didn’t use many words, but spoke of a church she was attending that was changing her life. I was newly divorced and recognized that my life was in need of a change.

As many of you have also witnessed, Tim Cook’s Sunday sermon was tailor made just for me. I cried the first year I was at The Church of Conscious Harmony and am still humbled by how this homecoming has enlivened my life, my being. An Introduction to Centering Prayer class was my first baby step into synchronizing my heart and mind. Over years, I steadily felt the gift of being in this silence and noticed a deep-seated appreciation for the method in which Fr. Thomas brings this offering to us. My body, mind and heart were ready for this peace. These three centers were awakening to one another. I started going to the Work of Inner Christianity classes and attending retreats. I recognized an urge to attend all I could of the Church offerings. It was the beginning of Namaste, the divine spark in me recognizing the divine spark in all around me.

My yoga practice and various

classes at CCH began to dovetail. Surrendering to the silence of Centering Prayer daily allowed for the silence to wash over me, and flow into my daily life. I didn’t recognize the change, but friends noticed a difference. There is a saying in yoga that if you hold to your practice, your practice holds you. While this metamorphosis was not a goal, my attention was shifting – ever so slowly. Beyond daily yoga and prayer practice, a different type of stretching was occurring and multiplying. All this was giving rise to more, including weekend yoga workshops, Work groups and Work partners!

Eventually, I was drawn to deepen my practice by becoming an Iyengar yoga instructor, which was an intense and humbling four years. All of these desires resembled a stirring from my childhood, a call from within and without that was my heart’s longing. There was something pulling my being, beyond the loss of time in the company of friends and sacrifices in the loss of sleep to get prayers, yoga, children, work, pets and home all to fit in. Was I committing to opening my heart to Love? Was it a different love? How can I be Love? Who am I to try?

Beverly Lanzetta, in *The Monk Within*, offers one explanation,

“We love the Divine for its

own sake. We do not love God because we seek forgiveness or receive gifts. We do not love God on our own terms and in our own time. We love because love makes us whole, it is all we are; it is all we wish to be. In love we find Love; we discover the source of Love; God alone. We stretch our love like a sail against the wind and allow the current of our passion to guide us straight into the divine heart.”

An opportunity arose for a new perspective, perhaps that sail was taking me there. I had prayed for a few years for a direction, a purpose. One year into Covid, I made a bold move that perplexes me even today, but I am certain it was completely Spirit driven. I sold my home, refuge, and magical place. My career for many years was interior design and I had poured every bit of passion and creative energy into the design of this space working with many wonderful artisans and craftsmen, a few of which are from our CCH community. The hard work of many hands extended inside and out to the gardens of the home making it a wonderful spot for my children and friends. I lived there the longest of any place in my life. For twenty years, I can honestly say that I was grateful for every day.

Surrounded by nature, I was able to enjoy the simple joys of living in a true neighborhood, replete with neighbors that would stand in the middle of the street talking to one another while kids would flow up and down the street on anything that rolled. We watched out for one another and genuinely enjoyed each other and cared for one another. I felt so blessed, making this move a difficult decision. Yet there was that inexplicable nudge.

My transition was to a beautiful ranch with a German stone house from the 1870s located half an hour away from the nearest town at a speed of 60 miles per hour. This is a place my grandparents, parents, siblings, and all our children have returned to as it has been in our family for almost 85 years. Now, this home felt very new, yet not! I was different, and yet some unfinished desire from my childhood presented itself for me to be in nature. Could it be as Beverly Lanzetta indicates? Our passion guides us straight into the divine heart.

Life slowed dramatically. I often go a week or more without seeing a human being, except for Zoom. My practices meet me and hold me as I find myself in the very ordinary. I am lovingly prodded to utilize spiritual practices to build my very being. I have spent years of my life

going to classes and workshops and I have the opportunity to use these tools and lean on them in a manner that is crucial to my wellbeing right here, right now. I move through my day doing chores outside in the morning, then moving inside, and later back out, a movement according to the weather and time of year. Last year, I positioned myself outside under the wide open sky for hours so I could simultaneously view a spectacular display of nature, the sun setting in the west and the full moon rising to the east until it became night. I have observed the tiniest of God’s creatures in a contemplative way, the movements of ants doing their daily chores, taking all the seeds I have thrown down for grass to their home underground. I find myself calling a truce and living in compatibility with the spiders that dwell in my home, for they also capture scorpions and other bugs in their webs. Each morning and evening presents me with ordinary yet extraordinary offerings. What a thing to celebrate!

Alongside the attentive alertness necessary to live amongst rattlesnakes, scorpions and plants that will stab you, accidents and mechanical malfunctions are constant. I rely once again on my neighbors and have discovered

an enduring friendship despite differences in beliefs. The rhythm of ordinary life creates movement for my body while my mind is calmed with chants, prayers and self-observation. That old saying, "You can run, but you can't hide." is evident. There is no place I don't meet myself, a phone call from a distraught beloved, the dishes, meals, chores, again and again through my very ordinary day. My daily movements through yoga have prepared me for the rigors of ranch life. Through all of these explorations, I still witness some issues in my tissues, as Fr. Carl Arico would say. I find that my studies have brought me to a place where I can befriend my body. With compassion and gentle inquiries, I have a strength I never thought could exist, one brought about by patience, curiosity and wonder of these bodies we inhabit: of this place I now call home.


While my yoga practice has evolved with less asana, it is aligned more with Patanjali's other seven limbs, guidelines for a healthy purposeful life. Newer practices are taking hold such as the Welcoming Prayer and the Forgiveness Prayer, created for us by Mary Mrozowski and blessed by Fr. Thomas. I recently participated in the reciprocity of

a beautiful Welcoming Prayer retreat at Cedarbrake, which added a new refinement to my knowledge and maybe my being.

"At its heart, bodyfulness is a contemplative practice. Yet, contemplation and action inter-are." Caldwell

These repeated actions, these acquired skills, slowly over time, seep into my very being and sharpen my senses. There is a knowledge gained from the practices which in turn bears the fruit of the practice in ordinary daily life. In this way too, I feel the actions of Lectio and Visio Divina with this slow penetration, revealing a deepening relationship with myself and the Divine indwelling.

In these moments, there is a knowing that all the movements of my daily life, if done with intention, are prayer. And so I move in and out of remembering and forgetting and remembering again. I am inching towards that radical, unshakeable, undeniable trust that all is in God and God is in all, one ordinary day at a time. I say "yes" to the joy of serving in any small way I can. Yes to passing it along in my service. Isn't being ordinary just marvelous?

"God has shouted 'Yes! Yes! Yes!' to every luminous movement in Existence." Hafiz 



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ELDER WISDOM: HONORING OUR FATHERS AND MOTHERS

A ROAD TO FREEDOM IN OUR ORDINARY LIVES BY SHIRLEY LANEHART

It has been a long road to get to the ordinary of the present moment. Hindsight is 20/20. It turns out the wisdom teachers that we study were right all along. Fr. Thomas Keating's spiritual journey videos are spot-on as well as the Work of Inner Christianity. The marriage of these two teachings is pure genius. It is my experience that together they are a road to freedom in our ordinary lives. Of course there have been many other masters along the way. But I have found these two the most difficult teachings to practice and also the most honest.

Here is an abbreviated peek at my personal journey. At 18, I went to India with 14 Baptist ministers to "save" them. The moment I got off the plane I fell in love with India and its people. I began to ask, "What am I doing here?" The God love was palatable to me. Five weeks later, I came home with no one to talk to about my conversion from Baptist doctrine to God love. So, I went off the deep end for a few years. Call it faith in doubt.

A friend introduced me to Unity (The Pyramid in Houston) and it pulled me in right away. When I

moved to Austin, I found Tim and Barbara Cook at the Unity church here. But this Unity was different. They were different. Then life called them in a different direction. When they returned to Austin, I began my real journey with The Church of Conscious Harmony.

Centering Prayer pulled me in right away and I went on the first 10-day retreat in Eagle Lake with CCH. The first retreat was mostly bliss for me. Then the Work began. Retreats after that were mostly about unloading of the unconscious. This was extremely uncomfortable and normal. My journey has followed Fr. Keating's teachings almost perfectly. Knowing that the journey is a spiral is very important.

A solid foundation has been laid by CCH for those new to Centering Prayer and the Work. Many of the mature members have been through the journey and can validate and witness to others as they walk through their own personal journey of becoming real and ordinary. In other words, aiming for more Christ within and less false self.

After my first Centering Prayer retreat, I heard about Mother

Ammachi (The hugging Indian saint) and went to see her in Dallas. My God love for India drew me to her. The next thing I knew, I was in India with Tim and Barbara. It was a divine calling and of course a much different experience than the first trip to India. Five weeks later (note the spiral reoccurrence), I came home with an Indian identity for a while. One day I looked in the mirror and asked, "What am I doing here?" I love India and I am not Indian.

The next identity was the worst, "The Spiritual One." Soon I was presenting myself as some kind of holy person. It's a role just like all the others. Along with that came my pontificating as if I knew what I was talking about. One day I was unidentified enough to ask, "What am I doing here?" This is not I.

Eventually all those roles expressed themselves less and less to me and to others around me. Thank God for patient people!

What I am trying to say is that wherever we are, whatever we think we are, and whatever role we are playing is normal. It is human. The identification with the roles fades

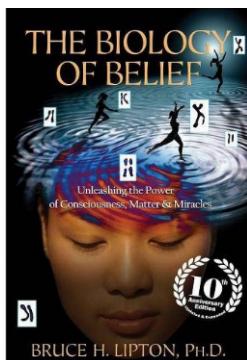
away eventually with many years of community support and intention. We learn that God is the source and center of our lives not the roles we play.

Wherever you are in your spiritual journey, Divine Love is with you and guiding you no matter what it looks like. Appearances are deceiving. Just show up and practice consent to the presence of God within.

It is my experience that although the journey is never ending, at some point, we abandon trying to get somewhere and begin living extraordinary lives in ordinary ways.

There will always be a role that we need to play – that’s the ordinary. The extraordinary is in *knowing* that Christ, as the present moment, is expressing as you to the degree you are able to consent. That is real freedom. ☸

AUGUST COMMUNITY READING



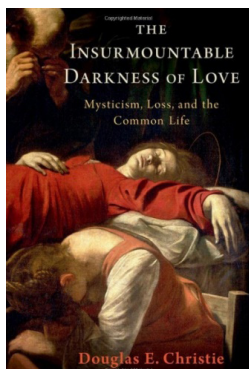
The Biology of Belief by Bruce Lipton, our July and August community reading, is an old friend for many of us. We return to this classic as a way of helping us remember how what we do effects who we are, and that the power of thought and practices help shape our genetic expression. This book is an encouragement to cherish our bodies by improving our thoughts.

AUGUST SERMON THEMES

TRANSFORMING PRACTICES

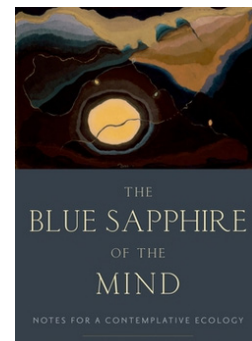
August 7	Eating
August 14	Sleeping and Resting
August 21	Creating
August 28	Community Sharing

Book Look



Douglas E. Christie may be one of the most important scholars of contemplative and monastic spirituality of this generation. Though you probably have never heard of him, his books are essential reading for anyone interested in deepening their knowledge and understanding of the contemplative and monastic streams within the long enduring Christian traditions. Christie serves as a professor in the Theological Studies Department at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

His most recent book, *The Insurmountable Darkness of Love: Mysticism, Loss and the Common Life*, is a masterpiece of introspective spiritual autobiography that also teaches the wisdom of the contemplative monastic tradition in very accessible ways. His prior book, *The Blue Sapphire of the Mind*, is a treasure chest of wisdom integrating contemplative practices and nature. Enjoy! ☸



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

LIVING THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY IN DAILY LIFE

NORMALCY BY NATHAN JONES

Work Idea: It is hard to be certain what is innate to each of us. Harder still to distinguish that which we come with from that which has been taught us. I suspect I love in the same desperate way as a French poet. Rationalize in a similar manner to a Greek philosopher. Or ache with the same muscles as a Mesopotamian farmer. There exist in us 'T's, both seemingly inherent and those worked into us, shared across time and place. It is important to observe these powerful 'T's. Many of us, if not most, have secretly yearned for notoriety, an audience, influence, recognition, or a microphone. The pursuit of celebrity along with riches is an affliction. A vast majority of our society, as well as citizens throughout the world, share the inclination and entertain these 'T's at some point over the course of their life. Hollywood and Wall

Street are stacked full of individuals implementing a story they tell themselves on the importance of fame and fortune. Some with levels of traction, some with none, and both are following a false tale. The Work leads us back to the center, the middle of the pendulum, the blessed ordinary. It asks us to observe those malignant parts of us that think in terms of fame and fortune, that inflate the giants of pride and vanity, and remove us from the present. Through non-critical self-observation, we are able to become more conscious of those aspects of us that leak energy, which are not based in reality but in a fantasy of imagination. Be eager for the ordinary; understand that normalcy is our God given right. It is from here that real humans can be born.


Work Source: "Without the

equilibrium which a balance of centers provides, a person cannot be thought of as normal, for that person's state is equivalent to being under the influence of a drug. Reminding a person of his or her normal condition if that person is under the influence of a strong emotion or is identified with a political ideal, for example, is impossible, as Orage reminds us. Both states are drunken states compared to the existence which is intended for three-centered beings. Even in such states of physical, emotional, or intellectual drunkenness, though, an average person may still have at times an intimation of a different kind of existence, a more coherent and connected way of being for which he or she longs. Gurdjieff calls this intimation of something better a state of 'Organic Shame;' it is


the condition of lower vibrations aspiring to share the experience of higher vibrations. Orage understands the state of Organic Shame as the beginning of normalcy.” Anna Challenger, *Philosophy and Art in Gurdjieff’s “Beelzebub”: A Modern Sufi Odyssey*

Application: Specifically, observe your own ‘Ts that romanticize fame and fortune. Perhaps you will need to look to your past. Otherwise look outward to the dance of humanity in that unfortunate direction. Two titles frequently used to conceal the pursuit of fame and fortune are “aspiring

artist” and “entrepreneur.” Always and everywhere non-critically observe, non-identify and self-remember. Normalcy is, or can be, a component of the objective.

Further Resource: “The sole means now for the saving of the beings of the planet Earth would be ... [if] every one of those unfortunates during the process of existence should constantly sense and be cognizant of the inevitability of his own death as well as of the death of everyone upon whom his eyes or attention rests.” G.I. Gurdjieff, *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson* 

AUGUST COMMUNITY PRACTICE SWIMMING

August is a good time to submerge yourself in the miracle that is water. Whether you dip, float, dive, plunge, jump, wade, or splash, do play with the gift of water and remind yourself of its life giving, thirst quenching, renewing powers. Water has a unique way of energetically calming our nervous system. Perhaps it’s the ions in the air around a body of water, or simply the fact that our bodies are comprised of 60 percent water, and we feel connected to and with water in a visceral way. Try entering into a body of water every week this month. See what you discover about yourself. Notice how your body feels in the water and then as you dry off after being in the water. What do you discover about yourself through this practice? 

AUGUST CALENDAR

For more details, visit
<https://consciousharmony.org/>
or call 512-347-9673

SPECIAL EVENTS

Half-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Aug 27 9am-noon
Register online
Centering Prayer 5-day Retreat
Sep 9-13 Register on CCH website

MONTHLY

Caritas Donations
1st Sundays
Bring non-perishables to CCH or
donate to caritasofaustin.org

WEEKLY

Sundays
†Centering Prayer & Lectio Divina 8-9am
*Intercessory Prayer 9am
†Worship Service 10-11:30am
Youth Program (preK-12) 10-11:30am

Wednesdays
†Contemplative Worship Service 6-7pm

Thursdays
*The Journey School Class 7-8:30pm

Saturdays
*Scriptorium noon

DAILY

Centering Prayer Service 7-7:35am

*Please join via internet; links are
on our website.
†In person and online.



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Makoto Fujimura, *Charis-Kairos (The Tears of Christ)*

THE GRACE OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

*And when the disciples raised their eyes,
they saw no one else but Jesus alone.*

Matthew 17:8

As the disciples return to the plain,
they take with them, not the experience of Jesus' glory,
which was so consoling,
but something even more valuable:
the transformation of consciousness
that is the result of their experience on the mountain.
... They can live in the marketplace
from their inmost center ...

The grace of the Transfiguration
is not just a vision of glory, an isolated experience of
divine consolation, however exalted. ...

But its primary purpose is something greater:
to empower us to live in the presence of God
and to see the radiance of that presence in all events,
people, the cosmos and in ourselves.

Thomas Keating, *Reawakenings*

