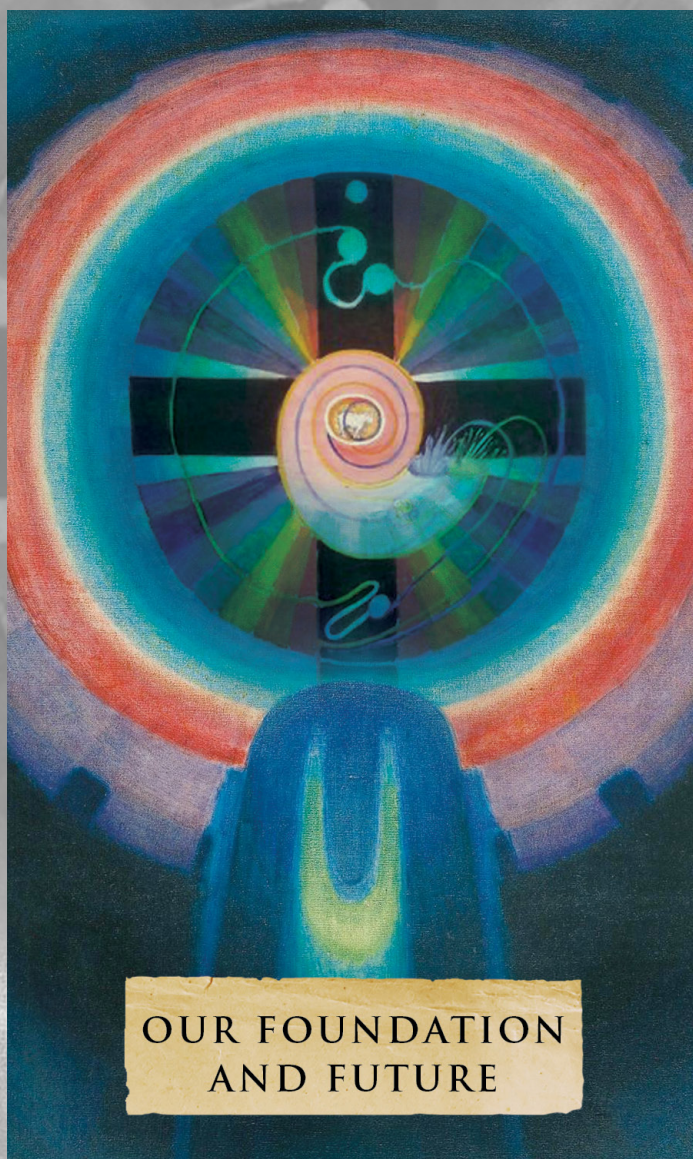


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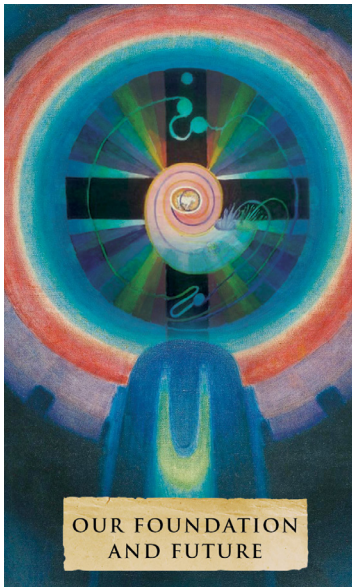


The Mark

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



OUR FOUNDATION
AND FUTURE



Holy, holy, holy ... the whole earth is filled with God's glory! Isaiah 6:3

ANNUAL AIM: HOLY REMEMBERING

OUR FOUNDATION AND FUTURE BY STEVE AND KATHY UTTS

Absolutely,
the Incarnation
was not the revelation
of some lone individual's
oneness with God.

“Christ”
is not a reference
to either God
or to a *particular*
human being,
but to *everyman's*
eternal oneness
in and with God.

Bernadette Roberts, *The Real Christ*

*And if I go and prepare a place for you,
I will come back again and take you to myself,
so that where I am you also may be.
Where I am going you know the way.*

John 14:3-4

We are in the middle of
the final triad of The Church
of Conscious Harmony's annual
aim of “Holy Remembering.”
It has been a year of reflection,
transformation and transition.

October:
“Our Past and Possibilities”

November:
“Our Foundation and Future”

December:
“Our Wonder and Delight”

This triad invites us to continue

a series of rotating movements
invoking a dance of the Spirit to
prepare us for the holy days and
year to come.

In the October issue of *The Mark*, our minister Peter Haas bid his farewell as he culminated this year of remembrance with a return to his scriptural roots. We stand now, one month after his departure, expressing profound gratitude to Peter for guiding us first through the retirement of our founding ministers, and then

through the Covid pandemic. With his leadership, our Church has extended our message through online services, groups, classes, and retreats that continue as we also joyfully celebrate our return to live on-campus services. The Journey School has flourished with profound and varied offerings. We are eternally grateful and bless Peter in his return to the Presbyterian Church. Please join us in holding a future memory that he continues to be nourished by his new calling and remains a spiritual friend to CCH.

Standing at this transition point from the past to the future, we can look to an open horizon of possibilities guided by a return to our roots and rediscovery of our foundation. We affirm that love is the prime force and essence of God and since we are created in the image of God and bound in unity with God and all creation, it follows that love can also be the prime force in us. God created us and invites us to evolve our being toward divine source.

We recognize our mechanical nature and why we regularly “miss the mark.” Jesus teaches us in Matthew 23:26 to *first clean the inside of the cup and the dish*. Through Centering Prayer and the

sincere Work of Inner Christianity, we can clear our contemplative landscape and receive what we have been given by grace. Despite our best intentions, we often forget to “remember.” So often, we catch ourselves spiritually asleep. We then gain in humility what we fail to achieve in sustained higher consciousness.

Perhaps the fuel for transformation is simply an open disposition to Becoming. Total enlightenment can become a distorted agenda of the ego, yet we rise, and we fall through the “constructal givens” of this world (to borrow from Cynthia Bourgeault). With sincere effort, we can become more loving, generous, and wise. As Fr. Thomas Keating reminds us, “In Christianity, motivation is everything.” God is also motivated to be with us through all trials and discernments.

“God is the great companion – the fellow sufferer who understands.” Alfred North Whitehead

Now is an opportunity to look at our foundations with fresh eyes and to minister to each other as did the early followers of “The Way” in first century Palestine. We will discover

deeper gifts and charisms in our community, and we will emerge with greater spiritual maturity as a result. This is an amazing and vibrant spiritual community. New ideas, inspirations and offerings will continue to emerge organically, and with perfect timing, we will attract a new spiritual leader.

In November, we have the opportunity again to express gratitude. Historians tell us that on the first Thanksgiving in October 1621, 53 surviving Pilgrims and 90 members of the Native Wampanoag tribe celebrated a feast together of clams, venison, turkey, corn mush and roasted pumpkin. When these Pilgrims initially departed England for the unknown “new world” in 1620, their Pastor John Robinson gave this farewell sermon saying, “The Lord hath more truth and light yet to break forth from his Holy Word.” They then endured a year of trial without their pastor, yet they remembered his words and emerged as a more mature community, more capable of bearing truth and light.

As we remember our foundation and set forth into the unknown future, may we continue to witness God’s truth, light and love and emerge as a deeper spiritual community. Thanks be to God! ☸

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

REFLECTIONS ON THE WORK OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

REMEMBERING CONSCIOUS CIRCLE

BY MARTIN FIELD

The Conscious Circle of Humanity always through the ages
has tried to awaken the Mechanical Circle of Humanity.

But it cannot do this by compulsion. ...

The Work says that Man is created a self-developing organism,
but to develop he must believe in Greater Mind.

Maurice Nicoll, *Commentaries*, "On Putting Feeling of T into The Work," January 19, 1946

Dr. Nicoll explains the aim for us humans as self-developing organisms involves separating oneself from all forms of negative emotion to become a different person who can ascend towards the Conscious Circle of Humanity. Can you feel into the enormity of this? The possibility?

The Conscious Circle of Humanity is described by Beryl Pogson as a group of beings that have developed to the highest levels of consciousness "and so attained objective reason and accepted the task of helping mankind fulfill its destiny." This passage from the mechanical to the Conscious Circle is only possible with the help of a neutralizing force—something *different from life* and its daily stresses and strains. Yet we can only hear The Conscious

Circle through our Higher Emotional and Higher Intellectual Centers, which means when we have reached the Third State of Consciousness (Self-remembering) through long work on ourselves.

The truth of the Work of Inner Christianity calls me to become conscious and awaken through daily study and practice. The foundational Work tool of non-critically self-observing, non-identifying with what's observed, and Self-remembering to something higher helps me transform dense negative energy into finer energies where I can begin to comprehend the ever-present Conscious Circle.

However, there are times when I feel my spiritual foundation and sense of security being shaken. When aware,

I have been able to observe how certain events and impressions have dropped my conscious state into negativity and identification. When this shakeup happens, I've seen how my protective mechanical behavior takes over internal thoughts and emotions and may outwardly express them with words and gestures. Then, there is an impulse to apologize and commit to do better next time, which makes the outside of my cup appear clean (to reference Matthew 23:26), but what's happening on the inside?

We can probably all relate – internal pains, issues (in the tissues), remorse, shame, internal accounts, and so on are still there. Partaking in self-calming earthly pleasures can help me ease or numb those emotions so I can

go another day without having to do my Work. But I cannot grow by having an open flow of negative emotions, which twist everything and make wrong connections in my psychological side. Thankfully, I understand there is something higher in me away from this mechanical negativity.

First, I must uncritically self-observe. This first step is a struggle – a raw look at myself, which isn't easy nor pretty to witness. But I aim to develop a new view of everything, to see the contradictions in myself from many sides.

When I'm identified and can't bear to see the stain inside my cup, I sink into a psychological state called "the slums" in the Work. Here, I connect to familiar social patterns from my upbringing and associative thinking, like well-worn grooves that hinder embracing a more conscious state where compassion and love are present. A strong facet of my multiplicity, named "the critic" in the Work, can become very influential and exert significant control. The critic is addicted to judgment and criticism to such an extent that it resists any attempts to rise above this negative mindset. This state creates a repetitive cycle whereby negative thoughts arise within me, get judged by this critic, and then return sometime later to the same thoughts. In recurrence, nothing psychologically changes to a finer, higher state.

I have also observed when my inner critic awakens to scold me. The critic feels empowered by compiling a comprehensive list of rights and wrongs for any given scenario. My

personality can intellectually match these scenarios to past trauma, memories, or imaginary fears of things to come so that something in me *reacts* to what I think is right and wrong. My mechanical self finds comfort in matching external influences with past associations, cultivating a sense of security, admiration from others, control, exaltation, and esteem in who I think I am. With all these feelings holding me in that slummy place, it's hard to believe in a higher Truth, and help from the Conscious Circle of Humanity is nowhere to be found.


"To change one's life is not to change outer circumstances: it is to change one's reactions." Nicoll

Negative emotions can be transformed or transmuted using Work tools so that the original thought and trigger for that negative thought can be cleansed from my very being. Yet mechanical states prevent me from embracing opportunities through God's grace to cultivate humility and a more selfless mindset. Leaning in, I can use a Work idea like "external consider always, internal consider never." By external considering, I mean seeing myself in others and others in me. It is like being *in* the other person and seeing from their viewpoint what they feel or dislike about me. This requires consciousness and effort.

By meeting an incoming impression with a Work idea that is not derived from life but from the Conscious Circle creates an opening for non-identification and Self-remembering. This more objective mix of Working

with negative impressions allows me to get around my mechanical programs to enable a more conscious awareness.

"How can you expect to get in touch with Higher Centers if you will never face your own negative emotions with the strength that will give you a new mind and a new understanding of life?" Nicoll

My efforts in the Work are quieting my mechanical inner critic and lifting all my centers out of the slums towards balance. Replacing mechanical reactions and becoming more conscious of what is in my being brings me closer to hearing Higher Centers. With transformation comes Holy Remembering. The real truth that God is always with me to lift me from my slummy state to a higher consciousness towards joy, love, self-awareness, and broader consciousness where anything is possible. I can seek a still place where God's grace shines the light so I can Remember myself and know that I am a child of God with a connection to the Conscious Circle of Humanity. That is my faith, my knowing, and is the promise to all humans that God's love, an Agape love more profound than I may ever know, never forgets me, never leaves me, never lets me down or turns away from me. A life filled with love is built upon a strong and steadfast foundation. I wish to remember this beautiful state of being deeply rooted and grounded in love. 

But whenever you pray, go into your inner room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. Matthew 6:6

REFLECTIONS ON THE PRACTICE OF CENTERING PRAYER

STILLNESS AND TEARS BY JIM TAYLOR

Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him.

Psalm 37:7

This morning, a herd of about 25 elk sauntered through the Aspen trees. Leaves rustled in the wind, sounding like waves crashing on the shore. I am drafting this article in the stillness and majesty of the New Mexico mountains outside of Angel Fire. Clearly, spending time in nature provides an immediate awe and stillness in my being. Similarly, the fruits of Centering Prayer are awe-inspiring gifts from God and not in any way a result of my effort. In my experience, spending time in Centering Prayer is a life-long process with few ‘aha’ moments, and yet there is a mystery that draws the intellect to question how something so simple can be so powerful. Centering Prayer has been the main foundation in my spiritual journey and continues to aid me in this ongoing journey.

“Let your mind fast from the physical delight it gets from thinking.”

The Cloud of Unknowing

I first attended The Church of Conscious Harmony on Christmas Eve 1994, and admittedly my initial experiences of Centering Prayer at CCH often tried my patience. How could ten minutes be so long! Culture tends to suggest that we must be doing something for it to be an effective use of time. Taking the Introduction to Centering Prayer class in July 1996 (led by Ann Kirk and Edward Pearce) gave me the needed knowledge and practical tools to take things deeper. My first “sits” at home were with my back to a waterbed frame. There was no room for a chair as our newborn daughter needed space for her crib. I was only able to sit in Centering

Prayer early in the morning and late at night due to life circumstances. I was blessed with a blended family (a newborn, stepson five, daughter six, and stepdaughter nine years old). My job required long hours, and my wife ran an in-home day care. This meant often coming home to a chaotic and disheveled house. After straightening up for the next day and engaging in family time, my priority was to Centering Prayer, which gave me respite from the chaos. The stillness and consenting to God’s presence and action within gradually provided healing and peace. CCH’s founder, Tim Cook, conveyed an idea that Centering Prayer is a direct line to God, no bank shot off anyone is needed.

“Without discipline, we can solve nothing. Discipline is the means of Spiritual evolution.”

M. Scott Peck

I rarely missed morning sits, and did what I could to have the evening sits while still being a good householder. I was asked recently in a Journey Group how I was able to accomplish this. Discipline has negative meaning for many, but I must thank my father (with his Army, Marine, baseball umpire, basketball referee, and Lutheran pastor experience) for drilling discipline into my life. Though I chose not to raise my kids in that manner, discipline was such an important part in having a consistent and meaningful practice. Fr. Thomas Keating has many practical ways to accomplish this in his book *Open Mind, Open Heart*. I recall him suggesting having a longer thirty-minute sit in the morning especially when you know (due to obligations) a sit in the evening is not doable. Sometimes one could have an afternoon sit before going home from work, so as to be fully present for family when home.

Meditation is “an antidote to the mind’s vulnerability to toxic emotions.” Daniel Goleman

Refilling the reservoir was essential during my career, which allowed me forty plus years of experience in working with trauma and tears. I was a psychiatric social worker at the Austin State Hospital, Shoal Creek Hospital, and Texas Neurological

Rehabilitation Center. Every day, most of my caseload involved working with individuals who did not want to exist. Fortunately, this negative state tended to dissipate quickly in most people, which tends to go along with Fr. Thomas’ assessment that we all have a core of goodness. My experience also indicates that heredity certainly has a strong influence on our mental health. Obviously, this is an area we do not have any control over. Fr. Thomas was one of the few spiritual people I have known who advocated that in some cases, professional help could be beneficial. I also resonate with Fr. Thomas’ descriptive picture that everyone needs a good spiritual vomit once in a while. Centering Prayer allows God to take the negativity and traumas of the past and provide relief and healing at a level that is incomprehensible.

“Nothing outside yourself can cause any trouble. You yourself make the waves in your mind.” Susuki Roshi

Personally, Centering Prayer helps guide me through life’s tragedies. Prior to turning 50, my first ex wanted more money, my wife and I divorced after a nine-year marriage, and my father died. The most difficult time was “holding center” for my family after the death of my two-year-old grandson. Three

doctors indicated “this wasn’t an accident,” though no one was ever charged or prosecuted in his death. The day after his memorial, I led a coping skills group on grief. Looking back, Centering Prayer was the anchor that allowed me to stay strong, externally consider, forgive, and come out on the other side of these tragedies with a peace that transcends any understanding.

Through self-observation, I see an immediate association between the word “tears” with sadness and grief. But in my being, I have witnessed the connection of the gift of tears with joy. Likewise, the gifts of Centering Prayer are joyful. Using Abraham Heschel’s term, I am in “radical amazement” that Centering Prayer has had such a profound impact on my health and need for sleep. Since starting a daily Centering Prayer practice, I did not call in sick at work for over 25 years. I feel well-rested with five and a half to six hours of sleep and am rarely tired. Additionally, only through God’s grace and consistent practice of Centering Prayer is how I can explain staying in the same house for 10 months during my divorce process, and another six months after the divorce. Grace, upon grace, upon grace!

My wish is to allow the stillness of Centering Prayer to guide us through the tears and joys of life in this year of Holy Remembering. ☸

SCRIPTORIUM

OUR FOUNDATION AND FUTURE BY JO FUENTECILLA

Related to our monthly focus on “Our Foundation and Future,” our verse for this month’s Scriptorium is found in the Gospel of John 14:3-4.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be. Where I am going you know the way.

In light of verse 3, the word “if” is an invitation to participate or become involved. It is an important implication to trust that what Christ is telling us is true. “If” implies a certainty or promise that Christ is going and will return. Where did Christ go? To me, Christ didn’t leave. Forgetting that He is always with us, in the good and bad, could be the illusion of Him leaving. In the beginning, it may be necessary for us to forget Christ in order for Him to rise again. When we forget, we are blind. But, being blind for a moment, may teach

one to develop a new sense to finding Christ.

What place does Christ prepare? Could it be a psychological, emotional, or physical state of mind? Christ goes on saying, “I will come back and take you to myself.” This is a reminder that “Christ’s Self” is our “True Self.” With this understanding, he is showing us a way back to center, to our origin, to the absolute where we began. Not a physical place, but rather a peaceful sanctuary that exists within.

How will we know He’s back? If we can sit still, for a few moments, the place Christ prepared for us reveals itself in the stillness. Silence is the door to infinite possibilities. Like Christ, we go out into the world, but it is life, our greatest teacher, that reminds us to look within.

In verse 4, Christ said, “Where I am going you know the way.” With assistance, the third Chinese Patriarch of Zen

begins with, “The Great Way is not difficult for those who have no preferences. When love and hate are both absent, everything becomes clear and undisguised.” Learning your own preferences and likes and dislikes is a map, which shows us the way.

The more you know yourself, the closer you get to God. In Greek, the word for “know” is *ginosko*; it implies a powerful feeling or strong understanding. This powerful understanding will be discovered as we grow and develop a relationship with ourselves and God.

In summary, Christ has never left, we abandon ourselves. He is always here, ready to assist. As we draw closer to God, we realize that the True Self is Christ within. He is our foundation, which is unconditional love. As we develop, heal, and study ourselves, we begin to discover new ways of knowing, seeing, feeling, and loving God more. We are full of potential, practically limitless. ☸

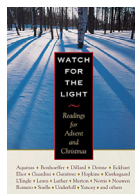
BOOK LOOK

READERS FOR ADVENT AND THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS

Lo, in the silent night
A child to God is born
And all is brought again
That ere was lost or lorn.
Could but they soul, O man,
Become a silent night!
God would be born in thee
And set all things aright.

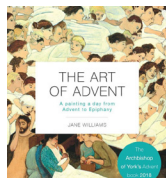
15th century

Many like to participate in Advent and the Octave of Christmas by reading a special daily reader to enter into deeper meanings of this sacred time. Here are three recommendations for us:



Watch for The Light
Readings for Advent and Christmas


An inspiring anthology of 45 reflections by 45 writers, ancient and modern, that actually begins in November. It includes meditations from Henri Nouwen, Dorothy Day, T. S. Eliot and many others.



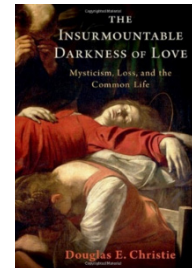
The Art of Advent, A Painting a Day from Advent to Epiphany
by Jane Williams

A beautiful small book of art, meditations and questions for reflection for 37 days.

Faith: An Advent Companion
A Journey into Faith with Thomas Keating

Published by Contemplative Outreach, this 105-page booklet features daily Scripture passages, reflections from the works of Fr. Keating and practice suggestions from Advent through the feast of the Epiphany. 

COMMUNITY READING SEPT-DEC



The Insurmountable Darkness of Love: Mysticism, Loss and the Common Life
by Douglas E. Christie

Please join us
as we read
Dr. Christie's masterpiece
of introspective
spiritual autobiography
that also teaches
the wisdom
of the contemplative
monastic tradition
in very accessible ways.

OUR NEXT COMMUNITY WORK DAY

November 4 9am-noon

Please gather with us for selfless service around the Church campus.

**COMMUNITY
PRACTICE**
NOV-DEC

**KEEP A BRIEF VIGIL IN
A SACRED PLACE**

What does it mean to keep a vigil? To stay in a place and quietly pray for a time. And what is a sacred place? While certain places have resonances by virtue of their intention and how they have been regarded, everywhere is sacred. Praying silently at the bedside of a loved one who is ill. Sitting quietly on a favorite rock on a walking path. Pausing with a special intention in our own prayer room. Or, if you are in Austin, you may choose to pray in Theosis Chapel at the Church. A place close by the Church is the Schoenstatt Shrine in Austin. There are over 200 of these shrines around the world where people gather for prayer, renewal, and inspiration. Advent is approaching. A perfect time to keep an intentional vigil. To watch for the light. ☉

**CELEBRATE THANKSGIVING AT
THE CHURCH OF CONSCIOUS HARMONY**

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2-5PM

You and your family
are invited to celebrate
Thanksgiving at CCH
and enjoy a fabulous meal with your church community.
Guests bring their own place settings and a side dish or dessert.
Space is limited and signup is needed –
see the posting on the church's kitchen door
to tell us the food dish
and how many guests you will bring.
Everyone is invited to share
a Thanksgiving poem or short story
during our time together.
Tamara and Martin Field will be hosting.

NOVEMBER SERMON SERIES
PRACTICING THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Nov 5
Practicing the Presence of God in Our Family

Nov 12
Practicing the Presence of God in Our Workplace

Nov 19
Practicing the Presence of God in Our Spiritual Community

Nov 26
Practicing the Presence of God in Our Earth

NOVEMBER CALENDAR

For more details, visit consciousharmony.com or call 512-347-9673

SPECIAL EVENTS

❖ Community Workday
Nov 4 9-noon

❖ New Member Induction
Nov 5 10am worship service, followed by a reception

* Exploring the Work of Byron Katie as a Resource for Holy Remembering
led by Beverly McCune
Weds, Nov 8-Dec 13 7-8:30pm (online only)
\$20 donation Register online

† Gurdjieff Music, An Evening to Honor Women of the Work
Nov 12 6-7pm

❖ Centering Prayer Retreat: Song and Silence
led by Beverly McCune
Nov 18 9am-3pm \$20 Register online

❖ Thanksgiving Potluck Dinner at CCH
2-5pm in CCH Fellowship Hall
Signup to bring food to share, see page 10 for details

Advent Centering Prayer Retreat
Dec 1-7 at Cedarbrake \$925 Register online

MONTHLY

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

WEEKLY

Wednesdays

❖ Communion Service in Sacristy 7:40am
❖ Contemplative Lunch noon-1pm

Saturdays

* Online Centering Prayer Support Group 7:35am

Sundays

† Centering Prayer & Lectio Divina 8-9am
❖ Intercessory Prayer in Room 211 9:15-9:30am
† Worship Service 10-11:30am
❖ Youth Program (preK-12) 10-11:30am

Thursdays

* The Journey School Class 7-8:30pm

DAILY

† Centering Prayer Service 7-7:35am
* Centering Prayer 6-6:20pm

*Please join these services, groups, and classes via online video options.
Contact the website for accessible links and more information.
†In person and online ❖In-person only at CCH



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THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

The Communion of Saints is not a club to which virtuous people belong after having paid their dues by way of asceticism, suffering, or austere penances. Still less is it something we access only by physical death. It is, rather, a participation in the divine life that is eternal and that has no past or future because it is entirely present ...

When you pray alone think of inviting relatives and friends who have passed on to come and join you ...

The Communion of Saints includes not only those who are canonized, but also your old friends, parents and ancestors. They are all together now in the love of God.

Through contemplative prayer, we are moving into a realm of reality that influences the past and the future perhaps more than anything else we could do.

Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God*

