

CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH OF CONNECTICUT GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Dated: 11/22/2016

This Document outlines the Vision, Mission and overall structural elements of Contemplative Outreach of Connecticut (CO of CT). This initial document has been accepted by consensus of the Leadership Team on 11/22/2016. Future revisions are also subject to approval by consensus of the Leadership Team. Planned future revisions of this Document are intended to reflect lessons learned and movement towards an increasingly collaborative Leadership Model.

VISION: Taken from Contemplative Outreach, the vision is as follows:

“Be still and know that I am God.” (Psalm 46:10)

“The intent of Contemplative Outreach is to foster the process of transformation in Christ in one another through the practice of Centering Prayer.”

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul,
and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.” (Luke 10:27)*

The foundational principles of Contemplative Outreach, current to the date this document has been accepted, are captured in Contemplative Outreach’s Vision and the Theological and Administrative Principles. **Appendix A-- Contemplative Outreach Vision, Theological and Administrative Principles and Regarding the Integrity of the Method of Centering Prayer.**

OUR MISSION: To support, grow and share the Contemplative Outreach prayer practices and enhance the Christian Contemplative Community in Connecticut. Our purpose is to serve the needs of individuals and groups in CT. We are open to assisting the growth of individual and prayer group practitioners in surrounding areas by working in cooperation with other chapters to the extent we are able.

HISTORY OF OUR STRUCTURE: The initial structure of CO of CT is based on a Model of Collaborative Leadership as recommended by Contemplative Outreach. **Appendix B-- Definition of organizational terms as set forth by Contemplative Outreach.**

The role of Servant Leaders is scripturally based on the advice Moses received from his father-in-law, Jethro, and can be found in Exodus 18, 17-22:

“The task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone...Act as the people’s representative before God... [and] you should also look among all the people for able and God-fearing men...Thus, your burden will be lightened since they will bear it with you...” (The Catholic Study Bible, Oxford University Press, 1990).

Servant Leader is an umbrella term and when used in the context of a CO chapter team: Remember who is being served. Be aware God is serving others through us and there is a transmission of love taking place. Servant Leaders serve God and others in love with no expectations. Just as Centering Prayer is a prayer of intention and consent,

servant leadership is a service of intention and consent. Motivations are purified by intent, consent, and prayer and reveals the true self. In this purification, there is neither success nor failure.

OUR STRUCTURE: Based on the recommended Leadership Model adopted by Contemplative Outreach, the initial structure of CO of CT will consist of a **Chapter Coordinator**, a **Leadership Team**, **Service Teams** and general members of this contemplative chapter community. Leaders in this structure are composed of people experienced in Centering Prayer and are aligned with the Contemplative Outreach's Practices and Principles.

Servant Leaders: Refers to anyone serving a specific function, including but not limited to Coordinators, Service Team Leaders, Facilitators, Commissioned Presenters and anyone involved in service to CO of CT. **Appendix C—Contemplative Outreach General Prerequisites for Servant Leaders and Appendix D-- Leadership Meetings with typical format and frequency.**

Coordinator: Invites, organizes and oversees the Leadership Team. The Coordinator serves for a 3 year term renewable one time. A coordinator will be selected by a Prayer Discernment Process. **Appendix E—Contemplative Outreach Prayerful Discernment Process for Leadership.**

Service Team Leaders: Members of the Chapter Leadership Team who serve and oversee the activity of a Service Team. Service Team Leaders are encouraged to commit to serve on a Service Team as a volunteer for a term of 2 years. They are willing to commit to and actively participate in the Vision, Mission, and Objectives of CO of CT. They are experienced in Centering Prayer and are aligned with the Practices and Principles of Contemplative Outreach.

To ensure the vitality of the Team, the search for new **Service Team Leaders** should be an ongoing task. Any member of the Leadership Team can invite a person with the proper qualifications to serve as a Team Leader. The candidate being considered will first be presented to the Chapter Coordinator who, upon consultation with the Coordinator Service Team, will present that candidate to the Leadership Team for discussion. New Service Team Leaders are accepted by consensus of the Leadership Team.

Service Teams: Service Teams emerge from the needs of the contemplative community. Each Service Team is coordinated by a member of the Leadership Team, but the Service Team members can be made up of individuals that are not formally a part of the Leadership Team. The selection process for Service Team Members is the same as Service Team Leaders as noted above.

Service team leaders meet with their team members who are asked to develop a plan. The service team leader then presents the plan to the leadership team for discussion and feedback.

Coordinator's Service Team: Responsibilities: To assist the Chapter Coordinator with coordination and administrative tasks and to support Service Team Leaders. This Service Team includes the role of Secretary who will keep minutes of meetings, keeps the latest versions of all formal documents and plans and handles all formal correspondence and the role of Treasurer who is responsible for handling all finances reflecting income and expenses.

Other Service Teams are:

Service Team for New Prayer Group Development: Responsibilities: To form and grow new prayer groups in the general community.

Service Team for Facilitator and Prayer Group Support: Responsibilities: To form and develop a prayer group facilitator's community and to assess and support the need for sustaining the existing prayer groups.

Service Team for Prayer Community Development: Responsibilities: To deepen the practice of individual Contemplative prayer practitioners.

Service Team for Training and Formation: Responsibilities: To coordinate formal Contemplative Outreach Formation training by Commissioned CO trainers.

Service Team for Communications (includes Web, newspapers, bulletins, newsletters, flyers):

Responsibilities: To carry out communications within the community regarding important Chapter information, activities and local prayer groups by establishing and maintaining a web and social media presence, posting information on the Contemplative Outreach Ltd. National web site and using other media as appropriate.

OUR YEARLY AND LONG TERM OBJECTIVES: Yearly objectives and long term vision will be approved by consensus of the Leadership Team annually in September. The planning process will begin with Service Team Leaders meeting with their individual service teams to develop annual objectives that will align with the Chapter's overall vision, mission and long term vision. These objectives will be discussed when the Leadership Team comes together to establish the Chapter's annual objectives. At this time, the required budget to achieve them will also be established and approved.

Once the Chapter's annual objectives have been approved by a consensus, each Service Team is responsible for developing its own individual plans for realizing those objectives which include coordinating and working with other Service Teams as needed. Annual objectives that cannot be accomplished will be included in the Chapter's long term vision.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A process of Contemplative Dialogue will be used for resolving conflicts/disagreements. This model, developed by Steven Wirth, is based on the foundation of Contemplative Noticing, Non-defending Learning and Nonviolent Engagement and is biblically inspired. Initially, an attempt is made to resolve conflicts/disagreements between individuals.

- If unsuccessful, it will be brought to the attention of the appropriate Service Team
- If unsuccessful, it will be brought to the attention of the appropriate Service Team Leader,
- If unsuccessful, it will be brought to the attention of the Chapter Coordinator,
- If unsuccessful, it will be brought to the attention of the Servant Leadership Coordination Service Team
- If unsuccessful, the entire Leadership Team will be called upon to resolve the conflict
- Lastly, if the issue is sufficiently important, Contemplative Outreach will be contacted for guidance toward resolution.

Applying these principles to our conflicts seeks to build common understanding, to elicit a larger, bigger truth that recognizes and respects both our common ground and our differences and can lead to a fundamentally new and deeper common understanding. **Appendix F: Contemplative Dialogue.**

ACCEPTANCE BY CONSENSUS: Throughout this document we state that decisions will be made by Consensus of the Servant Leadership Team. For us, Consensus means the majority (over 50%) of those present at the time the decision is reached. In order to vote, a quorum totaling 2/3 of the Leadership Team members must be present. Presence entails physical presence or presence by phone or methods of electronic conferencing such as Skype or similar means. When those present agree, the quorum for voting may also be achieved via email or other means of electronic communication or through subsequent personal discussions with missing Leadership Team members.

Appendix A
Contemplative Outreach, LTD
Contemplative Outreach Vision,
Theological and Administrative Principles,
Regarding the Integrity of the Method of Centering Prayer as the date of Document Acceptance

The Vision gives definition to Contemplative Outreach as the CO community and defines the purpose of Contemplative Outreach set in a scriptural context to support one another in the process of Divine transformation.

The Theological Principles represent the theological foundations for our CO community as a whole.

The Administrative Principles guide Contemplative Outreach servant-leadership.

VISION

Be still and know that I am God.

Psalm 46:10

The intent of Contemplative Outreach is to foster the process of transformation in Christ in one another through the practice of Centering Prayer.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself. Luke 10:27

THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES

1. Contemplative Outreach is a community of individuals and Centering Prayer groups committed to living the contemplative dimension of the Gospel in everyday life.
2. A commitment to the daily practice of Centering Prayer is the primary expression of belonging.
3. Listening to the word of God in Scripture through the practice of Lectio Divina is encouraged, particularly its movement into contemplative prayer, which a daily practice of Centering Prayer facilitates.
4. The source of Centering Prayer is the Indwelling Trinity. Its practice consists of responding to the call of the Holy Spirit to consent to the Divine presence and action within.
5. The Divine presence affirms our basic core of goodness made in the image of God.
6. The Divine action is the process of transformation in Christ which inspires and deepens our consent.

7. The contemplative dimension of the Gospel manifests as an ever-deepening union with Christ and the practical caring for others that flows from this relationship. It reveals the deeper meaning of Christ's life and teaching.
8. Our relationship with the living Christ is the bond uniting us together in mutual love.
9. While formed by our respective denominations, we are united in our common search for God and our experience of Christ through Centering Prayer.
10. We identify with the Christian contemplative heritage in which Centering Prayer is rooted. We recognize this heritage as the common ground for Christian unity.
11. We affirm our solidarity with the contemplative dimension of other religions and sacred traditions.
12. Through the continuing practice of Centering Prayer, we experience a deepening commitment to the needs and rights of each member of the human family and an increasing respect for the interdependence of all creation.
13. We foster a spirit of unity, generosity and utmost charity in all our relationships.
14. Following the teachings of Jesus, we exercise leadership through an attitude of humility, listening and service.
15. We recognize and maintain a spiritual relationship with Saint Benedict's Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado.
16. We acknowledge that any good accomplished by Contemplative Outreach is the work of the Holy Spirit.

So that they may all be one; just as You, Father, are in me, and I in you, may they also be one in us. John 17:21

ADMINISTRATIVE PRINCIPLES

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. I Corinthians 12:4-7

Contemplative Outreach is an evolving community with an expanding vision and deepening practice, serving the changing needs of Christian contemplatives.

1. As members of this evolving community we are responsible to foster and transmit the Vision of Contemplative Outreach.
2. We fulfill our Vision through attraction to the Centering Prayer practice not by proselytizing.
3. The gift of contemplative practice enables us to bring an attitude of humility, listening and service to our daily activities.
4. We reach decisions through discernment and consensus.

5. We serve in leadership, ordinarily in a voluntary capacity.
6. All who provide Contemplative Outreach services do so in consideration of, and in balance with their personal, family, and professional responsibilities.
7. We avoid indebtedness and owning real estate in order to remain free to devote our resources to sharing the gift of Centering Prayer.
8. We employ staff and contractors as our growth may require.
9. We cooperate with church authorities in the areas where we work, but do not seek to become a religious or lay institute.
10. We wish to remain accessible to everyone. For this reason, we do not endorse particular causes or take part in public controversies, whether religious, political or social. As private individuals, we act according to our conscience.

REGARDING THE INTEGRITY OF THE METHOD OF CENTERING PRAYER

Fr. Thomas Keating, our Spiritual Guide, emphasizes both the importance of integrity and the need for flexibility and tolerance within the CO community. Our hope is to preserve the deeper meaning of the Christian contemplative heritage and its teachings learned through our daily practice of Centering Prayer under the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit and to understand and study the Christian spiritual journey.

This integrity is an interiorization of the Centering Prayer method and a manifestation of its fruits. It is important that all Servant-Leaders, including Presenters, Coordinators, Contact Persons and Facilitators, understand that a transmission takes place during the presentation of any workshop, formation or retreat. It is not so much about strict adherence to guidelines of any particular program itself. Rather, it is about the integrity of the person's commitment to the Centering Prayer practice and one's submission to the transformative process that is conveyed from Servant-Leaders to seekers and practitioners.

Guidelines are very helpful and well-received when they are seen not as rules but as a guide to understanding. Guidelines work best for most people most of the time; there is also room for exceptions when needed. As Servant-Leaders, we are called to enter into the mystery of our shared experience of contemplation, while at the same time returning to the simplicity of the Centering Prayer experience that we interiorize and carry with us into the activities of our daily lives and share with one another as the CO community.

Appendix B

Definition of organizational terms

Contemplative Outreach, LTD

A team of individuals who have consented to serve the growth and development of a Contemplative Outreach Chapter. A Chapter Leadership Team is usually comprised of a Coordinator(s) and Service Team Leaders. A Secretary and/or Treasurer may be a member of the Leadership Team and not necessarily a Service Team Leader.

Service Teams

Definition of organizational terms commonly used to describe primary leadership roles in Contemplative Outreach Chapters

Servant Leader

An “umbrella” term to describe persons engaged in volunteer service to Contemplative Outreach in any capacity. It is assumed that all volunteers have a regular practice of Centering Prayer.

Organic Growth of Chapters

A term that encourages and supports the development of the organizational structure, services, programs and formation of teams to grow according to the emerging needs of a Chapter by periodic assessment of “needs.”

Leadership Team

A Service Team is comprised of a small group of volunteers working as a team to provide a service to the Chapter that has been identified as an “assessed need.”

Service Teams are formed to implement and serve an event, program, or other special need as the needs emerge; e.g. forming a Service Team for coordinating and offering the Centering Prayer Introductory Program.

Service Team Leader

A Service Team Leader is a volunteer who consents to take the lead role in coordinating and serving an “assessed need.” The Service Team Leader invites other persons to serve as Service Team members thereby forming a Service Team to serve that need – event, program, etc. Service Team Leaders are invited to serve as members of the Leadership Team so that they can advise of the activity of their teams and support the Coordinator and other Service Team Leaders that comprise a Leadership Team.

Contemplative Outreach Vision, Theological & Administrative Principles

The Vision, Theological & Administrative Principles state the purpose of our service to the organization, to the Chapter, and to the many people with whom we share the practice of Centering Prayer and the contemplative spiritual journey.

Appendix C

GENERAL PREREQUISITES FOR SERVANT LEADERS Contemplative Outreach, LTD

These are minimum prerequisites for Presenters, Coordinators, Contact Persons, Facilitators and Service Team Members. Depending on the particular role within the CO community, there may be additional prerequisites for specific Servant-Leader positions.

1. A daily practice of Centering Prayer for at least one year.
2. Acceptance of the CO Vision, and Theological and Administrative Principles.
3. Availability and willingness to serve at least one year as a Servant-Leader.
4. Attendance at the Centering Prayer Introductory Program or the equivalent.
5. Familiarity with three foundational books by Fr. Thomas Keating: Open Mind, Open Heart; Invitation to Love; Intimacy with God.
6. Familiarity with the "Spiritual Journey" series by Fr. Thomas Keating.
7. Attendance at a Contemplative Outreach Intensive Retreat.
8. HIGHLY RECOMMENDED: Attendance at one or more of the following formation opportunities: Presenters Formation for Centering Prayer, Coordinator Servant-Leader Formation, Basic Facilitator Skills I Formation.

Appendix D

Leadership Meetings with typical format and frequency

The Leadership Team will hold regular meetings every one – three months depending upon the number of items that need to be addressed. During the course of a meeting the time of the next meeting will be established.

In addition to normal meetings which will follow the agenda proposed below, special ½ day or full day meetings can be called if there is sufficient work to warrant such meetings or for the purposes of retreat, spiritual development and team building.

Most meetings will be restricted to members of the Leadership Team or guests that are invited in advance by the Chapter Coordinator or by agreement of the consensus of the Leadership Team. The Leadership Team may also consider having annual or bi-annual Open meetings at which the general Prayer Community is invited to attend.

In order to facilitate and promote Contemplative Spiritual growth of individual Leadership Team Members as well Contemplative Spiritual growth of the Servant Leadership Team itself, the following is the recommended agenda for a regular Servant Leadership Team meeting:

1. Time for Gathering – 15 minutes
2. Centering Prayer with Opening Prayer – 25 minutes
3. Spiritual Sharing and Dialogue – 20 minutes
 - a. Examples include Reflective Sharing on a Theological or Administrative Principle
4. Existing Business – 45 minutes
 - a. Chapter Coordinator Brief Opening Reflections
 - b. Acceptance of Minutes from previous meeting
 - c. Important items previously established for discussion
 - d. Financial Update
5. New Business – 30 minutes
 - a. Newly introduced items for brief discussion / review
 - b. Will be bypassed if sufficiently important Old Business requires attention
6. Establish Date/Time of next meeting, meeting scribe and person responsible for opening prayer
7. Closing Prayer

APPENDIX E
CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH, LTD.
PRAYERFUL DISCERNMENT PROCESS FOR LEADERSHIP

Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Colossians 3:17

Facilitator

A person should be designated by the group to facilitate the prayerful discernment process for new leadership. The designated facilitator should be familiar with the guidelines of the process as follows:

Purpose/Function of a Chapter

Prior to the beginning the group discernment process for leadership, a brief discussion should take place with members of the chapter who will participate in the discernment process to fully understand the purpose, function and objective of a Contemplative Outreach Chapter.

A handout defining the role and responsibilities of Chapter Coordinator and Contact Person should be reviewed by the group so there is a shared understanding of the role for which leadership is being discerned.

Reflection

Prior to the discernment process, the group members are asked to reflect on the questions listed below in order to be prepared to answer them. These questions should be read aloud to the group and 5-10 minutes given to silent reflection on the questions/statement and their response.

Centering Prayer

A prayer to the Holy Spirit is offered asking for guidance and help to choose the Coordinator (or other role you are interested in filling) that will serve Contemplative Outreach in a way that will best serve the intention of God's will for the Outreach community. A period of Centering Prayer follows.

After 20 minutes of Centering Prayer, the facilitator asks each person in the circle answers the following questions:

1. My commitment to Centering Prayer and to Contemplative Outreach is....

2. I am (or am not) able to serve as the Coordinator for our local Chapter....

State the reason why you are able and willing to accept

3. *(If unable to accept the recommendation, please continue to respond)*

I would like to recommend ___?___ to serve as the Coordinator....

A person may also state at this time if they are willing to serve as a team leader or member of a Service Team....

Note: If a person is unable to accept the role, that person then verbally recommends the name of one of the other members in the group and informs the group why they feel this person would be the best person to serve as Coordinator (or other role).

If three or four names emerge as potential candidates, each person is asked if they wish to serve. If more than one says yes, then there may be a ballot election. The person who receives the most votes is selected.

Contemplative Outreach: July 1, 2014

Appendix F Contemplative Dialogue

CONFLICT RESOLUTION: A process based upon the spirit of Contemplative Dialogue (see Steven Wirth, ContemplativeDialogue.org) will be used for resolving conflicts / disagreements. Contemplative Dialogue is based on the foundation of:

- **Contemplative Noticing**--Contemplative Noticing begins with Open, Active Listening to another's point of view and then reflecting on that point of view prior to responding.

- **Non-defended Learning**-- Non-defended Learning ensures that our primary objective is to hear the other and to ensure that the other hears us without the need to defend our stance. It attempts to ensure that our stance is understood as we understand another's stance in a way that fosters a new, common understanding.

- **Nonviolent Engagement**---Nonviolent Engagement ensures that we operate in our dialogue from a love and respect that fundamentally recognizes our common purpose and connection.

Applying these principles to our conflicts seeks to build common understanding and elicit a larger, bigger truth that recognizes and respects both our common ground and our differences. It can lead to a fundamentally new and deeper understanding.

It is this spirit that will be applied to resolve our differences following this biblically based method which seeks to resolve conflict closest to its source.

See ContemplativeDialogue.org for additional information.

Steven Wirth, ContemplativeDialogue.org