



Guidelines for Forming a Centering Prayer Group

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Guidelines for forming and conducting a Centering Prayer group

1. When one feels inspired by God to form a Centering Prayer group, this is a call to take some steps toward that possibility.
2. Find another person who will pray about the possibility of starting a Centering Prayer group with you. Additional training may assist your discernment and listening. You may consider attending a Centering Prayer Introductory Workshop. Extended and continued practice in your own daily discipline is also likely to deepen your process.
3. You need at least one other person to start a group. Faithful attendance of the leaders of the group is important for group formation. Starting with a dedicated few, the group will grow as others attend.
4. Most groups meet once a week. It is helpful to frequently publicize the date, time and place of the meeting. If the meeting is held in a church, the bulletin may be a good place to advertize.
5. The meeting can be in a home or other available space conducive to prayer. It is best if it is in a place that is inviting to both regulars and newcomers.
6. The primary purpose of the group meeting is to share Centering Prayer and support one another in their practice of the prayer. Most groups meet for an hour or an hour and a half, which allows time for spiritual enrichment. This can include, among many options, watching a portion of the Spiritual Journey videos by Fr. Thomas Keating or another DVD. There can be group *lectio divina*. (There are *lectio divina* teachings through Contemplative Outreach. One method of group *lectio* is explained in the book by J. David Muyskens, *Forty Days to a Closer Walk with God*.) A book can be read by the group, discussing a chapter or section at each meeting. Audio and video recordings can be checked out from a chapter library or ordered through the online bookstore of Contemplative Outreach.

7. Part of the time of a Centering Prayer meeting can be used for group sharing. The following are Contemplative Outreach guidelines for personal sharing in small prayer groups:

1. We accept one another as we are.
2. We do not give advice.
3. We do not criticize what others share.
4. We listen attentively when someone else is speaking.
5. We keep the sharing in the group absolutely confidential.
6. We share experiences from our own lives, not abstract ideas.
7. We gather to care, not to cure or remove the crisis of pain. God does the healing.
8. We decide among ourselves how much time we will devote to sharing, making sure that each person who wishes has a chance to speak.
9. We are always free to remain silent if we wish.

The group is encouraged to adopt these guidelines; they may be read from time to time in order to keep the group unified and intentional. Try to cultivate an atmosphere in which differences are respected and honored.

8. Group facilitators may need to make a quick introduction to Centering Prayer to newcomers unfamiliar with it. It is advised that the leaders have thought through how they will introduce the practice in a few sentences.

9. Facilitator training is made available in many chapters annually. The Chapter Resource and Communication Service team (CRCS) offers a Facilitator Formation Program every two years that develops skills helpful in forming and leading Centering Prayer groups. This formation is scheduled for July 15-22, 2011. Please contact Susan Komis or David Muyskens for detailed information.

10. A good way to start a group is to host an Introductory Centering Prayer Workshop led by a commissioned presenter of Contemplative Outreach. This is a six-hour workshop with four presentations and two 20 minute periods of Centering Prayer, so participants have the opportunity to experience the prayer. Then participants are invited to attend six continuing sessions. These six sessions include a DVD featuring Fr. Thomas Keating as well as a time of Centering Prayer.

11. Further suggestions for group leaders are found in the handbook for facilitators available from [Susan Komis](#) (U.S.) or [David Muyskens](#) (international).

Guidelines for a Centering Prayer group leader (facilitator):

Welcome the participants.

Read the four guidelines of Centering Prayer, especially for any who are new to the prayer. Announce how the prayer period will begin and end, and the length of time for the prayer.

Centering Prayer Guidelines

1. Choose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.
3. When engaged with your thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

Ring the bell or singing bowl three times.

The following prayer can be used to begin the prayer time, or use another of your choice:

Source of All, Savior, Holy Spirit:
We welcome your presence at the center of our being.
Letting go of all else, we surrender in love to you.
Let our sacred word be a symbol of our consent to your loving presence and healing
action within.

Ring the bell once.

[20 minutes of silence.]

Ring the bell once.

Slowly and quietly pray the Lord's Prayer for the group. Or, offer your own prayer in a similar manner.



(last updated February 2011)