4. Those who serve in leadership ordinarily do so in a
3. We share Centering Prayer by appealing to interior
2. The integrity of the teaching of the method of Centering
1. Contemplative Outreach is an evolving community with

Contemplative Outreach, as a community, is a living
organism that is interactive, interconnected, interdependent,
and dynamic. It aspires to function without a hierarchical
structure and is designed to share Centering Prayer and its
teaching vision as widely as possible.

Additional practices offered by Contemplative Outreach are
skillful means to bring the fruits of Centering Prayer into daily
life, but are not part of the integrity of the teaching of the method.
Similarly, resources such as books, videos, and articles are not
part of the integrity of the teaching of the method, but provide
vital support for the ongoing practice of Centering Prayer.

3. We share Centering Prayer by appealing to interior
attraction rather than proselytizing.

The practice of Centering Prayer enables us to bring
dispositions of humility and attentive listening into our
service. We offer the method of Centering Prayer and
its conceptual background in a pastoral way and avoid
emphasizing strict policies, rigid rules or proselytizing.

4. Those who serve in leadership ordinarily do so in a
voluntary capacity. We employ staff and contractors as needed.

We depend on the enormous generosity of those serving
Contemplative Outreach and performing innumerable tasks
without remuneration. We invite members of the community
to serve in ways best suited to their call and special
qualifications. All who serve seek to be attuned to the needs
and concerns of the whole community, whether individuals,
small prayer groups, or local chapters. We may employ staff
and contractors with special or necessary skills as needed.

5. All who provide Contemplative Outreach services do
so in consideration of their personal, family, and
professional responsibilities, which come first.

Those in leadership carry out their service by first taking into
consideration their own personal, family, and professional
responsibilities.

6. Contemplative Outreach avoids indebtedness and owning
real estate in order to be free to devote all its resources to
sharing the gift of Centering Prayer.

Contemplative Outreach avoids indebtedness and owning
real estate, which can burden persons in leadership who want
to devote as much of their time and energy as possible to the
spiritual welfare and changing needs of the community.

7. We reach decisions through prayerful discernment,
aiming toward consensus especially in matters of major
importance.

In view of the prayerful discernment process, consensus for
us does not require unanimity, but all members in the group
need to have a voice in the discussion. If consensus cannot be
reached after adequate consultation in the group as well as
with those who will be directly affected, a simple majority can
decide. When time is of the essence a person or small team may
be entrusted to resolve the impasse. Once decided, all honor the
decision in the spirit of unity. For ordinary matters, those to
whom a particular responsibility has been delegated do what
is necessary to fulfill their appointed task.

8. We collaborate with our respective church authorities,
but do not seek to become a religious or lay institute.

Contemplative Outreach is designed to make available to
Christian communities the method of Centering Prayer as a means of furthering the renewal of our common
contemplative tradition.

9. To remain accessible to everyone, Contemplative Outreach
does not endorse particular causes or take part in public
controversies, whether religious, political, or social. As
private individuals, we act according to our conscience.

We avoid taking part in particular causes or engaging in
public controversies because these might alienate from
Contemplative Outreach persons committed to one side
or the other. Our purpose is to make Centering Prayer
available to everyone without taking sides. As private
individuals, we act according to our conscience.

10. We maintain a spiritual relationship with St. Benedict’s
Monastery in Snowmass, CO.

Saint Benedict’s Monastery in Snowmass, Colorado is our
spiritual home and a place of retreat and renewal where
new insights for our spiritual journey may be revealed.
We embrace the process of transformation in Christ, both in ourselves and in others, through the practice of Centering Prayer.

Theological Principles with Commentary

1. Contemplative Outreach is a network of communities and individuals seeking the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit and to contribute to the renewal of the Christian contemplative tradition through the practice of Centering Prayer.

2. A commitment to the practice of Centering Prayer is the primary expression of belonging. The daily practice of Centering Prayer is the essence of belonging to the community.

3. The theological foundation of Centering Prayer is the Divine Presence in every member of the human family. The presence of the Divine in us is the permanent self-giving of God to every human person. The Word of God and Source of all creation sustains everything that exists and relates to each human being in a personal way. The primary call of the Spirit is to consent to this intimate relationship.

4. Consenting to the Divine Presence and action within us is the heart and soul of Centering Prayer. To respond to the call of the Spirit is to consent to God’s presence and action within us and to the transformative process initiated by the Spirit, which enables us to participate in the divine nature and to become one family in Christ.

5. The indwelling Divine Presence affirms our innate core of goodness and is expressed fully in the theology of the Most Holy Trinity.

6. The Divine action is the healing process of transformation in Christ, enabling us to experience an ever-deepening intimacy with God and the practical caring for others that flows from this relationship.

7. The conceptual background of Centering Prayer grounds and supports the growing silence and stillness of contemplation. In order to be well-grounded in the conceptual background of Centering Prayer, we urge beginners to view the Spiritual Journey videos and to study Open Mind, Open Heart, Invitation to Love, and Intimacy with God. These are a summary of the Christian contemplative tradition in dialogue with contemporary psychology and the wisdom teachings of other religions. The method of Centering Prayer is drawn from The Cloud of Unknowing by an anonymous fourteenth century English writer.

8. Listening to the word of God through the practice of Lectio Divina is encouraged, particularly its movement into contemplation which the daily practice of Centering Prayer facilitates. The classical term for reflection on scripture and other sacred texts is Lectio Divina. Practicing Lectio Divina through the exercise of the faculties - reading, reflecting, and responding that leads to resting in God - serves to balance the letting go of deliberate thinking during the periods of Centering Prayer.

9. We believe that the Christian contemplative tradition and its expression in service is the common ground for Christian unity.

10. While formed by our respective denominations, we are bonded through the experience of Christ in Centering Prayer and in daily life. Centering Prayer transcends denominational differences, bonding us in silence through our growing experience of union with Christ.

11. We affirm our solidarity with the contemplative dimension of other religions and sacred traditions. United in our common search for God, we respect and honor other religions and sacred traditions and those committed to them. We engage in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and work together in areas of social justice, ecological concerns, and contemplative initiatives.

12. The practice of Centering Prayer deepens our awareness of the oneness of all creation and our compassion for the whole human family.

13. Following the teaching of Jesus, we endeavor to exercise leadership in a spirit of service, utmost charity, and unity. Leadership is a necessary function of the human condition and of society. Following Jesus’ example and teaching, we aspire to exercise leadership as a way of serving, of taking the lowest place, and of living ordinary life with extraordinary love. Ummah charity is more than ordinary charity. It is to love one another as Jesus has loved us, that is, with all our faults, limitations, and at times outrageous behavior. It is to forgive completely and from the heart everything and everyone, including ourselves. This is the path to unity.

14. The good accomplished through Contemplative Outreach is the gift of the Holy Spirit. To cooperate with grace is to co-create and co-redem the world with Christ from its beginning to its consummation. At the same time, divine transformation is the gratuitous gift of the Holy Spirit and the Source of all the good that God may accomplish through us.