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

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.

   *The fundamental purpose of Centering Prayer and of Contemplative Outreach is to further the knowledge and experience of God's love in the consciousness of the human family. Contemplative Outreach provides basic instruction in Centering Prayer and additional programs to sustain the development in contemplation and the process of transformation.*

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.

   *The Divine Indwelling communicates with us in two ways. First, it reminds us of our creation out of nothing in the image and likeness of God. This belief affirms our basic core of goodness that flows from the gift of life. Second, it heals the wounds of our human nature springing from primitive stages of consciousness. Our instinctual needs have not yet been fully integrated into our evolving state of rational consciousness with its capacity for abstract thinking, free choice, and compassion for others. Spiritual evolution is the healing process of divine transformation through the intimacy established in prayer and in following the example and teaching of Jesus in our daily life.*

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.

   *The healing process of transformation involves the purification of our false-self and egoic motivation based on the instinctual needs of early childhood and the influence of cultural conditioning. Purification is the progressive liberation from the dominance of the conscious and unconscious motives of the ego and the false self. It takes place through the infusion of divine love, which is essential to the healing process. Purification leads to the interior freedom to love, through genuine self-knowledge and the activation of the Fruits and Gifts of the Spirit.*

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.

   *Christian contemplation is rooted in scripture and the principal mystics of the Christian tradition. Our contemplative heritage unites the members of the Christian denominations who share the same Baptism, faith in the living Christ, and trust in God.*

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.

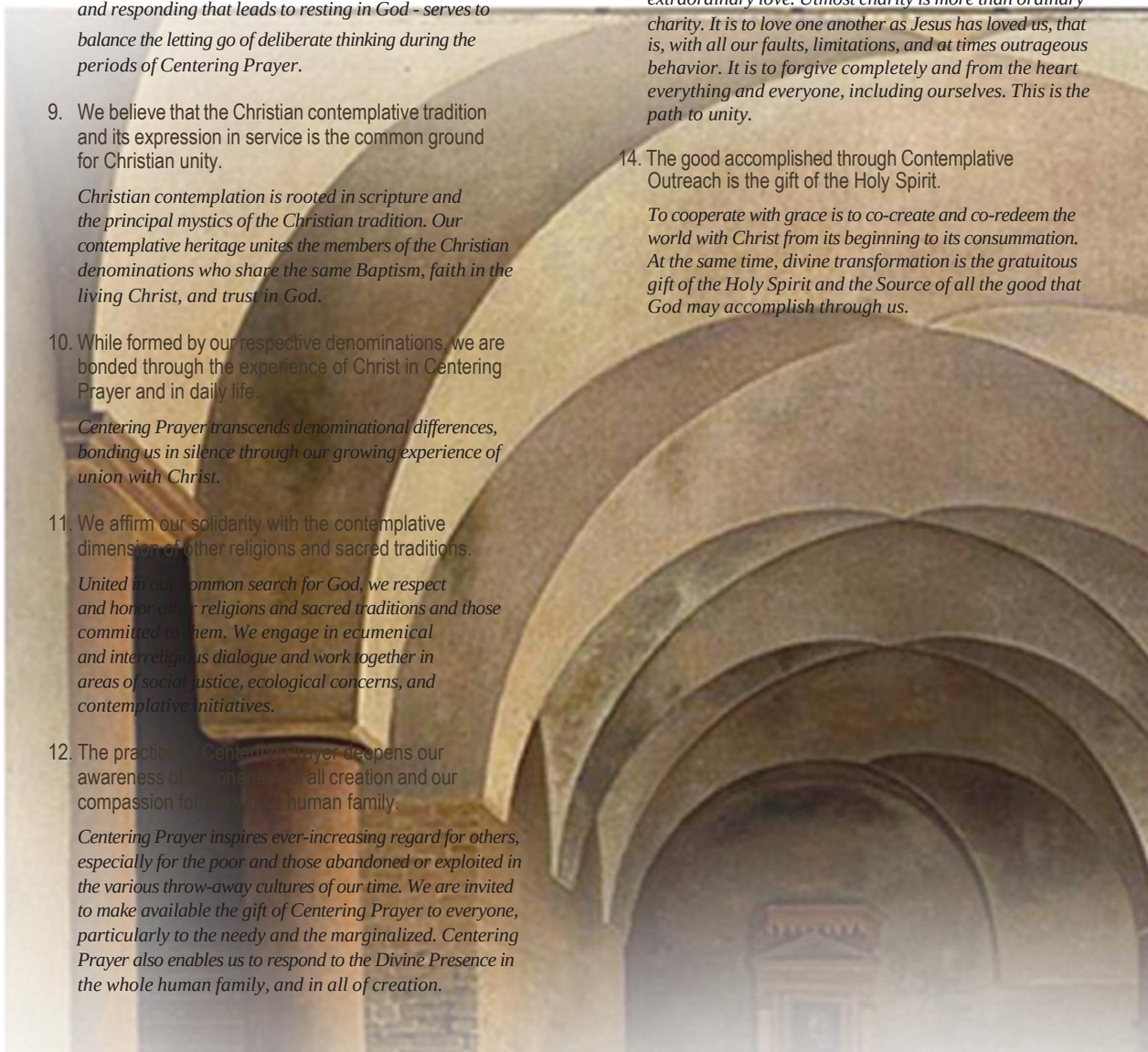
    *Centering Prayer inspires ever-increasing regard for others, especially for the poor and those abandoned or exploited in the various throw-away cultures of our time. We are invited to make available the gift of Centering Prayer to everyone, particularly to the needy and the marginalized. Centering Prayer also enables us to respond to the Divine Presence in the whole human family, and in all of creation.*

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. Utmost 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-redeem 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.*



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.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-6

## Guidelines for Contemplative Outreach Service with Commentary

1. Contemplative Outreach is an evolving community with an expanding vision and deepening practice of Centering Prayer, that serves the changing needs of Christian contemplatives.

   *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 contemplative vision as widely as possible.*

2. The integrity of the teaching of the method of Centering Prayer is contained in the Four Guidelines and their conceptual background as described in the Method of Centering Prayer brochure.

   *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 the living memory of Saint Benedict's monastery in Snowmass, Colorado, USA.

    *For many years, Saint Benedict's served as a spiritual; home and place of retreat for many. It was the home of Father Thomas Keating, whose presence, guidance, and teachings served to nurture the birth and Vision of Contemplative Outreach. Its contemplative spirit is a legacy that continues to inspire and live in the hearts of all who practice Centering prayer.*

Contemplative Outreach

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*Use the free Centering Prayer mobile app timer to support your daily prayer practice.*

*The app is available for iOS and Android mobile devices and is also available in Spanish-language versions.*

Centering Prayer

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# THE VISION OF CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH

By Thomas Keating

THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES
GUIDELINES FOR SERVICE
COMMENTARIES

Contemplative Outreach