



The Anchorage:
A Contemplative Community for All

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Come away...

October, 2016

Dear Friends of The Anchorage,

In June my wife, Chamlee and I traveled to Ireland for our 20th wedding anniversary. We began planning our trip months in advance and we made the decision that we would use Airbnb for our lodging throughout the trip. When you use Airbnb you have the opportunity to choose to stay in the home with the host during the visit. On part of our trip to the western coast of Ireland we stayed with Brigid on her sheep farm. Brigid grew up in the house and was the third generation of sheep farmers to live on that piece of land. Her family had lived in that part of Ireland for eight generations so she knew the area and the history of the land.

During our stay with Brigid she invited us to meet her flock of sheep. So after we finished our traditional Irish breakfast we put on our jackets and followed Brigid through the gate and into the pasture. The flock was scattered on the green hillside. When Brigid called out for Millie a lone sheep came running toward us. Brigid explained to us that this was her pet sheep which she had raised from a lamb. Millie allowed us to pet her and ate some food from our hands while some other sheep cautiously made their way toward us.

In John 10, Jesus tells the disciples a story about a shepherd and his sheep. In the story he describes how the sheep recognize the voice of the shepherd and follow him out of the pen. The text says, "When the shepherd has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them and the sheep follow him because they know his voice" (John 10:4). The sheep know the shepherd's voice because they are in the presence of the shepherd. It is the same with us and our relationship to the good shepherd. We can only recognize the voice of the good shepherd if we spend time listening to him.

The Anchorage is a "Contemplative Community for All." Through programs like the desert days and the annual beach retreat we provide a space where Christians can spend time with the Good Shepherd listening to his voice.

As a recipient of Depth Soundings, you are an important partner in the ministry of The Anchorage not just by reading this newsletter, but through your own practice of the contemplative way of life, your participation in The Anchorage events, your prayers for the ministry of The Anchorage, your assistance in sharing about the Anchorage with your circle of friends who might be kindred spirits, and your financial support as well. Please prayerfully consider what you might be able to give or pledge to support The Anchorage because God is changing lives through this contemplative community open to all.

Reverend Jason Loscuito
Participant, Pledger, Servant Leader Chair
The Anchorage: A Contemplative Community for All

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- Jason Loscuito, Chair
Baptist
- Juan Ortiz
Grace (non-denom.)
- Starla Revels
Episcopalian
- Angela Sudermann
Baptist
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- Glenn Hinson
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- Merwyn Johnson
Presbyterian
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Lutheran
- Kent Satterfield
Episcopalian



“Centering Prayer – in Community”

By Judy Lineback

As many of Depth Soundings’ readers know, Centering Prayer is a way of praying that involves spending time with God in silence. Its founders recommend practicing it twenty minutes twice a day, to develop a deeper relationship with God in that silence. It is an individual prayer practice, yet many find that participation in a weekly Centering Prayer group helps reinforce and strengthen their individual practices. We learn more about this type of prayer through reading books and articles about it and talking about that content in the group. We also deepen our understandings of this silent prayer by sharing our experiences with it at home – whether we’ve had particular struggles with keeping our practices regular or have found new spiritual comfort arising from the silence. A kind of accountability to the group is a motivation for some of us, including me. Though we don’t report how often we practiced at home that week, I know I am a better participant in the group when my own practice at home is more regular.

Yet far more important in the long run is the sense of community that develops in these groups. It transcends the more usual types of relationships found in other types of groups that meet regularly. In many Centering Prayer groups, members do not all belong to the same church, may not have known each other before coming to the group, and may not share much personal information about themselves. Still, we come to feel close to those we sit in silence with every week, despite knowing little about their jobs, marital or parental status, or church affiliation. There is a mysterious energy that comes from sitting together in this way that is palpable, whether or not it is ever acknowledged aloud. I come to feel connected to those in the circle in much the same way I feel connected to God in the silence. A longtime Centering Prayer practitioner says this:

“Sitting together is a simple act when we can experience the presence of God in a mystical way – beyond words and emotions, especially in silence. Two or three who meet together share, without saying a word, the most intimate part of their lives. The God within each moves from person to person, and the room is filled with the Spirit. The self, often bolstered to be a commendable image to others, is for the moment forgotten. The only intention, the only agenda, is to be present for God. We take off our disguises, even if it makes us feel naked and vulnerable. We then welcome the presence that is already within us.”¹

The mystical sense of God’s presence that arises in these groups calls to mind the prayer of Jesus for his disciples in John 17:21-23, during their last meal together before his crucifixion, in which he focuses on his desire for their continued unity with each other and with their God, invoking a community that would live on after him. He prays to God

“...that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one as we are one, I in them and you in me...”

Sustaining bonds are formed among us as we sit together in community week after week, bonds that come out of that unity with the God within us all and with those who seek an ever deeper knowledge of the Other who is present with us all in the silence.

(Thanks to Judy for this article and for her support of The Anchorage for many years. She is a member of Christ Church Episcopal in Greenville, SC, a facilitator of a weekly Centering Prayer group that meets there, and Coordinator of Contemplative Outreach of Greater Greenville, coordinating activities of several such groups in the area.)

¹ The Rev. Geoffrey Butcher, Contemplative Outreach of Middle Tennessee newsletter, Spring 2016