



CONTEMPLATIVE OUTREACH ONTARIO

SILENCE SOLITUDE SOLIDARITY SERVICE

OUR NEWSLETTER



SUMMER 2015 - N°4

A word from the Editor

On Christmas Eve 2014, just a few days after I met with Carolyn Gratton to discuss my editorial (as I have always done since I took over the publication of *Our Newsletter* two years ago), Carolyn was gone. The news spread like a wild fire: Carolyn had left us in her sleep for a better place. We were shocked when we heard the news. Nobody was ready for this since quite a few of us had had the opportunity to see her only a few days or weeks earlier. Nothing had prepared us for a sudden departure, and we are still struggling with the realization that she is no longer with us.

As I said in my last editorial, “without her, there would have been no seeds sown.” Therefore, we owe it to her to continue her pioneer and pivotal work. For now, nobody “replaces” Carolyn; it is way too soon as she was utterly multitalented and so gifted, but we shall try and fill a wee bit of her very big shoes and do our utmost to take up the torch. We count on her to help us. What a coincidence to have, in this issue, the story of the very first group. How it all began...

Actually, to pursue Carolyn’s vision, we now count four new groups in Ontario. And, in May 2016, we shall mark twenty years of Contemplative Outreach in Ontario. Come, come, come, to celebrate together, in Niagara Falls.

Last but not least, as you have waited so long for that, our website will soon be

operational thanks to Michael Crabtree, Lourdes’ husband. Many thanks for your patience. In the meantime, check the few corrections and new groups on page 6.

May you have a safe and lovely Summer!

Marie-Noëlle Maillard
logos302@sympatico.ca

Theological Principles

Our relationship with the living Christ is the bond uniting us together in mutual love. (Principle 8)

While formed by our respective denominations, we are united in our common search for God and our experience of Christ through Centering Prayer. (Principle 9)

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Upcoming Events

Double Track Servant Leadership Formation Conference
Sunday, July 26-Saturday, August 1, 2015
Marianist Center, Eureka, MO (just southwest of St. Louis)

* Chapter Servant Leader Formation – Learn the nuts and bolts of chapter leadership

* Centering Prayer Group Facilitator Formation – Learn the nuts and bolts of facilitating a Centering Prayer Group

For further information, contact Susan Komis: SusanKomis@coutreach.org

20th Anniversary COO Conference
Friday, May 27 to Sunday, May 29, 2016
Theme: Second Wind / *Deuxième souffle*

Place: Spiritual Centre, Niagara Falls, ON.
Mark your calendars!

Details will follow in the fullness of time.

Regional Spotlights

SOUTHWESTERN

Greeting from the great Southwest! We have been pleased and feel blessed with the way things have been going here.

Our Retreat was held at the Oxley Retreat Centre May 1-3. The retreat centre is located on a relatively high bluff overlooking Lake Erie. The facility offers many places for quiet meditation. There are stairs going down to the beach and there are benches on landings as one descends for rest or a quiet place to be alone. Our weekend was well attended with 24 people, with three from Detroit,

and two from Chatham. The rest were from our Windsor and Essex County groups. The weather couldn't have been better and the well-groomed grounds added to the experience. We had the entire place to ourselves and this added to the atmosphere of our silent retreat. The *Lectio Divina* was done with the monastic method and this also helped to emphasize the mood. Fr. Joe Quinn, CSB, celebrated in a contemplative spirit and sent everyone home refreshed and renewed. It was truly a Grace filled weekend.

Fr. Joe, who always is able to draw much insight and inspiration for the attendees from his own spiritual well also lead our Advent Reflection/Enrichment Day on November 29, 2014 that was held at the Church of the Ascension in Windsor with some 25 people in attendance.

Our Contemplative Outreach World Day of Prayer in March 2015 had as its theme - *The Mystery of God* - and was inspired by the video *Gift of Life: Death & Dying, Life & Living Series*.

Our Service Team has become aware of the need to encourage new people to step forward into a leadership role and for a while has been urging new people to step forward and to assume some of the roles of the long time members. Debbie Wilson-Safa, who has recently completed Part I of her training as Facilitator Trainer, and Jeannie Garinger led the sessions. They had a different approach with the two spelling off each other. The faith sharing about the impact of scientific on Jeannie's spiritual development was fascinating and gripping. The thirty people who attended left with some new ideas. One of the things that we have become aware of, is that as our group of repeat attendees has become more comfortable with each other, the sharing has become easier and more forthcoming. It was a very good day.

The Facilitators of this area continue to meet twice a year in Chatham. There will be a group of approximately 6 new facilitators who are looking forward to

begin their training this fall with Debbie Wilson-Safa after she completes Part II of her preparation this summer.

The Service Team continues to meet twice a year as well. We have moved our meeting location from Windsor to Chatham (more central location) as we now have representation on the Service Team from Goderich. At our Facilitators' meeting in April 2015, Marie-Noëlle Maillard, from Contemplative Outreach Ontario (COO), joined our meeting and gave us an update of the plans in the Central region and for the Ontario Conference in May 2016. She also spoke of the need of and her commitment to the COO Newsletter. The group thanked her for her effort and for travelling to visit with us in a very pleasant and informative exchange.

A concluding note: Member of the Service Team, The Rev. Kevin Steeper, has moved from London to accept a new posting in Goderich. With the enthusiasm he has shown contemplative meditation we expect that before too long he will form a group there. Jan Evans, spiritual director, has assumed the role of Facilitator in the London group. She attended our Facilitators' meeting in April where we were happy to meet her and welcome her as a member of our Facilitators' group.

Respectfully submitted by Fred Eldridge

CENTRAL ONTARIO

On Saturday, March 21, 2015, we hold, as every year, a day of prayer: United in Prayer, United in Silence in St. Michael's Parish Hall, with a mass in memory of Carolyn. The theme was *The Mystery of God* found in the video *Gift of Life: Death & Dying, Life & Living Series*.

On 23 May 2015 there was a second Day of Ecumenical Prayer, entitled "Voices of Silence" at St. John's Anglican Church, York Mills, Toronto. Contemplative Fire, Sisters of St. John the Divine and Contemplative Outreach Central Ontario,

sponsored the event. Peter Donovan and Peter Catt represented the Central Ontario region. Some forty attendees from the GTA prayed together, participated in prayer practices of different traditions, and shared their own stories of contemplative prayer. All agreed to try to hold another such day in the late fall of 2015.

Upcoming Events

Annual Summer Potluck Dinner, Saturday, August 15, 2015, from 5:30 p.m. As last year, Marie-Noëlle Maillard will host this tradition in her home, 302 Pacific Avenue, Toronto, 416 769-6278 (logos302@sympatico.ca). Details on how to participate are being circulated separately. Or just call or send an email.

Facilitators' Day, Saturday, Oct. 3, 2015 - Henry Carr Farm, 9th Line, Beeton, ON

For some time, we have been saddened by the absence of facilitators who live outside the city and find joining us for different events difficult.

So, this Fall, we are moving the gathering about one hour's drive north of Toronto. We have booked a lovely site - **Henry Carr Farm**, owned and operated by the Basilian Fathers. Four retired priests currently live there. For years, they hosted day retreats for young people. Daily Office and Mass are offered in their chapel. All are welcome. A large dining area accommodates meals for gatherings. The grounds are beautiful and peaceful. It promises to be a day of renewed fellowship and spiritual refreshment.

We will be organizing help with transportation from the city. All facilitators and interested group members are invited. The purpose is to support and renew the Centering Prayer Community in the Near North.

Details will follow later in the Summer.

Retreats at Bethany Retreat Center Frenchville, Pennsylvania, USA

Again this year, as COCO will not host any retreats at least until after the spring celebration of 20 years of Contemplative Outreach Ontario in May 2016. Do not hesitate to visit the Bethany Retreat Center website at www.bethanyretreatcenter.org.

Below are the name and dates of some retreats that may be of interest to you. Please go to the Bethany website for further details.

8-Day Post-Intensive Contemplative Prayer Retreat

August 2-9, 2015 (Sunday to Sunday)

“The Enneagram as a tool for Christian Transformation”

October 22-25, 2015 (Thursday to Sunday)

Formation for Contemplative Outreach Service

Including Presenter's Training
Dates to be announced.

8-Day Intensive Contemplative Prayer Retreat

Dates to be announced.

The Story of the Toronto “Monday Group” – Where it all started...

I have been asked to tell the story of the Monday night Centering Prayer group, how it started, evolved and where it is now. Everything flowed from the Monday nights at Carolyn's apartment. It is where Centering Prayer began in Toronto and from where it expanded out into other parts of the city and province.

Contemplative Outreach Ontario (COO) started out as a planning group for Monday nights, enlarging to organize the 20th Annual International Contemplative Outreach Conference in Toronto in 2004 and then transforming itself again into a

Steering Committee playing a dual role as support to the province and to the region then known as the Golden Horseshoe (now the Central Ontario region).

So, here is an abbreviated history of the Monday night Centering Prayer group.

How it started*

When Carolyn was a professor at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, she attended part of a two- or three-day course Father Thomas Keating was giving there on contemplative prayer. “By chance” she was corralled into driving him to the airport that resulted in Father Thomas inviting her to a retreat at Snowmass. She followed this up by taking a presenter's course in New York, again suggested by Father Thomas. According to Carolyn's longtime friend, Beverley Scorrano, this encounter with Father Keating was as pivotal a moment in her life as her decision to be a part of the Grail movement.

Now it is 1993 and Carolyn is retired from teaching and is back in Toronto thinking about how she might establish herself in the city. She receives a telephone call from a lapsed Italian Catholic who got her name from Father Thomas. He is interested in forming a Buddhist prayer group. Could Carolyn be of help? She puts him in touch with a woman also interested in a Buddhist prayer group and the two of them have a couple of meetings at the apartment, plan an agenda and settle on Monday nights from 7 to 9 p.m. Carolyn says she will provide tea and cookies, but she will not lead the group because she isn't a Buddhist. Monday night arrives, six people come, but no leaders show up. They never do.

So, in the absence of their leaders, the group decides to observe a time of silence. More meetings are held, other former Christian-become-Buddhists come, the true-blue Buddhists drop out, friends of Carolyn's friend Anne Tanner join, Grail members too. What started out as a Buddhist prayer group is now a Centering Prayer one. The format of the agenda

remains the same, but now there are readings from Open Mind, Open Heart with 20 minutes of silent prayer and then tea and cookies.

*This history is taken from an interview Paul Fleming had with Carolyn in 2012.

The evolution of Monday nights

Through a small invitation ad in *The Catholic Register* and by word of mouth the group expanded with often upwards of 20–30 people in attendance. By this time The Spiritual Journey series was available, so the format changed to 20 minutes of prayer followed by a tape for 30 minutes. When all 28 tapes were viewed, they started all over again. Gradually, periods of *Lectio Divina*, double centering and other tapes and books were introduced into the evenings. One rule never changed though – “everyone out of the pool” at 9:00 p.m. sharp.

After the International Conference in 2004, Carolyn encouraged members to start groups in other geographical areas of the city. Some took up the challenge and other Centering Prayer groups popped up around Toronto.

In and around 2009, the management of the apartment building started to receive complaints (too many people using the elevators on Monday night!). Carolyn was told to stop holding meetings or risk eviction. She complied and Monday nights eventually found a new space at St. Leonard’s Anglican Church. Some missed the warm, homey atmosphere of Carolyn’s apartment, but most soon adjusted to the comforts of the Canon Dyke Room at the church. At first the group continued to be large and open, welcoming many new people who wanted to try Centering Prayer. People came and people left. Gradually though numbers dwindled to about 10 regular people.

The Monday night group now

We still meet and we still follow the basic format established at the very beginning. Even after her two strokes, when she had recovered sufficiently, Carolyn continued

to come on Monday nights (thanks to Mary Alice O’Connor-Hayes who drove her). She was a powerful presence in spite of the limitations resulting from her strokes. Now that she is gone, there is a gap, a space that will never be replaced. The group carries on though, grounded in the practice and in the bonds that have united us all these many years.

“We wait patiently; in silence, openness, and quiet attentiveness; motionless within and without. We surrender to the attraction to be still, to be loved, just to be.”

Fr. Thomas Keating

Submitted by Judy Wootten, Toronto

EASTERN

Contemplative Outreach of Eastern Ontario has had a busy season with its ongoing “Pilgrim’s Way” days. These Enrichment days are organized around a theme or practice associated with Contemplative Outreach. This past year we offered Welcoming Prayer, Forgiveness Practice, *Lectio Divina* and a day called “Living in the Gap” – a contemplative approach to suffering and disparity in the world. We had a wonderful 4-day silent retreat in Arnprior, our seventh annual, this year with Fr. Tom Ward from St. Mary’s Retreat Centre, Sewanee, who led us into the “Indwelling Trinity.”

We continue this upcoming year with the following Pilgrim’s Way events:

October 3: Transformation Sucks: The Human Condition and Centering Prayer
November 28: Social Justice and Contemplative Heart
January 16: Prayering with Icons with Fr. Andriy Chirovsky

There are also two Introductory Workshops currently scheduled for September 26 in Aylmer, QC, and January 23 in Prince Edward County.

This September, from the 18th to the 20th, we are holding a three-day Silent Retreat at Providence Spirituality Centre in Kingston. "Love in Freedom." For more information visit our website:

<http://coeo.community/event-items/love-in-freedom-silent-retreat/>

We will also be holding our annual four-day Lenten Retreat on February 25-28, 2016, in Arnprior.

Our Service Leadership Team has expanded to include a Communications Coordinator, Susan Lewis. We have a new website which can be found at www.coeo.community

As well, we are boasting our Facebook page – "Contemplative Outreach Eastern Ontario" – please LIKE us!

Finally, we have been coordinating visits to our various prayer groups to continue to support this sacred community.

Faithfully,

Gregor Sneddon
Coordinator Eastern Ontario

Corrections and Changes

Jan Evans is the new facilitator for the group in London, ON. She can be reached at (519) 680-0194 or jan171@rogers.com. She replaces Kevin Steeper.

The facilitator of the Newmarket group is Elia (not Lisa) Des Vignes.

Seeds Sown

Brenda Coleman is starting a group in the Niagara Region. She can be reached at bcoleman@bell.net. There will be an introductory workshop on July 25, 2015.

Sue Woollard is starting a group in Brampton. She can be reached at

647 302-8596 (cellphone) or at sue.woollard@rogers.com

Stewart Ball is starting a group in Whitby. He can be reached at 905 244-2590 (cellphone) or 905 556-1151 (home) or at canbaj@rogers.com

Mary Alice O'Connor-Hayes has a group that meets à Alanna Snell's place, in Downtown Toronto. Interested people to join this group can call Mary Alice at 416 493-8521.

Meister Eckhart on Silence and Contemplation

That which a man acquires by contemplation, he should spend in love.

I will be silent and will hear what God will say in me... If God wishes to speak to me, let him enter. I will not go out.

Carolyn Gratton Obituary

Contributed to the Globe and Mail for the Lives Lived column, published on May 12, 2015, by Marian Ronan

Professor, author, spiritual guide, radiant friend. Born March 5, 1930 in Toronto. Died in her sleep in Toronto following several strokes, Christmas Eve, 2014.

Carolyn Gratton, only child of the late Eleanor (Conway) Gratton and James Gratton, grew up in Toronto, graduating with a BA in English and an MS in library science from the University of Toronto. A gorgeous young woman, she might well have spent her life in Toronto as a librarian or a devoted wife and mother.

But in 1953, Carolyn visited Grailville, a farm and conference center near Cincinnati, Ohio and the North American

headquarters of the Grail, an international Catholic laywomen's movement. She attended a summer program there on women's role in society. Carolyn was fascinated by the ideas she encountered at Grailville, and returned in the fall for the Grail's yearlong formation program. By 1956 Carolyn was on the Grail staff, and by the 1960s was resourcing Grail projects and programs all over the U.S. and Canada. Wherever she went, people fell in love with her: her radiant smile and cracker-jack sense of humor, but especially her profound spiritual wisdom, so surprising in a relatively young woman.

To deepen these gifts, Carolyn earned an MA in theoretical anthropology in 1967 and a Ph.D. in phenomenological psychology in 1975. She taught on the faculty of Duquesne University's Institute of Formative Spirituality in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, from 1975 to the early 1990s. During these same years Carolyn impacted spiritual searchers throughout the world, leading contemplative retreats and formation programs in Canada, the U.S, Thailand, the Netherlands, Australia, East Africa, and other places. Even as she resourced these events and discharged her academic duties, Carolyn mentored many individuals, myself included; our lives were never the same again.

In the early 1990s, Carolyn moved back to Toronto. She continued to travel abroad, leading spiritual programs for the Grail and other groups. But her main focus was on the formation of Centering Prayer groups throughout Ontario. At the time of Carolyn's death, and thanks to her passionate leadership, there were forty-five such groups in Ontario.

It would be unfortunate if Carolyn's successes obscured who she truly was: a woman extraordinarily gifted at relating to people of all backgrounds and classes. During a 2005 visit to Oaxaca, Mexico, Carolyn was paired up with Efigenia, a barely literate member of the local indigenous community as part of a village meeting. Efigenia came back from the

conversation glowing with pride, explaining that the two women had discovered they had much in common. They were both catechists (something like a Sunday school teacher).

Carolyn had not mentioned that she held a doctorate, or was a noted professor and author. Instead, she focused on what she and Efigenia had in common, the work of spiritual outreach. This was the woman whose death elicited messages and memories from individuals across North America and around the world.

Carolyn, we will never forget you.

Marian Ronan had been in conversation with Carolyn Gratton since 1967.

*

Wherever you are in Ontario, if you want to share something with other members of COO, such as a reading or a book, or contribute to *Our Newsletter* in any way, please contact the editor. Many thanks. Merci beaucoup.

This newsletter is being sent to all facilitators. Facilitators, please forward this newsletter, in turn, to all members of your groups. Group members, please feel free to forward it to interested friends. If for any reason you wish to receive future newsletters directly, please contact the editor. Conversely, if you don't want to receive them anymore, please advise the editor.