

Tend Your Awakening Heart with Us.



Awakening Hearts Cultivating Wisdom Revealing the Sacred

October 2020

Words from our Director...On Contemplative Dialogue

([click here](#) to view a chart that situates Contemplative Dialogue in a larger framework)



Opening to Others is the second movement of contemplative dialogue. It is related to one of the [Five Ordinary Movements](#), Back and Forth. To be open is to gain a sense of another in relation to oneself, to recognize one's place in the universe as one of many fragments that contribute to the Whole. Openness addresses big questions such as, who is my neighbor? What are the many places in the world that those who differ from me occupy? How can I create space for others and vice versa? In the work of life-span development, opening to others has to do with allowing others to shape one's identity, acknowledging diverse people in a community, realizing that oneself is not the center of the universe, connecting to the Other.

Spiritually, Opening to Others, is marked by mirroring experiences, i.e. seeing oneself in the other/allowing oneself to be seen, and often involves "stepping on others' toes." The dance is usually clumsy and messy, and the pain of getting one's toes stepped on is part of the intensity of this movement, as compared to the more gentle Ups and Downs. However, the struggle brings fruits of expansion, both widening and deepening our perception and receptivity.

The spiritual life is full of opportunities for Opening to Others. *Hospitality* is a spiritual habit related to opening. In order to practice hospitality, we first draw from our personal preparations in grounding and then prepare a space to welcome others in openness. Hospitality requires two things: first, that we allow our guest to come fully as they are and second, that we allow the wholeness of our guest to actually impact us, especially in our needs for healing and wholeness. *Suppleness* is a contemplative posture that supports opening. Openness asks us to make space and be willing to concede it to the needs of others. When we go with the flow, when we learn to shift our attention in tune with the moment, when we balance our heads and hearts, we are better equipped to adjust to the constant brushing up of our own spaces against and within others' spaces. We can welcome the guest as both stranger and friend.

When we are open, we "show up" with our capacity of perception and draw from our grounded awareness in our three centers, which include the mind, the heart, and the senses. When we are open, we invite the Other to "show up;" we meet them where they are and receive information from the Other through our three centers. A simple exercise in suppleness to support opening is to shift our attention from self to the Other and from one center to another. Such practice in shifting attention allows us to widen our perception. (see the video exercise below)

The Back and Forth movement is a complex factor in our ongoing journey toward openness. Opening to Others is marked by an intensification of what Thomas Kelly refers to as alternation. Alternation has to do with our sense of experiencing two-ness, sometimes felt as more gentle Ups and Downs, and at other times felt more intensely as the tension of opposites in the Back and Forth movement. The tension of opposites can be a help as well as a hindrance. For example, to experience cold allows one to more fully know what hot is; the dance between the two allows for a fuller knowing of each experience. However, the tension of opposites becomes a hindrance when we remain in one side of the tension for too long, when we get stuck, effectively cancelling the tension. When ideas or groups of people remain in one pole or the other, disdain for difference, and even hate of others likely emerges. To avoid this, we often need to allow a small "dying of self" before we can saunter along again in the other direction on the path of tension in opposites.

The level of personal beliefs and interpersonal interactions are the two largest arenas in which we have ample opportunity

to practice living into the Back and Forth movement found in the tension of the opposites. Practically, and given the current political propensity toward division and fragmentation in the U.S., I recommend the following exercise of imagination, especially for well-meaning folks who feel at a loss for "how to understand the Other on the other side." It is rather simple. When engaged in an actual conversation with someone who markedly differs from you, imagine yourself offering them a hand-held mirror. Imagine asking them to hold it in front of them at the heart-level as they speak, so that you can gaze at yourself from their heart while they speak. From this posture, using this two-way lens of perception, try to hold both sides of the conversation (words, feelings, assumptions, actions) alternately, and undulating back and forth, see if you can arrive at eventually holding simultaneity, i.e. the two sides together at once.

Specific practices to support opening include: [lectio divina](#) ([click here](#) for an introductory video), small group experiences, performative worship or movement, making meals for others, and sharing deeply with others, to name just a few.

Reflection questions for Opening to Others:

- What political topics, groups of people, or religious/spiritual beliefs are likely to invoke my passion or trigger me?
- Where might I find a safe space to deeply encounter others who are different from me?
- How do I really feel about people whom I simply can't understand? What do I do with that feeling?

A chant to support Opening to Others: [Let Love In](#)

An exercise to practice Opening to Others: [An Exercise in Suppleness](#)

I invite you to offer your attention to Opening to Others over the next few weeks. Find a friend or small group and be intentional together about Openness to Others.

Christine Lena Munger

Director, Episcopal House of Prayer, Collegeville, Minnesota, USA



Pray with Us.

The Episcopal House of Prayer now hosts its weekly Wednesday night sit in Collegeville online, via zoom. Join us for all, or a part, of the session.

5-5:15 p.m.–time for tech and social connection

5:15-5:30–short teaching

5:30-6:30–formal sitting period

To join, [simply click here](#) or use this Meeting ID: 644 263 888

Join Us.

Contemplation with Art, Poetry and Music: A Hybrid Online/On-your-own Retreat Experience

Offered by Susan Stabile

Three pre-recorded sessions given **October 9, 14, 19** (view on your own in-between days)
Concluding online small group session **9:30 am-12 noon, Saturday, October 24**

While on virtual personal retreat, we will explore the use of visual art, poetry and music in our contemplative practice, considering both existing works and creating our own. Susan will offer three pre-recorded video sessions with teaching and guided meditations. While you can engage the videos on your own time and in the comfort of your own space, we will gather for an online simultaneous group meeting at the end of the three sessions in order to share insights with one another and hear questions and answers with Susan.

Words from our teacher...

We are intellectual beings and we love to use our minds. But underlying all religious traditions is an understanding that conversion is an experience of the heart, not an experience of the mind, an understanding that leads to an emphasis on the affective experience in prayer. That helps explain why we find music, art and poetry used in all prayer traditions. As long as humans have existed, they have turned to arts to express the inexpressible. Art and music are not simply objects, but an experience of opening to mystical awareness.



Susan Stabile is a Christian who spent many years practicing Buddhism. She is a spiritual director and retreat leader trained in the Ignatian tradition yet is at home with spiritual practices outside of that tradition. The author of the book, *Growing in Love and Wisdom: Tibetan Buddhist Sources for Christian Meditation* (OUP 2013) and of the blog, *Creo en Dios*, Susan is a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the University of St. Thomas School of Law. Susan regularly offers talks and retreats on spirituality.

[Register](#)

[Holy Wisdom, Mother of God](#)

Offered by The Rev. Matthew Wright

Zoom sessions:

Friday, November 20: Evening Session, 6:30-8:00

Saturday, November 21: Morning Session, 10:00-11:30 and Afternoon Session 2:00-3:30

Join us for a Friday evening and Saturday Zoom retreat as we prepare for the season of Advent. We'll be exploring devotion to the Divine Feminine in the Jewish and Christian traditions, particularly under the guises of Sophia, or Holy Wisdom, and Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Drawing on the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins, the mysticism of Thomas Merton, Holy Scripture, and the writings of early saints, we'll discover Mary as a face of fierce compassion and as the God-birthing dimension of our own souls.



[Rev. Matthew Wright is an Episcopal priest, writer, and retreat leader working to renew the Christian Wisdom tradition in a wider interspiritual context. He serves as priest-in-charge at St. Gregory's Episcopal Church in Woodstock, NY and is a teacher for Northeast Wisdom and The Contemplative Society, nonprofits rooted in the teaching lineage of Cynthia Bourgeault. Matthew is also a decade-long student of the Mevlevi Sufi tradition under the guidance of Shaikh Kabir and Camille Helminski. He lives with his wife, Yanick, alongside the brothers of Holy Cross Monastery in West Park, NY.](#)

[Register](#)

EHoP Short Sessions

[Mystic-a-Month series](#)

[Prayer series](#)

EHoP Circles

[Small Group Spiritual Direction](#)

[Small Group *Lectio Divina*](#)

[Small Group Book Discussions](#)

Be Grateful with Us.

In late August, EHoP sent out an [update letter](#) informing folks about how we are doing in these unprecedented times. As part of that update, we included an appeal for your financial support and a [brief](#) on our programming pivot. We are pleased to share that your generosity has reached over \$12,280 through September. You are welcome to continue giving of your time and treasure for our fall appeal. If you are interested in volunteering with fall chores and clean-up, please contact House Manager, Patricia Benson at houseprayer@csbsju.edu. Also, please remember that participating in our retreats and events is one way to support us that lies at the core of our mission and vision!

Donate

Be safe with Us.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Episcopal House of Prayer continues to assess when we will open the House again and gather our community in person. In August, the Executive Committee updated the following:

- At the end of August, EHoP welcomed a cohort of the Benedictine Volunteer Corps into our space. The young men, who each offer a year of service to the broader community, will call EHoP home as they pray, live in community, and serve others. Welcome BVC!
- Retreats for the entirety of 2020 will not take place onsite; alternatively, an online option will be available.
- [Monday weekly contemplative sits](#) (Minneapolis) are held in outdoors locations.
- [Thursday weekly contemplative sits](#) (Saint Paul) are determined on a weekly basis.
- Monday night ChiKung in Collegeville continues as an outdoor activity. Through October, sessions depend on weather. Teacher Gary Barrett will announce on Sundays whether the group gathers each week.
 - Common guidelines for outdoor gatherings include six-foot distancing, using facemasks, and bringing your own materials.

Practice with Us.

This year, we began to offer "short teachings" on prayer as part of the weekly contemplative sit in Collegeville. These short-teachings engage both new and seasoned practitioners in reflection about contemplative prayer. The session lasts fifteen minutes and includes three parts: 1) a short selection of text on prayer from the tradition, 2) short teaching on the text, 3) questions and opportunity for reflection regarding practice.

As the body of these short-teachings grow, the new teachings will be shared in this section of the newsletter. For a full listing of all the teachings, visit our website and navigate to the [Prayer Teaching Library page](#).

[Contemplation and Order](#) by Brother David Steindl-Rast
[The Faculties and the Heart](#) by Brother David Steindl-Rast

[Sabbath in Time not Space](#) by Abraham Joshua Heschel
[The Sabbath and Presence](#) by Abraham Joshua Heschel

[The Desire for Unceasing Prayer](#) by the anonymous author of The Way of the Pilgrim

Chant with Us.

Chant and sacred song are an important element of our weekly prayer and retreat experiences at the Episcopal House of Prayer. Over the years, a number of beloved and favorite chants have echoed in the oratory, even as new ones are heard for the first time. I invite all members of our community to consider either recording some of your favorite chants and/or listening to them when they are posted in the newsletters.

Thank you to Christine Luna Munger for this month's chant: [Holy One](#)

If you would like to listen to the entire set of chants, visit our website and navigate to the [Chant Library page](#).

Be with Us.

If you are seeking spiritual transformation and tending an awakening heart, we invite you to join us!

All are welcome!

[Visit our website](#)

Vision with Us.

Our Mission is to assist in the ongoing work of discerning God's voice, both within ourselves and in the world; provide guidance in the search for wisdom; teach all forms of contemplative prayer; offer training in the inner work of the spiritual life.

The Vision of the Episcopal House of Prayer is to be a contemplative ministry of spiritual transformation, grounded in the Christian tradition, in the practice of Benedictine hospitality, reaching out and welcoming all.

Support Us.

The Episcopal House of Prayer is a contemplative ministry grounded in the Christian tradition and held within a Benedictine container, with locations in Colleeville, Saint Paul, and Minneapolis, Minnesota. This ministry is dedicated to supporting individuals and groups as they seek to be "formed into Christ" (Galatians 4:19).

[Donate](#)

Connect with Us.

