



CONTEMPLATIVE NETWORK

NEWS & VIEWS

Volume 3 No. 7 | Second Quarter 2023 | Jan Masterson, Editor

FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Lanson Jones

It was a cold, rainy morning in downtown Houston. I was waiting to jump on a horse to represent our downtown Rotary Club in the rodeo parade. Debbie Crowfoot and I were discussing how the Holy Spirit was moving in our lives and transforming our hearts. This led me to share the story of my near death experience (NDE) in high school. It is an event impossible to describe in a few words. The experience made me realize God's love and

how close He is. I shared with Debbie I began praying in silence, letting God speak to my heart. This method of prayer was drawing me closer to God in a way I hadn't felt since my NDE. Debbie told me she recently had a similar conversation with a person who studies the connection between NDEs and centering prayer. She told me I needed to meet Dr. Robert Hesse.

When we are silent enough to listen carefully, I believe the Holy Spirit guides us to whom we need to know and where we need to be. This was one of those moments. Bob and I shared stories of God's miraculous healing touch in our lives and how we have seen centering prayer help others. After our conversation, I was drawn to help the organization. I agreed to join the Board and share the power of centering prayer with those who have the desire to reach deeper by being silent enough to hear God's voice clearly. The last few months I have watched Contemplative Network grow. Witnessing the affect centering prayer has on people's lives has been a joyful blessing and rewarding beyond what mere words can express.

**“Commitment is doing what you said you would do,
after the feeling you said it in has passed.”**

St. Camillus

A CONVERSATION WITH...



Carolyn Rogas

Carolyn Rogas is one of God's special people. She exudes love, kindness and patience everywhere she goes. She walks with God. He listens when she talks. She hears when He responds. I am convinced she has a direct line to the Divine; she doesn't have to wait in the queue to capture His attention.

Carolyn is everyone's friend and spiritual mentor. She listens quietly, advises gently, loves unconditionally. Shortly after I met her, she became my spiritual mentor, even though I didn't realize it in the beginning. After our marathon conversations, my Inner Spirit is nourished, my heart is full of love, my soul is at peace. She is God's gift to me and the world.

Carolyn was a missionary in the interior of Brazil for many years; she speaks fluent Portuguese. Years later, people she met when they were young children stay in touch; a young Brazilian pediatrician who did his postgraduate work at Harvard, is a pen pal. He and so many others she touched continue to thank her for her inspiration, personal attention and love. Many credit her for their success as adults. What a marvelous tribute!

When our chairman began a Centering Prayer group at Eagle's Trace, Carolyn was the first member and soon agreed to be the group's leader. Every week she prepares a short message using scripture, poetry, songs and inspirational readings from diverse sources. She knows each person's story. Their trials, tribulations and triumphs often guide her choice for the theme of the weekly message. Due to Carolyn's leadership, the group has developed a loving, synergistic relationship; it permeates the very air. One of the main reasons those new to Centering Prayer return is because of her devotion to and practice of this form of prayer. She is an example of its comforting, healing effects.

When asked for a comment about her role in Eagle's Trace Centering Prayer group, Carolyn said, "Our group is interfaith. We welcome everyone because we believe all are daughters and sons of God." I am indeed blessed to call Carolyn my friend, my confidant, my spiritual mentor.

This quote captures how Carolyn lives her life.

**"God will use anyone who trusts in Him
and expects to be used by Him,
not because of who you are,
but because of who He is."**

Pastor Rick Warren

A message from our Chairman:

"As you know from our last newsletter, Contemplative Network's spiritual director, Monk Fr. Denis, was in hospice. We now celebrate he was born to eternal life on Sunday, January 22, 2023. It is with sadness we will miss him, but with joy he is now in the eternal embrace of our heavenly Father's infinite love in heaven. We ask you for prayers for him and his prayers for us from his glorious abode."



The Women of Angela House

GAME ON!

By Amber Lewis

I remember like it was yesterday. I arrived at Angela House on Friday, August 20th, 2021. It was game night. What a fortunate stroke of serendipity. Prior to getting to Angela House, every night was game night of the street life I had been existing in for 25 years. That game looked like this: promiscuity, drug addiction, homelessness, illegal activity and repeated incarcerations. The name of this game is insanity and recidivism. There were no get out of jail free cards. I was the biggest winner, or loser, depending on how you look at it. I was completely exhausted by my life. My decision was made. I didn't want to exist like this anymore. I knew what I was doing was not living. I was deluded into thinking drug use was my only problem; I wholeheartedly believed it.

Every day at Angela House begins with morning meditation and every day I repeated "I just don't want to smoke crack anymore." I still do that today, 15 months later. I had to have a complete overhaul and mental shift from my repetitive thinking. I learned about recovery. I knew I needed to change, not just my drug use, but everything I thought I knew. With the help of the staff, each of them instrumental in their own way, I was able to transition into this woman who I am becoming. There was no magic potion. It took the grace of God and

me being honest, open minded and willing.

I suffered a lot of childhood trauma and domestic abuse. I had not ever attempted to deal with the thinking errors these created. I was required to get a sponsor and work the 12 Steps. I participated in spiritual health classes and recovery work. As a result of this program and my tenacity, I have rechanneled my thinking. I am a completely different woman. Today, I am disciplined, I communicate effectively and I am responsible. I have integrity and I practice accountability. Most importantly, I am sober. If love could have healed what was broken inside of me, the love of and for my children would have done it. I needed to love me. Today I'm learning to do just that. I'm very grateful for this program and the opportunity I was afforded to live a new life. Now it is game on!

"Respect yourself enough to walk away from anything that no longer serves you, grows you or makes you happy."

Robert Tew

MESSAGE FROM THE MYSTICS



Dag Hjalmar Agne Carl Hammar skjöld was born in Jönköping, Sweden on July 29, 1905 and died in a mysterious plane crash on September 18, 1961. He was 56 years old. Hammar skjöld father, Hjalmar, was the Prime Minister of Sweden from 1914 to 1917. Dag always considered Upsala Castle his childhood home. He was educated at Katedralskolan and Uppsala University. By 1930, he was awarded Licentiate of Philosophy and Master of

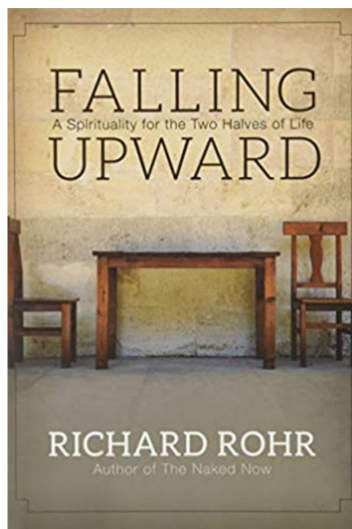
Laws degrees.

Hammaraskjold was an economist and diplomat who, until his death, served for eight years as the second Secretary General of the United Nations. He was well-regarded internationally for his administrative abilities and initiatives to strengthen the organization internally by improving morale and efficiency. His goal was to make the UN more responsive to global issues before they became armed conflicts. Some speculate this may be why he was assassinated; the cause of the plane crash has never been determined. He and his successor, U Thant, are considered the two most effective leaders of the UN. He is the youngest person to serve as Secretary General and the only person to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize posthumously.

Hammaraskjold was Christian by faith and upbringing. He sacrificed his personal social life to public service so suffered from a deep loneliness. He studied Meister Eckhart and other medieval mystics; he also studied the Asian traditions of Buddhism and Taoism. He wrote, "The ultimate experience is the same for all." He felt it necessary to keep his public life separate from his Contemplative practice. His spiritual foundation was revealed in his book, *Markings*. His words provide a picture of what made him the man he was. As he so poignantly said,

**"The longest journey is the journey inwards.
Of him who has chosen his destiny,
Who has started upon his quest for the source of his being."
Dag Hammaraskjold**

A Recommended Read



TITLE:

*Falling Upwards:
A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life*

AUTHOR:

Richard Rohr

PUBLISHER:

Josey-Bass, 2011

REVIEWED BY:

Ann Smith

In his Introduction, Fr. Rohr says that “we are a ‘first half-of-life’ culture; largely concerned about surviving successfully.” *Falling Upward* is about finding God and God finding you. He describes our soul as our inner blueprint. We can return to God and the world by love and service. It’s also about growth and understanding and acceptance of who we are and whose we are.

During the first half of life, we need to feel special to develop an ego. Rohr calls it our “narcissistic fix.” Then we can let go of it and move on. We need to feel secure, successful and content. There will be falls, but you learn how to recover from falls by falling.

Some who did not do well in the first half had not experienced unconditional love. The love received was love with conditions and expectations. Many have no relationship skills and no inner discipline. Successful relationships lead to healthy, positive attitudes for the second half.

In the second half of life, we learn to hear what Rohr calls “the deep voice of God.” We are drawn more by our soul than by our ego. If we’ve done the first half well, we can appreciate where we are and who we are without having to prove anything.

Rohr believes we have an inner drive to look for our “True Self.” There is a restlessness in the second half to go for the risks and promises in order to fill the God-size hole in each of us. God is found in the depth of everything - our fallings and failings.

In the chapter called *A Second Simplicity*, he candidly talks about his faith journey. He takes us from his happy childhood in Kansas, his conservative education, his speaking engagements that took him all over the world and nurtured his expanding viewpoint. “God always became bigger and led me to bigger places.”

Rohr talks about his faith in ways that are easy to understand; his observations are full of wisdom and common sense.

From Science to Soul

By Deborah Klesel, RN, MSN, PhD.



From Beans to Grapes ... A Celebration!

As a young single mother of three creative (optional word for mischievous) girls, I often relied on the support of my dear friends and neighbors, Elizabeth and Diane, to get through days of juggling jobs and herding children. We gathered before sun-rise to pre-game over a few cups of java, aka liquid resilience. This social break was my get-up-and-go and out-the-door caffeine power source.

According to Ethiopian legend, the energizing benefit of coffee was accidentally discovered, not by a child herder, like me, but, a goat herder. “Kaldi” uncovered the potential of these beloved beans after noticing his goats became energetic and unable to sleep after eating berries from a coffee tree.

While my friends and I cannot take credit for the original “coffee break,” pre-World War II women can. They were recruited by industries to fill vacancies left by drafted male workers because they were more efficient than their non-drafted male counterparts. When these ladies found themselves becoming tired during the long days, they requested daily, scheduled coffee breaks. The result was increased productivity and company earnings. The women called it a win if they made it through the day without a flat tire, an injured kid, or a cut off utility due to the check not arriving in time.

We, like post World War II women leaving factory life, developed the ritual of gathering late Saturday afternoons to lament the week over a glass of wine. Thanks to Jacqueline Kennedy, and her televised tour of the White House in 1962, we felt sophisticated as we toasted to what we considered a weekly job well done. We lightly tapped our matching dollar store stemmed red wine glasses at a pre-set dining room table, complete with cheese, fruit, and an assorted variety of notes from the various schools our (now driving) high school children attended.

We had come full circle – from beans to grapes – distilled into memories that have lasted decades. Salam to building memories through the rituals of life; Prost to cherishing life-long friends; Cheers to surviving childhood and/or raising children; and L’Chaim to the shared celebration of life.

**"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation,
by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving,
present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which
transcends all understanding,
will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."**

Philippians 4:6-7

An Interesting Journey Godward

By Alex Torres



We continue the discussion of how offenders practice their faith. I would like to remind you living faith in prison is quite challenging. Frequently we wonder is it worth it. Many decide it is.

Mike Munoz is a Muslim who goes by Ya'Sin which means "O Leader" in Arabic. Ya'Sin, pronounced

Ya'Seen, has practiced Islam for six years. During this interview, he did not mention anything concerning the challenges he or his community encounter to practice Islam. Instead, Ya'Sin focused on basic tenets. For example, he says, "In Islam, we believe there is only one God." Based on observations, the Islamic community contains a variety of literature, DVDs and property, such as tables and chairs. They meet several times a week and have a spot on "The Tank." Because the curriculums offered in the Faith Based Program is comprised of core and elective classes, which are predominantly Protestant Christian, he is requesting an expansion of the curriculum. Ya'Sin filed paperwork to gain core or elective recognition on the various subjects from an Islamic perspective. Recently, he received an acceptance letter from Huntsville concerning his request for training as a Peer Support Coach. He is slated to leave Polunsky Unit

sometime in 2023.

A Peer Support Coach is a new initiative offered by the Rehabilitation Program Division. It is a six-month course that trains offenders on the effects of substance abuse and the various stages of recovery; training is renewed every two years. Upon completion, the offender is transferred to a new unit where he serves as a mentor and teacher.

Two other men were approached for this series of articles, a Protestant Christian and an adherent of Messianic Judaism. Although, they indicated they would participate, neither did. All four men profiled in this series were drawn from the Faith Based Program.

**"Unconditional happiness comes from...
Taking the most unfortunate circumstances
As a path, as a spiritual teaching, a truthful teaching."**

Anam Thubten

POETRY CORNER

THINKING OF LEE

By Carolyn Rogas

The tide recedes but leaves behind
Bright seashells on the sand.
The sun goes down, but gentle warmth
Still lingers in the land.
The music stops and yet

It echoes on in sweet refrains.
For every joy that passes...
Something beautiful remains.

MUSINGS FROM THE EDITOR



Surrender. A concept that troubles me. Because of painful past experiences, I have a difficult time accepting it and a hard time using it in any context. Recently I read an article in the Daily Om (a division of Everyday Health, Inc.), which compared surrendering to letting go explaining “surrender is the opposite of control.” A lightbulb moment! In order to accept the first, I need to let go of the second. But what exactly does that mean?

When my spiritual director used the word surrender to describe what I would be trying to do during Centering Prayer, I stiffened and promptly said I was not a candidate to learn the practice. After responding to his gentle questions about why I believed that, I began crying uncontrollably. Poor man! After my outburst, I apologized for my behavior; he was a bit flummoxed about how to deal with an hysterical woman, especially one he didn't know very well. Eventually, he persuaded me to at least give the practice a try. He assured me he would be by my side, nothing bad would happen. I wasn't convinced, but decided as a concrete way to show my remorse, I would try. After twenty minutes, I did feel calmer and more peaceful.

As I have shared before, I have a lot of trouble quieting my thoughts and keeping my curious mind under control, not just during Centering Prayer, but any time. When I read “surrender is the opposite of control,” I realized one of the reasons for my inability to accept the concept of surrender is an overriding need to control everyone and everything. What Centering Prayer is attempting to teach me is a way to let past guilts, current concerns and fears for the future float away gently. But in order to do that, I have to surrender my life and my thoughts to God.

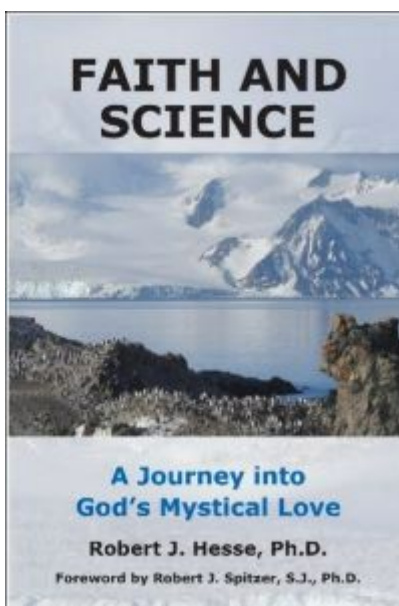
With the Holy Spirit's guidance and my spiritual director's patience, I continue to work on clearing my mind and opening my heart to God's presence. On believing I am worthy. On surrendering to God's love. I'll keep you posted on my progress.

Stay positive. Be loving. Share hugs.

Jan

**"He is searching with you.
He is nearer to you than yourself.
Why look outside?"**

Rumi



Available on [Amazon](#) and [Crossroad Publishing](#).

100% of the author's royalties are being donated to the interfaith, non-profit, 501(c)(3), Contemplative Network to promote Oneness, Contemplative Prayer, scientific research into the healing effects of prayer and to establish ministries based on that research.

How to Do Centering Prayer

- Set aside 20 minutes, twice a day if possible. One time is better than none.
- Sit comfortably on a chair with your back straight.
- Close your eyes. Settle into the deepest center of your being.
- Silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
- As thoughts and feelings rush in, silently and gently repeat your sacred word until they go by. Thoughts are normal. Let them come, accept them, let them go. Do this every time thoughts grab your attention. It will get easier with practice.

[Brief Introduction to Centering Prayer \(pdf\).](#)

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

This is your newsletter. We encourage you to be an active part of its pages. We welcome comments, questions and suggestions. Send all correspondence to editor@contemplative.net with *newsletter* in the memo line. Your full name, country and email address *must* be included. If you do not want your full name used, we will honor that request.

To submit a book review, essay or poetry for possible publication, it must be attached as a Word document in Times New Roman, 12-point font. Accepted length is 350 to 400 words for original book reviews and essays and no more than 20 lines of poetry. Submissions are subject to editing. Be sure to keep a copy; submissions will not be returned. If your submission is selected, you will be notified prior to publication.

**"The pen of the tongue should be dipped
in the ink of the heart."**

Chinese Proverb

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