



## Contemplative Outreach Birmingham



### Christmas Newsletter

*We are all meant to be mothers of God, for God is always needing to be born. – Meister Eckhart, Christmas Sermon*

Dear Friends of Centering Prayer-

Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) was a Catholic priest, philosopher, theologian, and mystic. His statement above shows the vast inclusiveness of the Incarnation—God is not only with us (Emmanuel) but in all of us as well. This Incarnation in us is not just a one time event but needs to occur endlessly throughout our lives. We become partners with God and, in a way, mothers of God as God reincarnates Christ within us daily. Centering Prayer offers us this opportunity as we strive to pray twice each day. May the God of the wondrous gift of Incarnation be with you all throughout this Advent season.

David Smith, Coordinator, Contemplative Outreach Birmingham

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#### “The Lantern in the Snow”

Snow fell in soft spirals over the quiet village of Alderbrook. Each home glowed with warm yellow light, but little Nora sat on her porch, watching her breath turn to mist. Christmas Eve felt different this year. Her father, a firefighter, was away on duty, and the house felt too big, too quiet, too *not-Christmas*.

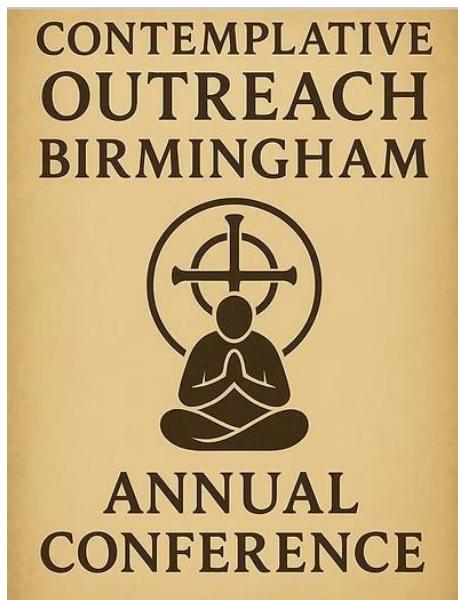
Clutched in her mitten hands was a small lantern—an old family tradition. “Light it when you’re hoping for someone to come home,” her father always said. So Nora lit the lantern. Its warm glow bounced off the snowdrifts, tiny sparks swirling like golden fireflies. She whispered into the night, “Come home soon.”

A gust of wind carried the distant sound of bells—carolers making their way through town. Nora recognized the tune: *Silent Night*. Tears pricked her eyes. She stayed on the porch, a lantern glowing beside her, listening.

Then she heard another sound: heavy footsteps crunching through snow. “Cold night for lantern-keeping,” a familiar voice said. Nora spun around. Her father stood there, still in uniform, snow dusting his shoulders like shy confetti. “You made it!” she cried, throwing her arms around him. “The shift ended early,” he said, hugging her back. “Figured I should follow the brightest lantern in Alderbrook.” Inside, the empty house no longer felt empty. The tree lights sparkled a little brighter, the cocoa tasted a little sweeter, and the music seemed to wrap around them like a blanket. Nora kept the lantern burning through the night—its glow no longer a hope, but a celebration. Christmas, at its heart, is the celebration of our Lord’s entering the world, bringing

the bright light of salvation for all people. “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” *John 1:5*

## Upcoming Events Local, Regional-South, National



**SAVE THE DATE!!**  
**MARCH 21, 2026**

Rev. Ed Bacon, interim rector, All Saints Episcopal Church, will present “The transformational power of contemplation and community energy.”



The next leadership meeting for Contemplative Outreach Birmingham will be Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026, 10:00-12:00 a.m., All Saints' Episcopal Church (110 West Hawthorne, Homewood AL 35209).

**All are invited!! Group members, Facilitators, Leadership.**

**Please come. We need you all.**



**The St. Stephens Labyrinth Memorial Garden is open to the public and all are invited to come visit and spend some time in contemplation in this beautiful space.**

If you would like more information about our labyrinth, please reach out to the [Rev. Mary Bea Sullivan](#).



A spiritual labyrinth is a single, winding path to a center. It is used for meditation, prayer, and spiritual reflection. Walking it is an ancient contemplative practice for grounding, letting go of worries, or discerning next steps, and there is no single "right" way to walk it.



**Threshold  
Center**

The Threshold Center is an initiative of Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church in Vestavia Hills, Alabama. It is a place of welcome that nurtures well-being through practices that engage the heart, body, and imagination.

[More Information on the Threshold Center](#)



## **66th Festival Service of Lessons and Carols**

**All Saints Chapel, University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee**

Saturday, December 6, 7 pm Doors open at 6 pm, no tickets required

Sunday, December 7, 4 pm Door open at 3 pm, no tickets required



## **Virtual Sit Meditations Advent 2025**

**Join the Center for Action and Contemplation community for a free series of Virtual Sit Meditations inspired by Fr. Richard Rohr's book "Preparing for Christmas."**

**Dates:**

**Sundays November 30, December 7, December**

**14, and December 21 featuring: CAC Faculty & Staff, Location: YouTube, Cost: Free**



## **The Center for Spiritual Direction at Holy Family Passionist Retreat Center**

Rooted in the Catholic identity and Passionist charism of Holy Family Passionist Retreat Center, the Center for Spiritual Direction was launched in 2024. **There are lots of Zoom activities to get involved in at the link below.**

[More Information](#)



## Younger Contemplatives Read This!

You are invited to participate in an hour of practice, teaching, fellowship and faith-sharing. The teaching series is the legacy of Fr. Thomas Keating called the Spiritual Journey.

These sessions are open, drop-in session, Zoom meetings, no pre-registration is required.

For more information go [here](#).



## Close Than Breath - Online Community

Keith Kristich - Founder

We envision a growing community of contemplatives worldwide who actively embody the light and love of the Divine to create greater peace and harmony on earth.

**Check out this website. There are lots of ways here to get connected with the larger community of contemplative practice and many events available online.**

[More Information](#)

## About COB/Important Links

[Donate Here](#)

Since the early 1990s, **Contemplative Outreach Birmingham** has been an active chapter of Contemplative Outreach, LTD. We embrace the process of transformation in Christ, both in ourselves and in others through the practice of Centering Prayer. Our mission supports 25 prayer groups in the Central and North Alabama areas. All our work is provided by volunteers who generously donate their time and talents. Your donations in any amount help us to continue this work. Thank you!

**New to Centering Prayer?**

[Begin Here.](#)

**Need a Centering Prayer Group?**

[Find One Here.](#)

**Looking for Inspiration?**

The Contemplative Outreach national website is a great source of inspiration including the **Opening Minds, Opening Hearts Podcast** and the **Spiritual Journey Series**. Go to "Programs" at the link below.

[Find Inspiration Here.](#)