

Contemplative Outreach Birmingham Monthly Newsletter November 2026

A Month of Grateful Hearts

As November and Thanksgiving arrive, we are reminded of the beauty of autumn, the blessings of family and friends, and God's manifold provision for us. Sometimes gratitude comes easily. We give thanks when life is joyful, when prayers are answered, when blessings are abundant. But genuine gratitude also calls us to trust God even during difficult seasons.

A thankful heart does not mean that everything in life is perfect. It means that even amid uncertainty, we recognize that God is present, His love is steadfast, and His grace is sufficient.

What could a practice of gratitude look like over this month, culminating with Thanksgiving? Here are some ideas from **Grateful Living**, a nonprofit group dedicated to the transformative practice of living gratefully. Their founder is Benedictine monk, Br. David Steindl-Rast, often called the "Grandfather of Gratitude". Br. David had his 100th birthday this year.



Watch this short video, "A Grateful Day" and be blessed.

Here is a 30-day framework for month of gratitude:

Days 1–5: Presence and the Senses

Stop, pause, and light a candle or sit in silence.

Notice your breath, heartbeat, and physical body.

Observe sky colors, ordinary items in your room, the feel of your hands.

Days 6–15: Reframing and Appreciation

Reframe a daily obligation (like a chore or task) into an opportunity.

Savor a simple meal or cup of coffee mindfully.

Express specific, direct gratitude to someone in your life.

Read a poem, listen to a piece of music, or build a personal playlist.

Days 16–25: Connection and Reflection

Maintain a daily gratitude journal listing 3 to 5 specific things from the day.

Reflect on your interconnectedness with nature, community, and ancestors.

Notice the stories behind the faces of people you meet.

Take a mindful walk while pairing steps with mental notes of appreciation.

Days 26–30: Action and Integration

Convert a positive habit into a sacred daily ritual.
Contribute time, kindness, or energy to someone else ("grateful action").
Discern what you truly need versus desire.
Land on a final reflection: What are you most grateful for, in this exact moment?

Here is a link to the Grateful Living website for more on gratefulness practice.

Let us know how your Grateful Month came out!

Upcoming Events Local, Regional-South, National

There is a LOT going on at the Threshold Center!

"As the season changes and begins to fill with expectations and obligations, the Threshold Center offers a different response to that internal alarm: A space to slow down, an opportunity to breathe deeply, and practices that help quiet the noise."

Check out the Center's website at this link: The Threshold Center
Or call the office at 205-490-1200



AN EVENING OF GRATITUDE & GRACE

Hosted by SE-Interspiritual Sanctuary and Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church

Experience and share the Grace from God, Yahweh, Allah, Christ, The Great Reality, Higher Power, Great Spirit or any tradition through listening and sitting in contemplative silence in community!

Wednesday, November 18th, 6pm CST - Dinner Provided
At Saint Stephen's Episcopal Church
3775 Crosshaven Drive, Birmingham AL 35223

News From Contemplative Outreach National

The Diversity Outreach Team is seeking volunteers.
The team meets monthly on the third Tuesday of the month from 5-6:30pm/ET. To learn more about their work, see here.

Why Serve the Diversity Outreach Team?

As expressed in Thomas Keating's Vision of Contemplative Outreach, we as members of the body of Contemplative Outreach labor to: *"make available the gift of Centering Prayer to everyone"* and to *"work together in areas of social justice, ecological concerns, and contemplative initiatives".*

Over the years, our community has begun developing outreach programs to live more intentionally into this vision. In 2024, this work evolved into a team of volunteers dedicated to the work of diversity as an expression of Contemplative Outreach's long-term commitment to unity and oneness.

You can read more about our work and our mission statement on Diversity Outreach Team webpage.

If you sense a desire to join in this important work, we welcome partnering with you to discern participation on the Diversity Outreach Team.

Please contact any of the current team members to express your interest:

Alan Krema alkrema@gmail.com
(CO Chicago) **Jack Lloyd** jack.lloyd@earthlink.net
(CO Chicago) **Scott See** scottrsee@gmail.com
(CO NYC) *Council representative **Colleen Thomas** colleen@coutreach.org
Contemplative Outreach Ltd. (staff advisor/liaison)

Peace and blessings,
Colleen Y. Thomas
Diversity Outreach Coordinator
Young Contemplatives
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Opening Minds, Opening Hearts Podcast

Season 4 just concluded last month and the 8 episodes of Season 4 are available for listening in a variety of ways: YouTube, Apple Music, Spotify, Amazon, and others.

OMOH is for the curious meditator and long-time practitioner of Centering Prayer. The hosts reflect on the method of Centering Prayer and the teachings of Thomas Keating with friends of the contemplative community.

Here's a link to the YouTube channel.



Closer Than Breath - Online Community

Keith Kristich - Founder
Contemplative Community, Practice, and Education for the Spiritual Seeker

An Online Contemplative Hub offering programs to deepen your spiritual journey.

Centering Prayer Essentials
FREE 3-Session Course
November 2, 9, 16, 2026
1:00 pm - 2:15 pm ET

Center Prayer Free Course Details Here

Signup for Keith's weekly newsletter.

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.