

I continually find myself invited into new territories. It is my growth frontier. And I am continually tempted to retreat back into previously explored kingdoms rather than explore new terrains. I'm a play-it-safe guy. While there is a time/place to play it safe, I don't need any training in living conservatively. But I'm continually pressed to move onward, to press the edges, to explore unexplored kingdoms, to live on the frontier. I sense an invitation to live at the edge of explored kingdoms. That's a challenge for me, an authentic spiritual discipline.

For instance, these days I'm invited into family transition. Our son, our youngest, just graduated from college and was engaged to his girlfriend the same weekend. His completion of university life signals the end of a chapter in family life. Something new is ahead. Further, our 24 year old daughter moved back home two weeks ago, a temporary, two-month situation. By the end of the summer my wife and I will be permanent empty-nesters. New territory awaits.

I also have relational edges to explore. Recently I've realized - again! - how stunted I am relationally. Living beyond what I've explored and known is highly uncomfortable for me in personal relationships. I'm an introvert by nature - almost off the charts - so healthy, nurturing relationships are not a *natural* for me. I have to work hard, to extend myself deliberately beyond where I am comfortable. But I'm called past previously explored territory. I'm invited relationally to the edge of my exploration.

Unexplored vocational kingdoms beckon as well. We've been doing this ministry of spiritual formation through Chapelwood for over 7 years now. Formally, The Center for Christian Spirituality has existed for over 4 years. I think we've done a pretty good job of providing persons and congregations with resources for the inward spiritual journey. Classes, retreats, spiritual direction, contemplative worship, and other experiences feed us.

New edges await, though. We've asked questions recently about two frontiers for us: First, how do we provide entrance ramps into spiritual formation for folks who really are unfamiliar with it? Second, how do we become more intentional about helping folks connect spirituality with their lived experience, with the way we love, serve, and give ourselves in the world for God's sake? We've become quite comfortable in helping folks move inward toward transformation. How do we help folks engage their world in transforming ways?

I hope it is said of each of us, and of us as a people, that we did more than explore explored kingdoms. I'm praying that some of us will walk to the edge.

Peace to you,
Jerry

Poetic Voices

The Beginning of Wisdom by Denise Levertov

Proverbs 9:10

You have brought me so far.

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I know so much. Names, verbs, images. My mind  
overflows, a drawer that can't close.

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Unscathed among the tortured. Ignorant parchment
uninscribed, light strokes only, where a scribe
tried out a pen.

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I am so small, a speck of dust  
moving across the huge world. The world  
a speck of dust in the universe.

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Are you holding
the universe? You hold
onto my smallness. How do you grasp it,
how does it not
slip away?

~~~

I know so little.

~~~

You have brought me so far.

(from *The Stream and the Sapphire* by Denise Levertov)

from **Four Ways of Knowledge** by Robert Bly

I know there is someone
who tries to teach us.
He has four ways
to do that: First
is Memory, chosen.
I remember that I fell
one Sunday – I was three
or four – from my parents'
car; I saw it leaving
me on the road.
My parents do not recall it.
If we ignore that, he
waits till we are asleep,
opens the images, borrows
faces, turns men to turtles.
I dreamt that I sat
in a chair, and every other
second I disappeared.
That didn't reach me;
I went on with no change.
Then he moves, inter-
feres with matter, books fall
open to a certain passage.
Two strangers in one day
speak the same sentence.
The funeral is over;
the telephone rings;
or tennis shoes
that have no molecules
wake a sleeper.
If we still learn nothing,
then he turns to accidents,
disease, suffering,
lost letters, torpid sleeps,
disaster, catatonia.
We walk, the glass
mountain opens, we fall
in. I usually ignore
the earlier three,
and learn by falling.
This time we live it,
and only awaken years later.

(from *Selected Poems* by Robert Bly, New York: Harper & Row, 1986)

Psalm-Prayer adapted from Psalm 20

God, defend the peacemakers from those who want to fight.
Be their shield.
Set them safe,
 even in the midst of violence.
Send them help, God,
 and make them strong of heart,
 resolute for peace when everyone else glorifies war.

As for me, God, use my gifts to bring healing to the world,
 and show me where to lay down my life for others.
By your Spirit help me to live out the shape
 of the life You have formed inside me,
 to live the fullness of life as You have woven it into my DNA.

Then, God, as your people live freely and fully
 the wild and precious lives to which You've invited us,
 our very lives will proclaim your Name,
 giving witness to your love and desire for all humanity.

I've seen it happen over and over:
 those open to You, hands and hearts opened wide,
 live fully present to You.
They live as transforming presences in their life-world.
 They embody peace.
 Their very presence speaks, "hospitality."
 They bring healing to the wounded.
 They help the lost find themselves.
 They open their arms to the stranger.
From the outside it looks as if You favor them more than others.
In reality, they've simply opened themselves to your loving,
 they've simply done the hard work of losing their small self
 so they can participate in the life of the larger Self that transforms the world.

Some find their life in the small self,
 in grand accomplishments and powerful positions,
 in degrees and houses and recognitions.
Others, however, simply knit their lives to You,
 hold onto You at the core,
 so whatever else comes in life –
 good or bad –
 is secondary to how they are tethered to You.
The things we accumulate are not strong enough to hold the center.
 Only You can hold us firm.

Hear this, our prayer, Lord.
May it be so for us
and for all who call upon your Name.
Amen.

Summer Reading Series

Since childhood, I've spent summertime reading books. The Ponca City, Oklahoma, downtown public library would create a chart with the names of all the kids in town who wanted to participate in summer reading. Then we would get a star for every book read during the summer months. I'm pretty competitive – you knew that, didn't you? – so I loved to see that stars add up next to my name. And if I caught a glimpse of where that compared to the stars next to other names, well, so be it! (I'm in recovery . . . I really am!)

We've made it a habit over the last few summers to engage some books together and then take a night to flesh them out a bit in common. I recommend 3 books. We take about a month to read each one, then gather for discussion about where that book met us. Usually I try to find books of varying styles and from different eras. Some are classics and some are virtually unknown. The common thread is that they all speak in some way to the spiritual life and the way we carry God's Spirit into our lived experience.

Evelyn Underhill was an English mystic who wrote extensively on the spiritual life. Her writings balance the inner life of the Spirit with a consciousness of the way the spiritual life is lived out in the world. Her book *The Spiritual Life* was published in 1936 after she first delivered the material in a series of radio broadcasts.

The Cloud of Unknowing was written anonymously in 14th century England. It has been the basis of much great writing and practice in the centuries since, impacting spiritual writers including John of the Cross and Thomas Keating. Several years ago John Kirvan wrote a walking commentary on this classic, which he entitled, *There Is a God, There Is No God*. The book has been a huge help for me, and I commend it to you.

The Old Testament Psalms provide a foundation for a life of prayer. For centuries, Christians – including me – have learned to pray by praying the psalms. Many years ago, one of the first books on prayer I read was Eugene Peterson's *Answering God: The Psalms As Tools for Prayer*. I use it as a resource often. I'm looking forward to visiting it again and discussing it with you.

If you'd like to participate in these readings and discussions, here's what you can do:

1. Secure the books yourself or through The Center for Christian Spirituality. If purchased through The Center for Christian Spirituality, prices and deadlines are below.

2. Read one book a month.
3. Attend, if you'd like, a teaching and discussion time on each book. Dates are given below.

The prices, order deadlines, and schedules for teaching/ dialogue sessions are as follows:

The Spiritual Life by Evelyn Underhill, \$13.00 with **order deadline of May 19** (if you are ordering from us). Teaching and dialogue on Wednesday, June 18 at 6:30 p.m. in LC201. Please contact Nancy Sterling to order from us (713-354-4458 or nsterling@chapelwood.org).

There Is a God, There Is No God by John Kirvan, \$11.00 with order **deadline of June 9**. Teaching and dialogue on Wednesday, July 16 at 6:30 p.m. in LC201. Please contact Nancy Sterling to order.

Answering God by Eugene Peterson, \$10.00 with **order deadline of July 7**. Teaching and dialogue on Wednesday, August 20 at 6:30 p.m. in LC201. Please contact Nancy Sterling to order.

(Jerry Webber)

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Each month scores of knitters and crocheters work independently and in groups in anticipation of gathering at one or all of our three monthly meetings held at Chapelwood in LC211. These are held on the first and third Tuesday mornings at 10:30 a.m. and the second Monday afternoon at 4:00p.m. In June, those dates will be the 3rd, 9th and 17th.

April and May were busy months as we knit and gave away over a dozen shawls. Also, we welcomed several new faces and welcomed back several others who are finding our new Monday schedule to their liking.

On April 12th, thirty women attended the Prayer Shawl Retreat we co-hosted with St. Luke's UMC. It was such a success that plans are in the process to repeat it next spring here at Chapelwood once our construction dust has settled.

Please join us if you are able as we knit/crochet and pray together.

(Marty Shroff and Nancy Sterling)

Praying with *Sacred Space*

In December we invited persons to join together in daily prayer using the Irish Jesuit prayer book, *Sacred Space 2008*. The book gives a pattern for prayer and a daily scripture for *lectio divina*. About 60 people ordered the book. Who are those praying? I don't know their names ...

only that each morning when I pray using *Sacred Space 2008*, I'm joined by hundreds of thousands all over the world and several dozen who are my companions in faith locally. There is something indescribably powerful about praying in common with others. *Sacred Space 2008* gives us the opportunity to pray daily for ourselves, others, and the world in common.

The Center for Christian Spirituality Hosts Matt Linn Retreat

On April 24, Matt Linn offered a retreat for The Center for Christian Spirituality at The Cenacle Retreat House. Fifty-seven persons attended the retreat as Fr Matt spoke about prayer practices that bring healing and a renewed sense of one's personal purpose in life. Fr Matt led the group in practicing prayer forms that lead to meaning and discernment.

Fr Linn, a Jesuit whose ministry base is in Minnesota, is the author of numerous books on healing, forgiveness, and life-purpose, including *Sleeping with Bread* and *Healing the Purpose of Your Life*. Several of his titles are used frequently in the teaching of The Center for Christian Spirituality.

Library Resources

The Center has a modest lending library of books, tapes, CDs, and DVDs to lend. The selection is continually growing. Most topics and authors are complementary with the classes and retreats offered by The Center for Christian Spirituality. A sampling of tapes, CDs, and DVDs includes:

- *Prophets Then, Prophets Now* by Sr. Joan Chittister & Fr. Richard Rohr
- *Thomas Merton's Path to the Palace of Nowhere* by James Finley, Ph.D.
- *Holding the Tension: The Power of Paradox* by Fr. Richard Rohr & Sr. Mary Beth Ingham
- *Spiritual Community* by Laurence Freeman
- *The Contemplative Journey* and *The Spiritual Journey* by Fr. Thomas Keating
- *A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life* by Paula D'Arcy and Richard Rohr
- *The Anti-Gospel of Our Time* by Richard Rohr
- *Passion for God: The Path of the Bridal Mystic* by Tessa Bielecki

Contact Nancy Sterling at (713) 354-4458 or nsterling@chapelwood.org if you are interested in checking out any materials.

Centering Prayer and *Lectio Divina* on Mondays and Wednesdays

Each week on Mondays and Wednesdays, The Center for Christian Spirituality offers time for group centering prayer and *lectio divina*. The prayer times are offered for anyone interested in these prayer practices. and begin at 9:00 a.m. in the Bride's Room (behind the Sanctuary).