**An Introduction to Centering Prayer**

**Earlier this year, I spent some time abroad on a renewal course for priests, sisters and brothers, writes CANON JOHN LUMLEY, the parish priest for St Gabriel’s Ormesby and Corpus Christi, Thorntree. One of the great discoveries for me during that time was a method of silent prayer known as “Centering Prayer”, a daily practice which has greatly enriched my spiritual life since then. As with all gifts, once discovered, you are keen to share! So I contacted Howard Nelson, who lives locally and who has been practising and teaching this simple form of prayer for many years. I invited Howard to give us a brief description of this ancient form of prayer, with a view to offering an opportunity for people to experience and practice it, in January 2016. Here’s Howard’s description…**

During the 1980s, Trappist monk Father Thomas Keating and two of his colleagues, set out to recover the contemplative dimension of the Gospel and the Christian tradition of silent prayer, which, they realised, had been largely forgotten. Drawing on the writings of the Desert Fathers, and a wide range of later sources – particularly The Cloud of Unknowing – they developed a method which has come to be known as Centering Prayer.

The method is of great simplicity, and extreme gentleness: we are invited to consent to the presence of the Holy Spirit within us, and to the Spirit’s transformative action. We use a single word, of our own choosing, as a reminder, when we need it, to return from the clamour of our everyday thoughts to the simple intention with which we began our prayer – that intention being to sit as quietly as possible in the presence of God.

Centering Prayer is taught, and its practice fostered, by Contemplative Outreach, originally founded by Father Keating, and now a lay-led association of individuals and small faith groups worldwide.

**I have invited Howard, who is a member of Contemplative Outreach, to give us a one-day Introduction to Centering Prayer and, for those who are interested, this is reinforced by six short follow-up sessions to build on the experience of the Introductory Day. At the end of the follow-up, participants are invited, if they wish, to become a support group, meeting at regular intervals to practice the prayer and to deepen their understanding of the Christian contemplative tradition.**

**We hope to run the initial one-day introduction on Saturday 23rd January, from 10am to about 3.30pm (4pm at the latest) at St Gabriel’s Church, Allendale Road, Ormesby, Middlesbrough TS7 9LF. If you would like more information or wish to express an interest, please contact Canon John on JL@dioceseofmiddlesbrough.co.uk or by calling St Gabriel’s on (01642) 314501. The Contemplative Outreach website can be found at** [**http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org**](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org)

**The timetable for the day is below, plus a small poster for noticeboards:**

**Contemplative Outreach**



**An Introduction to Centering Prayer**

An outline of the day/Timetable

10.00 a.m. Assemble

10.15 a.m. Introduction

10.30 a.m. *Talk 1: Prayer as Relationship*

11.00 a.m. Coffee

11.30 a.m. *Talk 2: The Method of Centering Prayer*

12.00 noon Centering Prayer practice (20 mins)

12.30 p.m. Lunch

1.45 p.m. *Talk 3: The Use of the Sacred Word*

2.15 p.m. Centering Prayer practice (20 mins)

2.45 p.m. Tea

3.15 p.m. *Talk 4: Deepening our relationship with God: ways of extending Centering Prayer into daily life*

3.45 p.m. Questions

4.00 p.m. Close

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| **Contemplative Outreach**    ***An Introduction to Centering Prayer***  Centering Prayer is an opening of the heart and mind to God beyond concepts, words and images. Based on a centuries old tradition of Christian prayer, it has been developed to meet contemporary needs. This one day workshop will include instruction in the method of Centering Prayer; we also offer six further (and shorter) sessions, which build on the ground covered in the workshop.  All are welcome: no previous experience is required.  **St Gabriel’s Church, Allendale Road, Ormesby,**  **Middlesbrough TS7 9LF**  **Saturday 23rd January, 10am - 4pm.**  **Refreshments provided but please bring a packed lunch**.  **Parking is available at the church**  **Cost: Donation**  For further information please contact  Canon John Lumley [canonlumley@gmail.com](mailto:canonlumley@gmail.com)  Tel: (01642) 314501 |  | **Contemplative Outreach**    ***An Introduction to Centering Prayer***  Centering Prayer is an opening of the heart and mind to God beyond concepts, words and images. Based on a centuries old tradition of Christian prayer, it has been developed to meet contemporary needs. This one day workshop will include instruction in the method of Centering Prayer; we also offer six further (and shorter) sessions, which build on the ground covered in the workshop.  All are welcome: no previous experience is required.  **St Gabriel’s Church, Allendale Road, Ormesby,**  **Middlesbrough TS7 9LF**  **Saturday 23rd January, 10am - 4pm.**  **Refreshments provided but please bring a packed lunch**.  **Parking is available at the church**  **Cost: Donation**  For further information please contact  Canon John Lumley [canonlumley@gmail.com](mailto:canonlumley@gmail.com)  Tel: (01642) 314501 |