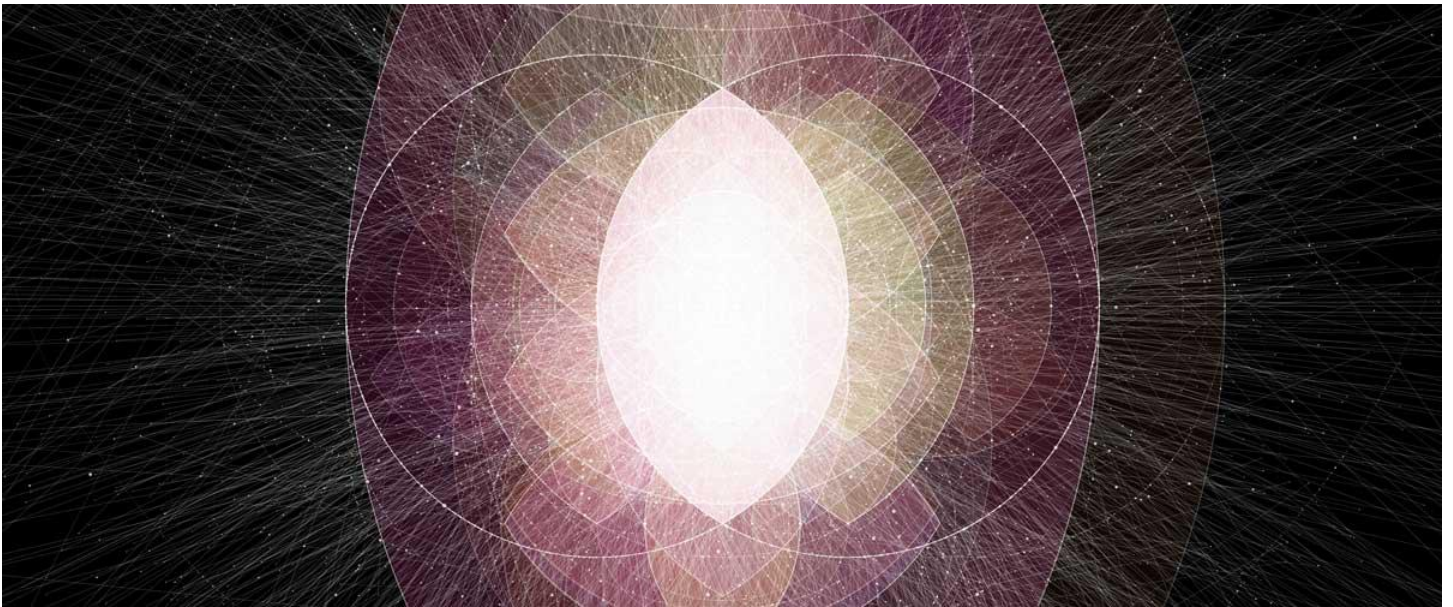


The In-Between Way: Behold

8:45 a.m. + December 22, 2024 + The Fourth Sunday of Advent



*What we are, that we behold; and what we behold, that we are:
for our thought, our life, and our being are uplifted in simplicity,
and made one with the Truth which is God.
And therefore, in this simple staring, we are one life and one spirit with God:
and this I call a contemplative life.
John of Ruusbroec (14th century)*

Crossing the Threshold

Singing our Welcome

*Veni, veni,
Veni, veni, Immanuel;
Veni, veni,
Veni Immanuel.*

“Veni Immanuel” (O Come, Immanuel)

Lighting the Advent Candle

When the people were looking for deliverance, the prophet Micah declared, "But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah...from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient day." (Micah 5:2). But what if Micah is also talking to us, proclaiming, "But you, O people of The Center, from you shall come forth for me..." What? What might God be calling forth from us?

God invites us to receive the promise of God's salvation and the sustenance of God's mercy and grace, enabling us to live the promise as God-beholders and God-bearers to the world. As the shepherds beheld the angels and Christ-child, so we too wish to see and perceive God's presence in our world today. As Christ was born in Bethlehem, so too we answer God's invitation to have Christ born in us today and every day.

We light this candle of love as a sign of our commitment to live as people of God's promise, a promise of salvation and flourishing for all people that springs forth from God's love for all creation.

Singing our Welcome

"Veni Immanuel" (O Come, Immanuel)

*Veni, veni,
Veni, veni, Immanuel;
Veni, veni,
Veni Immanuel.*

Praying a Psalm

contemplative adaptation of Psalm 27 & 46 (Nan Merrill, selected verses)

*One thing have I asked of Love, that I shall ever seek:
That I might dwell in the Heart of Love all the days of my life,
To behold the Beauty of my Beloved, and to know Love's Plan.
The Beloved is with us, the infinite Heart of Love.*

*Come, behold the works of the Beloved,
how love does reign even in humanity's desolation.
For the Beloved makes wars to cease,
breaking through the barriers of fear,
shattering the greedy and oppressors,
refining hearts of iron!
"Be still and know that I am Love.
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth!"
The One who knows all hearts is with us.*

Song of Response

"Lo How A Rose E'er Blooming"

*Lo, how a Rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming, as those of old have sung.
It came, a floweret bright,
Amid the cold of winter, when half spent was the night.*

*Isaiah 'twas foretold it, the Rose I have in mind;
With Mary we behold it, the Virgin Mother kind.
To show God's love aright,
She bore to us a Savior, when half spent was the night.*

Contemplating Scripture (with sung response)

Luke 2:8-20

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."

Do you see what I see? Do you see what I see?

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace in those whom he favors!"

Do you hear what I hear? Do you hear what I hear?

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and behold this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So, they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them, and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

Do you know what I know? Do you know what I know?

The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and beheld, just as it had been told them.

Sitting with Our Questions

"Come See The Mystery"

Meditation

Song of Response

"O Come, All Ye Faithful" & "Angels We Have Heard on High"

*O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant,
O come ye, O come ye, to Bethlehem.
Come and behold him, born the King of angels;
O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.*

*Gloria, in excelsis Deo!
Gloria, in excelsis Deo!*

*Come to Bethlehem and see Christ whose birth the angels sing;
Come, adore on bended knee, Christ the Lord, the newborn King.*

*See him in the manger laid, whom the choirs of angels praise;
Mary, Joseph, lend your aid, while our hearts in love we raise.*

Silence

During these minutes of silence, simply rest in God's abiding and loving presence in this moment. You are in God and God is in you. Just be and relax. Center your attention in your heart and imagine your breath flowing in and out from your heart area. If it helps you to center, use a sacred prayer word such as Jesus, Abba, Spirit, Light, or Love.

Communion

Receiving a Good Word



Our Staff

Haley Brown – Associate Director of The Anchor House
Courtney Garrison – Ministry Assistant
Peter Johns – Associate Director of Contemplative Worship

Zachary Montasser – Violinist
Rev. Rachel Sciretti – Associate Pastor
Rev. Dr. Michael Sciretti, Jr. – Pastor of The Center

Today's Music

"Veni Immanuel" – John L. Bell, *"Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming"* – Traditional
"Do You See What I See?" – Noel Regney & Gloria Shayne, *"Come See The Mystery"* – Peter Johns,
"O Come, All Ye Faithful" – John F. Wade, *"Angels We Have Heard On High"* – Traditional

For information about The Center for Christian Spirituality and upcoming events, visit:

www.TheCenterFCS.org

Please register your presence in the notebooks in the foyer.

If you have a prayer request or seeking support, please contact Rachel Sciretti, rscoretti@chapelwood.org.

The Service of the Longest Night

Tonight | The Chapel | 6:00 p.m.

The Service of the Longest Night is held on the Sunday evening closest to the Winter Solstice, the longest night of the year. The "longest night" has also become an expression for the spiritual journey of grief and loss. Our time together will be especially appropriate for those who have experienced a significant loss this past year. In this time of worship, you are invited to quiet refuge of prayer, music, remembrance, and Holy Communion.

Contemplative Candlelight Christmas Eve Service

Tuesday, December 24 | The Anchor House Grounds | 6:00 p.m.

We will sing carols, hear the Christmas story, reflect on its meaning for us today, and light candles to celebrate the coming of Christ. It will be a lovely way to mark Christmas Eve.

Giving to The Center

All of us are part of a never-ending process of giving and receiving. Life is not possible without this organic flow. What we co-create together here at The Center for Christian Spirituality is not possible without our conscious participation in this holy activity of freely receiving and freely giving. In this light, we invite you to financially give to The Center in response to what you have received today or throughout our contemplative offerings. Using the QR code will take you to a page where you can make a one-time offering or recurring gift. Thank you for your contribution and investment.



Receiving the Grace of Epiphany: January Guided Silent Retreat

Saturday, January 4 | The Anchor House Grounds | 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. | \$20

In our January Guided Silent Retreat, after a time of Centering, Michael will give a short presentation on the ancient as well as the inner meaning of the treasures of gold, frankincense and myrrh. As a part of this day, participants will experience anointing with holy oil and a contemplative communion service. There will be plenty of time for reading and reflection, prayerful walking of our labyrinth, and space for prayerful art. We don't want anyone to miss out because of pricing. Contact Haley for information on scholarships at hbrown@chapelwood.org.



The Way of The Anchorite: Towards a Three-Fold Rule of Life

Thursdays, January 9, 16, 23, 30 | The Anchor House | 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

In this new class offered by Michael, students will be led through a simple model for developing a "Rule" or "Way" of Life. This model is inspired by the monastic tradition of the "anchorite" – someone who withdrew from distractions to deepen their relationship with God, others, and the created world. To aid them, they committed themselves to certain practices that helped them to more consciously be anchored: in God, to Church, and for the World. In this 4-week class, Michael will help you determine what are your obstacles and facilitating conditions for anchoring in God, anchoring to Community, and being an anchoring presence in your World.

