

Thomas Keating, who developed centering prayer, dies at age 95

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by [Christian Century staff](#) in the [December 5, 2018](#) issue



Centering prayer advocate Thomas Keating (right) with journalist and pastor Liz Walker in 2012. [Some rights reserved](#) by [Christopher.Michel](#).

Thomas Keating, a leading figure in contemplative practice, died October 25 at age 95.

He spent his final days at St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts, where he developed what is now known as centering prayer during his 20 years as abbot, according to the organization he cofounded, Contemplative Outreach.

"He modeled for us the incredible riches and humility borne of a divine relationship that is not only possible but is already the fact in every human being," [Contemplative Outreach's staff and board wrote in a tribute](#).

Among the books he wrote were *Open Mind, Open Heart* and *Intimacy with God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer*.

Keating was also known for his engagement in interreligious dialogue in the decades that followed the Second Vatican Council, through which “Catholics were given permission and encouraged to acknowledge the work of the Spirit in other religions,” Contemplative Outreach wrote.

In 1971, Keating and two colleagues, William Meninger and Basil Pennington, began centering prayer, drawing from the ancient practice of *lectio divina*. The hope was to encourage contemplative practices beyond monasteries, including among laypeople.

In the last decade of his life, Keating worked with Contemplative Outreach on the *God Is Love: The Heart of All Creation* video series.

“I am at the point where I do not want to do anything except God’s will, and that may be nothing,” he said in the series. “But nothing is one of the greatest activities there is.”

A version of this article, which was edited November 29, appears in the print edition under the title “People: Thomas Keating.”