



CANDLELIGHT, ADVENT, TURNING INWARD...

December 4, 2012...the first Sunday in Advent, the time of year we move ever inward. After putting the garden to bed for the winter, we come inside to the warmth of the hearth. After the activities of summer and fall, it is time to rest, to meditate deeply, and to more deeply encounter the God of our understanding.

Some of this introspection will be just between ourselves and our Higher Power. But remembering that God has created us to need each other and to be a community founded on the relationship of both teaching and learning from each other, our spirits feel the need to be close with kindred spirits and to share the wonder of creation and the blessings of an ever-deepening relationship with the God of our understanding.

Toward this end, then, FRESH held its annual Candlelight Ceremony at our host Church of the Master in Florissant. So many of us look forward to this special day in the year that we share together with old and new friends. Some of us have known each other for many years. Others we have met over the years at wellness events throughout the community, very often at some of the other annual FRESH events throughout the year. Yet others are meeting for the very first time at the event.

The magic is that we all share a spiritual connection that encompasses gender, race, age, and life experiences. Through God's blessing and presence, we come together to share the things in our lives for which we are grateful. As each person shares, a candle is lighted. The room starts out dim but gradually becomes brighter and brighter, a metaphor for lives of increasing

spiritual connectedness, a realization of God's promises for us, and the joy of serving others simply by being present for each other.

Our lead-off speaker, Mary Feldmeier, has been active in the wellness community for many years. As well as her association with FRESH, she has affiliations with Contemplative Outreach, St. Louis. A research chemist by profession, she is an avid opera buff and writes creatively: often heartwarming stories centered around family. She encouraged us to think about doing an "old" thing in a new way and to take time to smell the roses.

She also read an exquisite poem about roses in November that makes us aware that the rose has many of our own attributes: we can be seemingly fragile at first and develop many "thorns" to seemingly protect ourselves along the way. But once we come into the full bloom of God's amazing grace, we can continue to grow with apparent ease and happiness while all the others flowers have fallen by the wayside of approaching winter.

We also enjoyed the fellowship of a holiday meal spearheaded by our Director, Carol Martin. Board members and participants also brought dishes to share. As this preceded the Candlelight Ceremony, it provided a chance for conversation, both "getting-to-know-you" and reminiscing. Then we were ready to go into a time of deeper introspection and sharing in keeping with the beautiful Advent season.

If you have never joined us at this event, please keep it in mind for 2012. It has become a treasured annual event for many of us. Season's Greetings to all.



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**For further
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REFLECTING ON 2011...



At the Karen Casey writing workshop in 2011, we saw many familiar faces and welcomed some dear new faces. All gathered to enjoy another memorable weekend with our facilitator, the gifted author, Karen Casey. Join us at this year's retreat which will be held in Augusta from September 7-9.

...LOOKING FORWARD TO 2012

On April 14, 2012, FRESH will be hosting our annual Speaker's Luncheon. This year, we are singularly pleased and honored to have as our guest speaker, Susan K. Komis. Susan is a certified Pastoral Minister in the Archdiocese of Saint Louis and has worked in Adult Faith Development and various other ministries including spiritual direction and interspiritual dialogue. She is presently a member of the Faculty of Contemplative Outreach, Ltd., serving as Director of Chapter Outreach.

In conjunction with Thomas Keating's philosophy that Centering Prayer as a form of meditation is an effective tool for all spiritual seekers, Contemplative Outreach actively supports the fact that many 12-step members practice Centering Prayer for 11th Step work. This workshop, therefore, will be of particular interest to both male and female spiritual seekers regardless of their religious or other faith-based affiliations.

Our annual luncheon typically offers a centered, safe environment where participants feel welcome to apply the information presented to their own personal life journeys. Former events have provided spiritual inspiration and nurture to those in attendance. We invite you to join with us this year for what promises to be a memorable event.