

gravity

a center for contemplative activism

YEAR IN REVIEW | 2018



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CULTURAL COMMITMENTS

abundant gratitude

We wholeheartedly express and receive gratitude for the gift of life, our community, partners, and clients.

affirming inclusion

We affirm the Divine imprint in all humanity and embrace diverse participation.

audacious imagination

We fearlessly dream of a better world.

generous hospitality

We intentionally establish a warm, welcoming, and inviting space.

hopeful contemplation

We regularly practice contemplative prayer oriented toward building a better world.

grounded activism

Our action in the world is rooted in solitude, silence, and stillness.

professional excellence

Our behavior, appearance, and work output are excellent and courteous.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

george mekhail, chair

George is the co-founder of Church Clarity, and he is the president and CEO of Together in This. He considers contemplative spirituality to be essential in shaping the next generation of Jesus followers and spiritual pilgrims throughout the world.



vera leung, vice chair

Vera is Director of Creative Services for International Justice Mission, an international human rights organization that secures rescue and justice for victims of violence, sexual exploitation, slavery, and oppression and works to make public justice systems accessible to the poor. She is passionate about engaging the creative community in pursuit of God's heart for social justice.

huiying guo, secretary

Committed to both discoveries in science and community involvement, Ying works to become a physician and an advocate for under-served populations lacking in quality health care access. She is able to stay grounded, disciplined, and nourished through contemplative prayer. Her contemplative practice has shaped the way she thinks, acts, and lives on a daily basis.

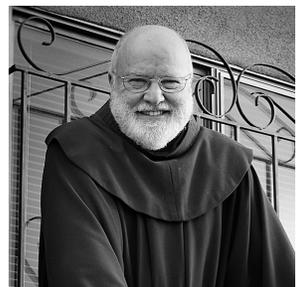


anahi salazar angulo, treasurer

Anahi served one year as Gravity's first Operations Manager, prior to returning to full-time studies for her masters degree. She is now an elementary school educator and has an interest in exploring education policy in her future. She serves on the Gravity board as our treasurer.

fr. richard rohr, general body member

Franciscan of the New Mexico Province and the Founding Director of the Center for Action and Contemplation in Albuquerque, New Mexico, Fr. Richard teaches primarily on incarnational mysticism, non-dual consciousness, and contemplation, with a particular emphasis on how these affect the social justice issues of our time.



ADVISORY COUNCIL

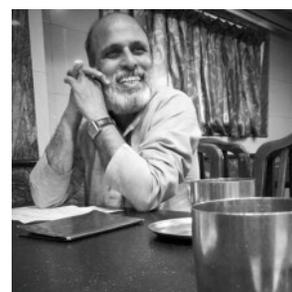


alexis carter, founding board member

Reverend Alexis Carter Thomas is a contemplative activist and disciple maker who spends much of her time teaching others about abundant life. Her work encourages people to engage with the disturbing and difficult aspects of faith and society through prayer, reading, reflection and acts of service. While serving a church in South Africa, Alexis sensed a call to serve communities that are both politically and spiritually impoverished. She has committed to live out this call through a variety of ways.

jayakumar christian

National Director of World Vision India, Jayakumar earned a PhD in Intercultural Studies from Fuller Theological Seminary and Masters degrees in Social Work, Missiology, and Divinity. He is the author of *God of the Empty-Handed: Poverty, Power and the Kingdom of God* (World Vision International, 1999) and several articles relating to working among people in poverty.



patricia jenkins-armstrong

One of America's great civil rights leaders, Patricia was just 17 years old when she trained under Rev. James Lawson in tactical nonviolence. As a college student she began participating in Nashville's sit-ins, stand-ins, and sleep-ins. In May of 1961 the Freedom Riders set out to desegregate the US interstate system by riding buses through the American South in mixed racial groups to challenge local laws that enforced segregation in seating. Patricia was one of the original freedom riders.

fr. emmanuel katongole

Catholic priest ordained by the Archdiocese of Kampala, Fr. Emmanuel has served as associate professor of theology and world Christianity at Duke University, where he was the founding co-director of the Duke Divinity School's Center for Reconciliation. Presently he serves as an Associate Professor of Theology and Peace Studies at Notre Dame's Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies.



ENNEAGRAM



ENNEAGRAM WORKSHOPS



OUR ENNEAGRAM SPECIALISTS



**CHRIS
HEURTZ**



**DR. AVON
MANNEY**



**OREON
TRICKEY**

Sessions are in person, on the phone, or by skype.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION



Spiritual direction is an art of discernment that originated in the 3rd and 4th centuries. What was once largely isolated to monastic life has now gone mainstream to serve the masses of modern people seeking a more meaningful life.

To service the increasing demand for spiritual direction, Gravity has grown from one to four spiritual directors in just 6 years. Each director offers unique specializations.

Your donations make it possible to underwrite the cost of spiritual direction services so that underserved populations may receive spiritual direction regardless of financial constraints.

GRAVITY SERVED 281 DIRECTTEES IN 2018!

SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS AT GRAVITY



**PHILEENA
HEURTZ**



**ERIC
WILSON**



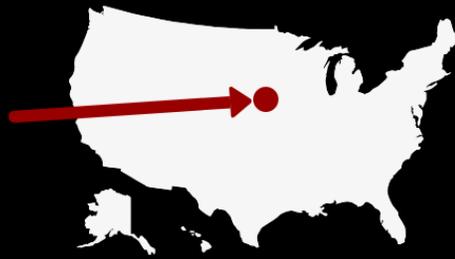
**NAISA
WONG**



**OREON
TRICKEY**

DEEPENING RETREAT

St. Benedict
Monastery in
Schuyler NE



484 people have participated
at our Omaha retreats since
Gravity's launch in 2012.

We've sold out and oversold
every Gravity retreat to date.

2018 FACTS

20
STATES
IN THE US

77%
OUTSIDE
NEBRASKA

3
HUMAN
TRAFFICKING
SURVIVORS

INTERESTING FACTS

⦿ **62% women**

**45 year age
spread**

⦿ **69 oldest-
24 youngest**

⦿ **37 was the
median age**

⦿ **32% repeat
retreatants**

sponsors

Benson Soap Mill

Boxed Water

Center for
Contemplation & Action

Chua Chocolate

Convergent Books

Ferebees

Jacci Turner

Loyola Press

Paraclete Press

Ruminate

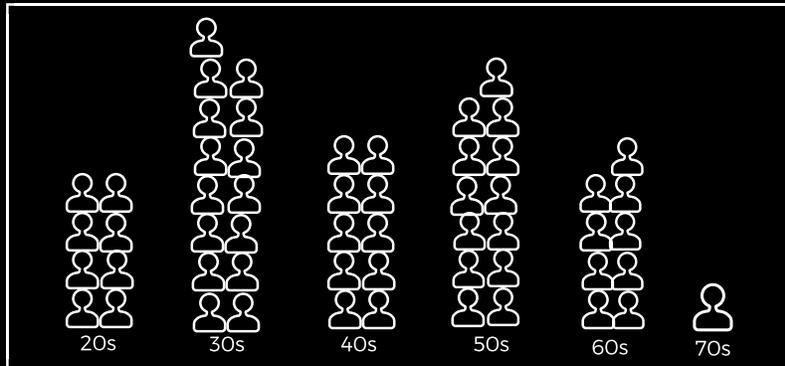
Run River North

Sleeping at Last

GROUNDING RETREAT

St. Benedict Monastery in Schuyler NE

Who attended the sold out retreat?



Interspiritual Group full of folks who identify as:

- Agnostic
- Catholic
- Christian
- Buddhist
- Evangelical
- Former Christian
- Mainline Protestant
- Muslim
- Spiritual
- Unity

and a majority "other"!

20 STATES **74% OUTSIDE OF NE** **3 COUNTRIES REPRESENTED**



sponsors

Benson Soap Mill

Boxed Water

Convergent

Energion Publications

InterVarsity Press

Lectio Journal

WaterBrook
& Multomah

Magnolia

Paraclete Press

Ruminare Magazine

Zondervan

INTERESTING FACTS

77%
women

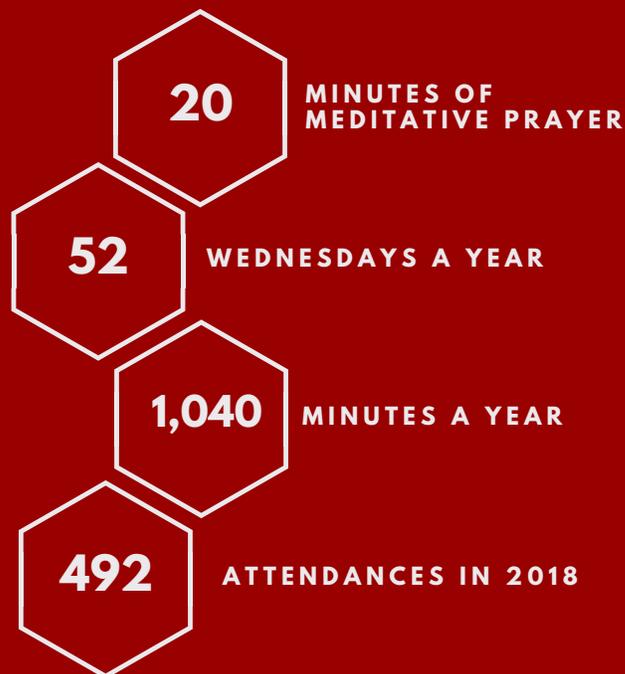
21% repeat
retreaters

35
average
age

49 year age
spread,
youngest **26** and
oldest **75**

PRAYER SITS

PRAYER SITS EVERY WEDNESDAY



FRIENDS JOINED US IN OMAHA FROM:



SOUTH AFRICA



MEXICO

98 INDIVIDUALS
PARTICIPATED IN 2018
INCLUDING CHILDREN AND
BASIL, GRAVITY'S PRAYING PUP



PRISON YOGA

In cooperation with the prison warden and prison high school principal, Gravity is in its third year offering a yoga program for young men at the Nebraska Correctional Youth Facility in Omaha, Nebraska. Twelve-week yoga classes have been offered both in conjunction with the physical education class that youth need to complete to earn their GED and as an open class for any inmate who wants to take the class.

Studies show that incarcerated people have often endured compounding trauma before entering prison. Once living behind bars, stress, anxiety, and depression generally increases. Yoga and meditation have been found to both reduce stress, anxiety, and depression and heal trauma stored in the body. Furthermore, prison yoga programs have been found to help reduce recidivism, opening a pathway to restorative, rather than retributive justice.



Your support makes it possible for Gravity to provide yoga and meditation to our cities troubled youth. Thank you for helping do good better.

PUBLISHED WORK

**MINDFUL SILENCE
BY PHILEENA HEUERTZ
RELEASED ON 11/13
2ND PRINTING 1/29**

**THE SACRED ENNEAGRAM
BY CHRIS HEUERTZ
IS IN ITS
8TH PRINTING**

**PILGRIMAGE OF A SOUL
BY PHILEENA HEUERTZ
IS IN ITS 5TH PRINTING**

**CHRIS' SECOND
ENNEAGRAM BOOK
ON BELONGING IS
SCHEDULED FOR
PUBLICATION IN 2020**

**PHILEENA & CHRIS
WERE INTERVIEWED ON
NEARLY 70 PODCASTS &
CONTRIBUTED TO A
NUMBER OF PRINT
PUBLICATIONS**

REVENUE BREAKDOWN

INCOME

We nearly hit our 2018 goal and raised a total of \$430,430.

IN-KIND/NON-CASH

An additional \$19,450 from in-kind/non-cash gifts to charity.

JUNE



Our best month was June with \$68,312, which caught us by surprise because giving is often lowest in the summer months.

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER

From November 23 – December 31, we saw \$78,082 come in.

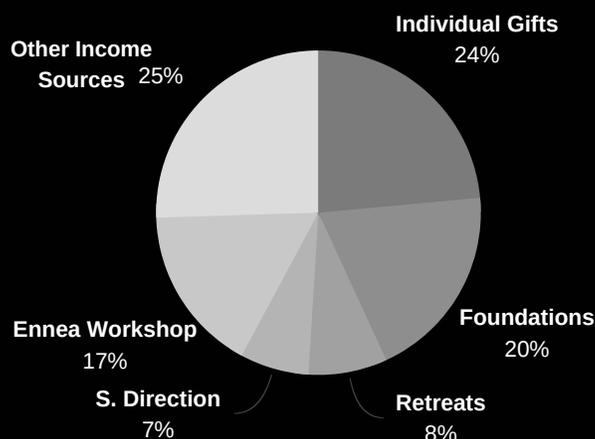
OUR 2 BEST DAYS

Omaha Gives brought in \$22,158 on June 28th & June 12th we received \$32,000. This adds up to 12.6% of our annual income!

DISCOUNTS & DONATIONS

The total amount discounted, donated, or scholarshipped by Gravity in 2018 was a whopping \$50,000. Thank you for helping us serve generously.

BREAKDOWN



This year,
GRAVITY

Turned 6!



WE CELEBRATE
THE PROGRAMS...

PRAYER...



AND PEOPLE...

THAT RESULT IN
SPIRITUAL HEALING
AND AWAKENING
FOR SO MANY.



THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU DO
TO MAKE OUR WORK POSSIBLE.

IN THE OFFICE



betty mcguire, operations manager

As operations manager, Betty is committed to her ever-changing and developing responsibilities. She strives to bring efficiency, creativity, and positivity to the daily happenings at Gravity. She loves a good cup of coffee, good vibes, and good friends. Betty enjoys serving the community through her work with us and she is looking forward to completing her graduate degree in Health and Wellness Coaching in 2020.

basil, building and office dog

When Basil is not patiently sitting in the entrance of Gravity and greeting people as they enter the building, he is making sure to read office mail and shred it if needed. He brings warmth and tender love to all who visit our office. He calms the air when it feels tense and lifts spirits when they are down. Basil works everyday like everybody else, often by pulling the staff to the present and reminding all to be in the here and now. He enjoys walks, treats, and lots of potty breaks on sunny days.



VOLUNTEER STAFF



angela griner, research analyst for special initiatives

Angela has worked in the field of education for nearly 20 years with a focus on ways educators can better serve children and families that have been historically underserved by education policy and institutional practices in the U.S. Angela's acumen for research enables Gravity to evaluate its programs and services and pivot in ways that best serve its clients and partners. With extraordinary thoroughness and precision, Angela's research keeps Gravity accountable to its vision and mission for helping people integrate contemplation with their very active lives.

nikole lim, graphic design intern

Nikole is a speaker, educator and consultant on leveraging dignity through the restorative art of storytelling. She is the Co-Founder and International Director of Freely in Hope, a nonprofit organization seeking to restore dignity with survivors of sexual violence by providing educational opportunities and platforms for women to fulfill their dreams. Her heart beats for young women whose voices are silenced by oppression and desires to see every person realize the transformative power of their own story. Her artistic eye and passionate heart are reflected in the beautiful work she does for Gravity.



victoria rosales, communications and marketing intern

Victoria is a Holistic Narrative Therapist and Natural Health Consultant who is passionate about the healing power of Story. She believes an accurate and honest telling of our story is necessary to the understanding and acceptance of truth, and that truth, once known, lends way to healing, liberation and redemption. She serves Gravity by sharing our stories with our community through regular correspondence and clear communication.

jared spence, hospitality specialist intern

Jared studied journalism and public relations at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. With a wide range of gifts and skills, Jared works as a freelance writer and editor for Omaha Publications, gallery attendant at KANEKO, and receptionist at Curb Appeal Salon and Spa. His personal and professional passions include writing, wardrobe styling, editorial creative direction, and event coordinating. A longtime friend of the Gravity Center, Jared generously extends his skills to offer hospitality at retreats, workshops, and other functions.



In Memoriam



Founding Board Member, Thomas Keating, O.C.S.O

One Saturday morning, fifteen years ago my husband's spiritual director, Bob, unexpectedly called. He said, "I felt inspired to invite you to meet my teacher, Fr. Thomas Keating. Would you & Phileena have dinner with us this evening?"

Knowing Bob was not one to be taken lightly, we thought it best to accept his invitation.

Later that night, we ventured to the nearby Creighton University. We found the dining hall where we were expected. Bob and his wife Anne greeted us. We sat down at a round table and moments later, in walked a tall, gallant, old man in a black monastic robe. With unhindered joy, Fr. Thomas embraced us.

We told Fr. Thomas about our humanitarian service around the world and subsequent religious deconstruction and spiritual darkness. As the evening unfolded, he introduced us to the Christian contemplative tradition and a meditation practice called centering prayer. Our life has never been the same.

There was decidedly life *before* meeting Fr. Thomas, and life *after* meeting him.

That day I took to the practice of centering prayer like a bee to honey and slowly, my personality with all of its hang-ups, came into view. As time went on,

it became clear how severely limited I was by my persona. It really was like a mask that blocked the light from shining through. I was discovering that I was much more than what others wanted or needed me to be. With the help of centering prayer, I experienced greater and greater freedom to dare to live my truth.

Over the years I had the opportunity to visit Fr. Thomas a few times at his Trappist home in Snowmass, CO. During prayers at the chapel I was always overcome with reverence and gratitude for the man who had learned the art of letting go in service to humanity, in service to me. He completely gave his life away.

Fr. Thomas lived the wisdom teaching of Jesus that if you want to save your life, you must lose it. It seems to me he lost everything and acquired the Source of life. In that, he was equal to none other than our beloved, Mother Teresa. These are the only humans I've met yet who were such obvious conduits of Spirit.

By "losing his life," Fr. Thomas saved mine. At a time when the practices that had sustained my faith journey were falling short, he helped me find the contemplative dimension of reality. His wisdom has guided my way ever since. Later, Fr. Thomas graciously agreed to be a part of our founding board for Gravity and remains an advisory council member in absentia to this day.

This past fall, October 25, 2018, at the age of 95, Fr. Thomas passed away. The day of his wake, I had the privilege of spending some moments relatively alone with his body in the chapel where the monks kept vigil for him. Even in death he was being of service. I found myself transfixed in his presence, while a life greater than his seemed to flow even more freely through him. By the time I left the chapel, more than thirty minutes had passed but it felt like only a few.

That day I was drawn to another wisdom saying of Jesus, "Unless a grain of wheat fall to the ground and breaks open and die, it will bear no fruit. But if it dies it will bear a produce a great harvest." There

is no doubt that Fr. Thomas continues to bear fruit, even and perhaps most especially in his death.

Through Fr. Thomas, I found the path of life. And on that path I found a way to let go of the confines of my personality. Slowly I'm discovering what it means to be a person, rather than a personality. A person, according to the Latin root meaning of the word, is one who experiences a greater life sounding through. The contemplative path opens

the possibility of such a meaningful existence. And we are grateful to Fr. Thomas for helping to open this way to us.

Fr. Thomas thank you for showing us the way. May your life live on in ours, and may our service fulfill some of your dreams for a more compassionate world.

Written by Phileena Heurtz

gravity

a center for contemplative activism