

Dear friends in Christ,

As unlikely as it may seem, three 'new-age' interfaith streams (EST/Mastery Foundation, Centering Prayer, and the Labryinth) seeming to be coming closer together in their bid to impact the Church. Three friends of Werner Erhard\* (the discredited founder of EST/Landmark Education) have set up "The Mastery Foundation", to combine "centering prayer" with EST as a 'ministry tool' for monks, nuns, and clergy.

The three friends are Brother Basil Pennington the founder of the Centering Prayer movement, Fr. G. O'Rourke the ecumenical officer for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of San Francisco - and a member of the Board of Directors for the United Religions Initiative, and the Right Reverend Otis Charles, an openly-gay retired Episcopalian Bishop - and former dean of the Episcopal Divinity School.

The essence of Centering Prayer and its twin 'World Christian Community for Meditation' <http://www.wccm.org/jms9802.html#anchor648533> is Hindu Mantra Yoga, turning biblical terms like 'maranatha' into a mantra.

ECUSA's former Presiding Bishop Browning, among others, has taken part in this EST/Centering Prayer 'corporate merger', and gives his online endorsement. Remarkably Werner Erhard is listed online as one of the teachers. The fast-growing Labryinth fad, popularized by Dr. Jean Houston <http://www.jeanhouston.org/> \*\*, the new-age founder of the 'Mystery School' and by her disciple Canon Lauren Artress of Grace Cathedral San Francisco, seems to be more and more linked with the Centering Prayer phenomom. My hunch is that we will see a lot more of this new-age 'trinity' in our local regions in the next few years.

In Christ, Ed Hird+

\* Werner Erhard has a remarkable ability to re-package his new-age ware (first EST, then Landmark Education, now Mastery Foundation) and to bounce back from a widely reported IRS scandal and sexual abuse accusations by his family. Werner, a former Scientologist, now claims that all his problems are Scientology-inspired, and that the only reason that he is not returning to North America is because Scientology <http://www.bostonherald.com/scientology/index.html> has a 'contract' out on his life.

\*\*Dr. Jean Houston is perhaps best known for the media coverage <http://www.fni.com/heritage/aug96/Hillary.html> on her attempts to channel the spirit of Eleanor Roosevelt for Hilary Clinton.