

UPCOMING EVENTS

20
26

April 26

Annual Meeting after Sunday Service

June – August

Aspen Music Festival students featured at Sunday services

July – August

FREE spotlight performances on Thursdays

August 11

Annual Garden Party

- Wine tasting
- String trio
- English teas and treats



Our Voices are Being Heard

2025 ASPEN CHAPEL ANNUAL REPORT

NICHOLAS' LETTER



“Our theme this year is the way that the voices of those in the community of the Aspen Chapel continue to be heard through all the activities we are involved in.”

Nicholas Vesey
Spiritual Leader

“The chapel offers a rare space for reflection, where people can step away from the noise of everyday life.”

We have had 4 men's group meetings so far. Each time from 6:00-7:30pm on the first Monday of the month..

At the first meeting we had 6 in attendance, then we had 12 the second meeting, and 8 the last meeting. So we are averaging 8. The themes have varied from why men don't cry, to coping with declining sex drives as we get older, to just about everything in between. I haven't used a strict agenda for our meetings and want them to be free flowing and open, while always staying away from politics. I think if I had to summarize our aims I would say to go deep and explore our feelings and emotions, and not be afraid to go deep. I think we have created a very safe and comfortable setting that allows the men in attendance to do this. Thanks for the opportunity to host these meetings, it has been a true pleasure, and strengthened the bonds between us.



Andy Godfrey
Men's Group

Dear Friends,

It has been a good year at the chapel, with us reaching out and being heard in a number of ways.

For me, the highlights of the year were the Webinar that we did in February, and the Forum we did in June. Both these were responses to the situation we find ourselves in as a country, and the recordings of these events were seen by over 20,000 people.

One thing that I have been really impressed with of late is the number of small groups that individuals have started in and around the community.

The list includes:

- The two meditation and yoga groups
- The Sacred Cinema
- The Book Group
- The Men's Group
- The Vishoka Meditation group
- The Supper Clubs
- Other one off happenings that community members have initiated.

This to me is a sign that we are all using the chapel as a platform for having our voices heard.

Alongside that, the Sunday services always include a regular time for people to express their views, and the one off events have included small groups to listen to what people have to say.

As we move into 2026, our emphasis is to provide a still point within the chaos that seems to be engulfing much of our world.

While some build 'doomsday bunkers' to withstand any onslaught, we are building our hearts to enable us to both stay sane, and to listen to what we are being asked to do.

I am confident that the chapel will continue to be both relevant, and part of the solution rather than part of the problem in the years to come.

I look forward to working with you over the next year.

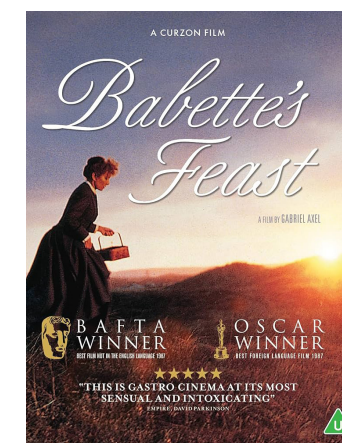
CINEMA

Sacred Cinema Series

The Sacred Cinema Series at the Aspen Chapel brought our community together for five contemplative evenings of film, conversation, and connection, with 30–50 participants at each screening.

Generously sponsored by the Journal of Religion and Film at the University of Nebraska Omaha, the series transformed the chapel into a serene cinematic sanctuary as autumn light faded and the space filled with warmth, incense, and the shared anticipation of meaningful stories.

Together we watched **The Way** starring Martin Sheen along the Camino de Santiago, **Black Narcissus**, **Babette's Feast**, **Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter... and Spring**, and the documentary **The Heart Revolution**. With gourmet popcorn and great friends, each evening invited reflection on the spiritual dimensions of life, turning film into a shared practice of presence and community.





Shelly Merriam
Supper Club

“Our Chapel members span the Roaring Fork Valley with strengthened friendships old and new.”

The Aspen Chapel Supper Club began in Fall 2023 with casual gatherings of 6 to 8 people contributing to and sharing dinner. Sign ups are fall, winter, spring and/or summer to accommodate seasonal and permanent residents. Each group plans their own dinner arrangements. Our Chapel members span the Roaring Fork Valley with strengthened friendships old and new. We are always heartened with the unfolding of shared interests and life experiences. Consequently, our interactions at the Chapel are strengthened from the conversations shared over intimate dinners. Please join us.

“The chapel continues to be a place where people come to reconnect with what truly matters.”

After each Sunday service, we welcome all attendees to join us for a coffee, tea and small bites reception in our downstairs gallery. This has been a tradition for many years at the Chapel. It is a time for people to converse with each other, whether folks are catching up on each other’s week’s activities or meeting a person for the first time. Thanks also to Nicholas for setting up the coffee every week! The reception is provided each week by volunteers. Please contact info@aspenchapel.org if you are interested in joining in.



Liz Bokram
Reception Team



Words of Wisdom Book Club

“It is inspiring to see how this community continues to grow and support the work of the chapel.”

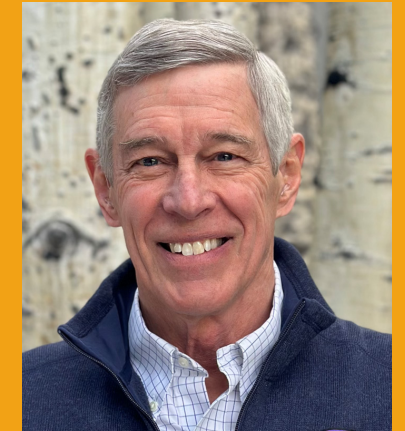
Justin Nyberg
Book Club

The Words of Wisdom book club creates an intimate, welcoming space where community members can truly let their voices be heard. Over six gatherings, 8–12 participants met in a member’s home for two-hour conversations rooted in shared reading and honest reflection. This season we explored **Be Here Now** by Ram Dass, **Anam Cara** by John O’Donohue, **New Seeds of Contemplation** by Thomas Merton, **Heart of Sufism** by Hazrat Inayat Khan, and **The Miracle of Mindfulness** by Thích Nhất Hạnh. Beyond discussing ideas, the group shares personal insights about inner life, relationships, and the wider world—offering a respectful platform where diverse perspectives strengthen connection and help the chapel’s voice be expressed through its people.

BRUCE'S LETTER

“2025 may have been the best year ever for our Chapel Community on three fronts: digital outreach to the world; operational cost efficiency; and new sources of fundraising.”

Bruce Merrifield
Board Chair



Dear Friends,

Thanks to two aspenwisdom.org web events, we reached record numbers of new digital participants both domestically and internationally.

Although our income dropped from these events in contrast to our live speaker series totals for both '23 and '24, the speaker expenses dropped even more for a greater, net surplus.

The gurus who participated remotely donated their time and wisdom. And, our aspenwisdom.org site has now become a magnet for new parties who would like to participate in future activities.

We ran a strong operational surplus in fiscal '25 due to new donations both large and small, and having total operational expenses for '25 being \$40K less (or 7%) than in '24.

In spite of both higher payroll and inflationary increases, our savings came from lower speaker expenses and overall lower, development/fundraising expenses.

Both Peggy and Nicholas have continued to skill up and take on more development activity costs in house to execute better for less.

Looking to the future, we are planning for a transition to a new, spiritual director as soon as June 30, 2028 when Nicholas’ current contract expires.

And, we are exploring a promising new partnership for our aspenwisdom.org platform. This platform may enable us to honor our founders’ original mission hopes for “redefining spiritual values” from a “national global ecumenical center”.

Onward we go!





“Sometimes I have to slow down, take a breath and just be present.”

Peggy Burke
Operations Manager

As Operations Manager, I wear many hats from data entry, financial reporting, donor relations, speaker series support, payroll agent, wedding planner, Garden party and events organizer and more.

Having Anca Stroe as my assistant this past year has helped me in many ways. After she has learned about the Aspen Forum, Labyrinth walks, Sound healings, Men’s group, Book club, Supper Club, Speaker Series, Aspen Music Festival Spotlight recitals, coproduction with Aspen Art Museum, Yoga and Meditation offerings...she commented “and I thought all you did was pray!”.

During my week, I often get various visitors popping in: homeless people, kids wanting to play with my lively Scottish terrier Mitzi, some who want to talk to Nicholas but when he’s not there share their stories/burdens with me, church shoppers asking what we are all about, others simply looking for a connection. This is when I have to slow down, take a breath and just be present with them. After all, it is what we teach here, “being in the present moment”.

The Zen Garden, the green Garden and the mini labyrinth seem to be attracting more and more explorers.

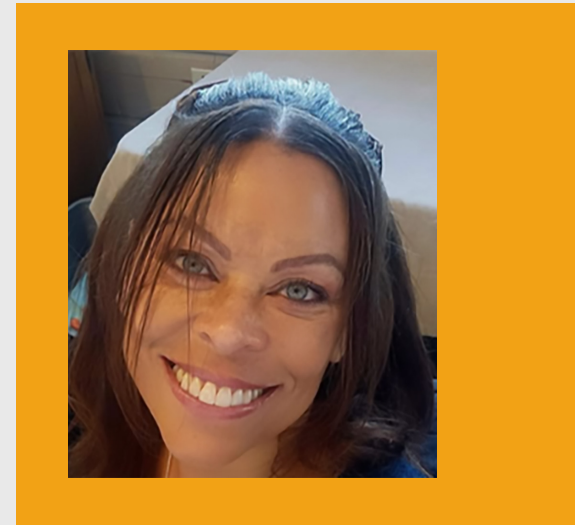
Each Sunday, we gather at the Aspen Chapel to clear our thoughts and reconnect with what truly matters to us on a deeper level.

Nicholas excels at illuminating techniques for skillful living, and I strive to find music that complements his weekly message.

Music has the remarkable ability to transport us beyond ourselves or to deepen our introspection. It can alter our emotional states, enhance our sense of purpose, and foster connections with others, driving the impact of the spoken wisdom home.

While we treasure our beloved musical favorites, I am also incredibly thankful for the opportunity to collaborate with talented professionals who are eager to perform for the first time in 2026.

My aim is to maintain high quality and ensure that the talent remains diverse and openminded, reflecting our vision for Aspen as a “spiritual home for everyone.”



“Music has the remarkable ability to transport us beyond ourselves”

Siam Castillo
Music



“The nonprofit organization receives 20% of sponsorships and 10% of the sales.”



Since October 2018, the Aspen Chapel Gallery has donated \$91,242 \$70,742 to 35 valley non-profits and \$20,500 to the 5 Roaring Fork Valley High School Art Departments.”



Michael Bonds Tom Ward
Co-director Co-director





ASPEN CHAPEL GALLERY

40
YEARS

265
CONSECUTIVE
EXHIBITIONS

“The Aspen Chapel Gallery has been giving “voice” to Roaring Fork Valley artists providing a dedicated gallery space to exhibit their work.”

Emerging and young artists have the opportunity for their first public art exhibition. Around 100 artists and 85 Roaring Fork valley high school art students are in the annual 8 shows.

We celebrated our 40th anniversary with a show open to all artists in the valley. 62 valley-wide artists exhibited 115 pieces of art.

Each exhibition partners with an Aspen or Roaring Fork Valley nonprofit organization to highlight the partnering organization, introduce an arts oriented audience to the nonprofit, and bring in a larger audience to the gallery. The partner attends the opening and interacts with the artists and attendees.

100
ARTISTS

85
ROARING FORK
VALLEY HIGH
SCHOOL STUDENTS

62
VALLEY-WIDE
ARTISTS

115
EXHIBITED
PIECES OF ART



“A freedom playground for children’s imagination.”

Marixa Peña

Children’s Work

Hello, I’m Marixa, one of the Sunday School teachers at Aspen Chapel. Each Sunday morning, our children are given the opportunity to express themselves through fun and meaningful activities that celebrate their creative imagination and spontaneity. Through joy and laughter, they expand their knowledge and grow together in a loving environment.

At Sunday School, we are reminded that the purity within our hearts is a true “Freedom Playground” for us all. Sunday School at Aspen Chapel is a special time we cherish deeply and look forward to every weekend.

The yoga and meditation practice lead by Mimi and Mary Cate Hauenstein is alive and well. There is a deep sense of commitment, gratitude, and calm expressed by the 20 consistent practitioners. At the end of each session the depth of the practice is palpable as is the sense of being held in a caring community.

Many people say that Tuesday evening at the chapel is the most important time of their week and they look forward to it all week. Attendance fluctuates due to work, injuries/illness, travel, family commitments, etc. Currently 10-15 people attend each Tuesday.

In an effort to inform people about the ancient and effective form of meditation we practice and to support more people in establishing their own personal meditation practice, an introduction to Vishoka Meditation was offered in March/April.



“Tuesday evening at the chapel is the most important time of the week.”

Mimi Hauenstein

Yoga and Meditation



Over this last year I feel that contemplative work has come to the fore in the expression of the chapel community. Nicholas continues to host Tuesday morning Zen Meditation, and has included, as a guest, Zen Master Robert Kennedy. He has most recently been doing a course on the 10 Ox-herding pictures.

Mimi Hauenstein and Mary Cate Hauenstein have been regularly running Tuesday evening Yoga and meditation, and Mimi is also offering a course in Vishoka Meditation this year.

Our Sunday services continue to have a contemplative emphasis. More recently we have been including five minutes of silent

meditation at the beginning of each service.

The Forum and the Webinar that we hosted this year both had some of this country's most experienced spiritual teachers, including Cynthia Bourgeault, Matthew Fox, Marianne Williamson and Andrew Harvey.

I am committed and keen that we continue to have this contemplative emphasis in all that we try to contribute, and that this be front and center in our expression.



Robert Kennedy
Zen Master



“With the world as it is at the moment, it is important that we continue to have a contemplative stance in all that we do at the Chapel.”

Heather Vesey
Director of Contemplative Work



The second event was a 'Forum' on 'Forming a Unitive Consciousness'. This was both live, with Sherri Mitchell and Susan Aposhyan coming to Aspen and other people appearing on video, with an audience on Zoom who could also participate. It was complicated technically, but worked well.

In all, over 20,000 people saw both these events and we participated in moving the needle of the conversation around the country from 'What do we do?' to 'How can we bring people together.'

That work continues and we are looking at more collaborations to bring the ideas that we have to offer through the 'Wisdom from the Top of the World' platform to a wider audience.

Nicholas Vesey
Spiritual Leader

The Aspen Chapel hosted the fifth annual English Garden Party on August 12th.

This very special afternoon has become a beloved community tradition, treating attendees to delicious English fare amidst the beautiful chapel gardens. Our guests sported authentic English Garden hats and attire, adding to the festivities. With musicians from the Aspen Music Festival, an exquisite wine tasting, an opportunity to bid on unique items and the backdrop of the Rocky Mountains, the Garden Party 2025 was enjoyed by many and truly a great success.

The Garden Party is an annual fundraiser developed to help support the operations and programming budget for the Aspen Chapel. Our guests and sponsors were very generous, with the event raising over \$58,000 to provide funding for this iconic chapel. As a major yearly fundraiser, we are most grateful for all who contributed and attended.

Garden Party 2026 planning has begun!
* Pictures on the back page.



“A beloved community tradition.”
Maureen Callahan
Garden Party

WISDOM FROM THE TOP OF THE WORLD



Wisdom from the Top of the World came into its own this last year, hosting two high profile events and growing its database to over 2000.

The Webinar we held in February was extremely popular, and we hosted, live, such teachers as Tim Shriver, Cynthia Bourgeault, Shane Claybourne, Cyprian Consiglio, Andrew Harvey and Marianne Williamson. This first event was about trying to respond to the situation the country found itself in following the change of administration.

