



The Shalem Society for Contemplative Leadership

SHALEM CIRCLES

A Shalem Circle is a form of support offered primarily to members of the Shalem Society for Contemplative Leadership. Participation in a contemplatively-oriented small group is part of the Shalem Society members' commitment. This can take many forms. The particular form described here, the Shalem Circle, can complement other differently-focused contemplative groups of which you may be a part (such as a listening circle or a spiritual directors peer group), or it can become your sole such group. Participation in a Shalem Circle is recommended but not required.

The Vision: an authentic, dynamic contemplative community of small groups of Society members, organized geographically, which meets regularly to provide support and encourage growth in contemplative living and leadership and in the membership commitment and practices of the Shalem Society. Through the grace of the Living Presence and the nurture of the Shalem Circles, the members will become more fully and authentically who they are in God and strengthened to offer fresh hope and healing to our broken world.

The Mission: to prayerfully embrace the holy ground of members' personal lives, community efforts and God's dream for the new creation. Shalem Circles will provide support and accountability for deepening contemplative life and leadership throughout the regions. Remembering that the word *shalem* refers to growing in wholeness, these small groups are dedicated to nurturing growth in contemplative awareness, holy imagination and sacred activism in the world, beyond what would likely be possible alone.

Guidelines: Shalem Circles may be formed at any time and will meet at least once every eight weeks, in person or by telephone conference call or Skype. We recommend a two-hour meeting time. If your Circle does not normally meet in person, it may also be valuable to schedule a retreat time together or an overnight meeting at some point during the year. The commitment is to one year together, at the end of which the Circle will consider the grace that's been given and the call to continue or not by particular members.

A Reflection Sheet is provided to assist the members' mutual accountability and preparation for Shalem Circle meetings. We suggest that these be emailed or sent to each other at least one week before every scheduled meeting.

Susan Etherton, **the Shalem Circle Companion**, is called to serve members who want to explore joining an existing Circle, where available, or form a new one. If you have any questions, please contact her at sretherton@aol.com.

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SHALEM CIRCLE MEETINGS

Each meeting should have a designated convener/timekeeper. The convener will make sure each group member has a copy of the Reflection Questions prior to the meeting.

Suggested Format for Shalem Circle Meetings

- Gathering silence (5 minutes)—if meeting by conference call, be in silence at home beforehand
- Brief check-in with each person (1-2 minutes)
- A brief reading from Scripture or other spiritual resource
- Silence (1-2 minutes)
- Sharing by one individual (4-6 minutes)
- Silence for listening for the movement of the Spirit (1-2 minutes)
- Response by Circle members (10 minutes)
- Prayer for the person sharing (1-2 minutes)
- A few moments of silence before the next person shares
- Brief reflection on group process
- Closing prayer

Sharing Time

- Commit to confidentiality
- Listen for the Spirit, honoring spaces between the words
- Resist moving into debate or problem-solving
- Value differences, seeking authenticity in self and others
- Use “I” statements rather than “we” or “they”
- Respect time and timing

During the sharing time, each person has an opportunity to present an issue related to contemplative living and leadership while others listen prayerfully.

After silent prayerful reflection, the response time allows for sharing the questions or comments that were given in the silence. Different from problem-solving, the intent of the questions is to assist the one sharing in drawing further his/her own wisdom, to name and claim his/her deepest truth. New insights, gifts, call, and synchronicity may be revealed and affirmed.

At the end of the meeting, after everyone has had time for sharing and response, allow for a brief processing time. The processing should include the group’s sense of openness to the Spirit during the time and any practical issues related to the process. In the closing prayer time (about 5 minutes), include prayer for the other members and corporate vision of the Shalem Society, as well as for the staff and mission of Shalem. If planning for a regional event is invited, set a time to do that.

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SHALEM CIRCLE REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Name _____

Date _____

1. What is unfolding for you in terms of your contemplative leadership/ministry? Any new hints of call? What support would you like to ask for?
2. What practice most supports your contemplative living and leadership? What accountability or other support would be helpful?
3. Is there anything else in your life for which you need prayer and support?
4. Are there any needs of your community or Shalem regional events that you want to share with your Shalem Circle, including anything that may be a call for involvement by some members of the Circle?
5. Name any resources for contemplative practices and leadership that you are finding particularly valuable.