

# Deep Listening

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# Deep Listening to the Spirit

**Leah Rampy**

*"In our intercessions we fix our wills on the divine possibility latent in the present moment, and then find ourselves caught up in the whirlwind of God's struggle to actualize it." —Walter Wink*

Recently I was sharing with one of our long-time friends, a former adjunct faculty and a long-time spiritual director, about my sense of the Spirit's movement in the work of Shalem Institute. She noted, "I always feel that an important part of discernment is to look around at what's already happening. God is already leading and we're invited to join in the movement and build on it." "Yes," I thought, "that's exactly my experience."

Our discernment comes from deep prayerful listening. It is stirred by conversations with others and a time of individual reflection. It is seasoned by spiritual community and bursts of that "aha" moment. And it becomes more vivid by noticing what God is already up to, what doors have been opened for us, and what is coming to us, often seemingly without intervention on our part. This has been the story of Shalem for the past 18 months.

In March 2011 Shalem's Board and Staff reflected during a silent retreat on the question, "To what is Shalem invited now?" But the discernment didn't stop there. We listened through continued individual and corporate prayer, conversations between Board and Staff, one-on-one conversations with friends of Shalem, and within the prayerful reflections of a discernment team. Always underlying this prayerful intention to listen from the spiritual heart has been a noticing of what God is already bringing into being.

Our collective sense of what is being invited is summarized in the initiatives we've called Deep and Wide.\* We feel the



longing for a deeper connection to the Holy in a world that often feels chaotic, fragmented, and disillusioning. We sense that the ancient-yet-ever-new contemplative way is vital for each of us and for our world.

We've noticed the increasing number of people who write us, unable to attend a program but still longing for spiritual community and support for contemplative living. We've rejoiced in the Shalem graduates in South Korea, Cuba, South Africa,

Jamaica, and other locations around the world who are bringing contemplative prayer to their communities; we hear their desire for continued support for their leadership. We've marveled at how Shalem's Personal Spiritual Deepening Program, now offered across the US and around the world, continues to expand to new audiences.

We've come to understand that Shalem is being called to nurture contemplative living and leadership for all seekers, regardless of their capacity to attend on-site programs, and that we are asked to renew our support of our graduates as they offer the fruits of their contemplative practice to communities around the world.

The path to Deep and Wide has unfolded to include 1) the development of a new website and online programs to introduce people around the world to contemplative practices and to support our graduates in continued nurturing of the spiritual heart; and 2) the nurturing of current and emerging leaders for Shalem's long-term programs and pilgrimages.

Throughout our extended discernment, we continued to witness many examples of how the Spirit was drawing us into a future not of our making. We have seen an amazing array of resources come to us and that has helped clarify and strengthen our understanding of the way forward.

For example, as we shared some of our preliminary ideas with the staff of the F.I.S.H. Foundation, they generously offered to fund the development of a platform to offer online learning as well as the first course of Shalem's Online School of Contemplative Prayer. We had discussed online learning, wondered about its possibilities—and then a door opened and we stepped through. This fall we piloted the program, and it will be open for enrollment in January 2013!

As we prepared the presentation to the Board that would launch Deep and Wide, the scope of the projects we felt called to undertake and the amount of money that we would need to raise, seemed daunting. Then four days before our Board and Staff Retreat, a wonderfully generous friend of Shalem called unexpectedly to say that she was sending a gift for \$100,000 to us to use as we were called! And then another friend offered to help identify and fund the equipment that we might need!

After reflecting prayerfully on the call, each and every Board member made a three-year pledge to the Deep and Wide

campaign that was over and above their already generous annual pledge! While we were listening for clarity of direction, God continued to work, helping to strengthen our intentions, clarifying the direction.

This seems a pivotal moment for Shalem. We believe that the Spirit is inviting us to be more expansive than we could have imagined a few years ago. The support we've received has sustained us, inspired us, and led us to trust this moment. We are being led to move beyond the status quo and invest in an unfolding future.

The condition of the world calls forth our renewed commitment; what we can bring to its well-being is vitally needed. May each of us continue our intention to open to God in each moment as the Spirit ever guides and co-creates through us.

***Leah is Shalem's Executive Director.***

*\*For more details on Shalem's Deep and Wide Campaign, please visit Shalem's web site, [www.Shalem.org](http://www.Shalem.org).*

## Reflection

—*Ellen Ratmeyer*

Inside me there is a spark  
of wonder and mystery  
of known and unknown  
energy and mass  
heaven and earth  
of holy communion

I have a need  
to clear away the clutter  
of what is secondary  
that blocks the way  
to the all-important space  
which is filled  
with the presence of the Beloved.

***Ellen is a graduate of Shalem's Spiritual Guidance Program.***



# To Fix or not to Fix—That is the Question. Or is It?

Liz Ward

Emma Woodhouse, the heroine in Jane Austen's *Emma*, was certain that the new curate, Mr. Elton, should marry her protégé, Harriet Smith. Emma was clever enough to find ways to bring the two together in her well-intended plan. The problem was, however, that her attachment to this agenda blocked her awareness of the truth. Mr. Elton was interested in the wealthy Emma, and not her lovely, kind, but less socially prominent protégé. Moreover, Harriet was actually in love



with the farmer Robert Martin, although it took her some time to realize the truth of her own feelings. Thus Emma's attachment to her own agenda brings embarrassment, disappointment, and pain rather than the happy outcome she so sincerely desired.

Emma has been one of many guides for my ministry as a spiritual director. It was hard for her to see beyond her own well-meaning impulses, so she consistently missed clues to a larger reality. Her focus was so narrowed by her plans for others that she was blinded by her misguided visions of the perfect future. She had not yet learned the humility that can come from confronting limitations and the awareness that sees beyond ego desires and the illusions they can so easily generate. Of course, she does learn the error of her ways, and we too learn the error of our ways along with her. So Emma has helped me see how easily I can be well meaning and misguided.

This awareness helps me be mindful of my inner Emma as I sit with directees. It can be tempting to think that some of the guidance I have received over time from prayerful listening or careful study could be applied to a particular situation of a particular directee. After all, I think, there are certain similarities in our experiences, circumstances, or understandings, and surely the lessons I have learned from the struggles of my life are meant to benefit others in some truly meaningful way. Surely it can't be wrong to encourage what I perceive to be a loving, liberating path into the future.

When I head in this direction, however, I have learned to pause and remind myself who the real Spiritual Director is. When I pause I can remember that an incredible, mysterious Life much wiser, more loving, and more truthful than I could ever be is flowing with wild abandon throughout creation. This Divine Energy not only transforms the seasons and endless creatures but also the hearts and minds of those drawn in communion and union with this powerful Holy Life.

Having the privilege of witnessing the transformations that can happen over time to those who allow themselves to be open and vulnerable to the movement of the Spirit is one of

the priceless gifts of being a spiritual director. It is a blessing to sense again and again how tenderly and respectfully the Holy One guides and lovingly co-creates with us if we are only open and willing. It reminds me that the Spirit has been living and moving in the directee from the beginning, and that the Spirit will continue to live and move in this life long after I am no longer journeying with this person.

My task is to open myself to this Loving Light and patiently wait for whatever may or may not come, for whatever may or may not seem right to say or to do. I can try to notice and limit my agendas to allow a spaciousness that encourages an openness to God's loving Spirit. I can try to listen with the directee for the often subtle nudges and invitations of the Spirit, and I can just be present with the directee in the countless times of confusion and not-knowing. I can hope that the breath of the Spirit will blow through with its obvious and surprising gifts and easy-to-spot blessings, but I also know that the work of the moment may be deep and hidden. It may seem as if nothing significant is going on when in fact, as always, something quite profound may secretly be taking place far beneath the surface of awareness.

On the other hand, upon occasion, the Spirit may want to draw from the well of my life and formation and offer slivers of content rather than open-ended questions. The key, for me, during these times, is that the Spirit is choosing what to offer and when to give it. The Spirit is allowing me to co-

create new life when and if I am somehow mysteriously able to hear what is mine to say in one particular moment. When the Spirit leads, there is a given-ness for me that seems richer and freer than when the words are said only on my own.

What is offered when the Spirit chooses can be fresher and richer than what comes from my automatic or impulsive response. Sometimes the words may be the same, but when the Spirit chooses, there can be a giftedness in the way they are said that seems to allow more freedom to hear and discern. Often I can be surprised at what comes out of my mouth—or at what does not come out. I can say things I did not know I knew or offer images that are meaningless to me but may have significance for another. There can be a sense that we are not alone in the room.

The real question then is not “to fix or not to fix” but if can I allow the Spirit to be the transforming force and somehow be sensitive in the moment to my little part in the ocean of God's life. Can I be intentional about not blocking the movement of the Spirit even when I don't know what that movement is or seems to want to be? Can I be as open as I am able in the moment and trust that faithful willingness is enough? If so, perhaps my inner Emma will gradually be as transformed as Emma Woodhouse, and who knows what may come as a result.

*Liz is the director of Shalem's Spiritual Guidance Program: Nurturing the Call.*

We wait in the quietness for some centering moment that will redefine, reshape, and refocus our lives. It does seem to be a luxury to be able to give thought and time to the ups and downs of one's private journey while the world around is so sick and weary and desperate. But, our Father, we cannot get through to the great anxieties that surround us until, somehow, a path is found through the little anxieties that beset us.

—From Howard Thurman, *The Centering Moment*

# "P[e]ace"

Ridgeway Addison

**A**s this fall season, with its call to autumnal busyness, continues its way into each of our lives, I wonder how many of you, as I do, find you are spending more of your time and energy haphazardly contemplating prayer and peace rather than actually and intentionally



engaging in contemplative prayer and peacemaking? Do you perhaps also sense a direct connection between the frantic quality and fevered pitch of all the “running around” you are currently doing in your professional and personal life and the pace of particular thoughts and issues “running around” the coliseums of your heart and mind?

I ran into this realization, quite literally, two months ago while leaning into a new job and concurrently stepping up my training for a December half-marathon. Since then I’ve been running (and not running) in all the wrong places, ways and times. My Sabbath time too quickly became reduced, theologically and chronologically, to the next time I could sleep and for how long. My pace both kept me running for and from peace. My right calf and my deeper-self kept cramping!

From the anxious exhaustion of it all, I have come to reclaim something I had too effortlessly forgotten: that the gifts and challenges of the running life and the gifts and challenges of the contemplative life are both great secrets that can only be known from the inside of each or from long, lived experience of both. The gifts and challenges of both paths, for me, come down to peace and pace.

I’ve had over 20 years of full-time pastoral ministry, long-distance running and experiments in the contemplative life. During this time I’ve “run” well and I’ve “run” horribly—literally, vocationally, relationally and academically. My personal worst marathon time was 90+ minutes slower than my personal best marathon. I finished my Ph.D. comprehensive exams in a record four months, then took eight grueling years to finally defend my dissertation. Thankfully, I wrote on Howard Thurman, whose spirit always kept me in step amidst my spectra of peace and pace.

Naming peace as my daily and ultimate intention doesn’t mean I’m going to run a marathon to bring peace to our planet, nor do I plan to write a pastoral manual detailing how to alleviate political violence. Instead, borrowing from Thurman, I teach, preach, run and pray to have a “sense of... well-being... of being in active and creative correspondence with one’s environment... of inner togetherness... of being whole” (from Howard Thurman’s audiotope, “Quest for Peace”). For me peace also has to do with the graced ability and responsibility of reconciling supposed opposites. (As in, “I need and want to stay in bed and I need and want to run eight miles this morning. And I need to stop and pray amidst panic and I need to pray when I can really focus.”)

For me, the practical and mystical elixir to bringing a compassionate center to my current, mostly toxic experience is pace. *I foundationally believe the key to peace is pace.*

Our common understanding of this term is “the rate of speed at which an activity or movement (or persons, people, situa-

tions, etc.) proceed.” Our English word finds roots in the Latin *pandere*—“to stretch or spread out.” So, to stretch or spread out, or to make or find a particular bit more space is what pacing is about for me in all my walks (and runs) of life.

This means that if I want to run a desirable (fast!) pace come December, I have to properly prepare by pacing out my preparation (allowing a bit more space in my schedule to train). Personally and professionally, my current “sprinter’s” pace isn’t a good way to start setting, finding and settling into a life-giving pace which will allow me to both be at peace and be peace for and with others. When I’m hyper-pacing, going back to pace as *pandere* is the first and last step to pace opening into prayer opening into peace.

Slowing down, even in the midst of a quick striding when running, brings more quality, precision, depth and presence to all that I do and am. And relatedly, peace comes in pacing everything out. Then I am free to respond rather than react—to breath-taking deadlines at work, to cramps when training for speed and to the continued delays in learning to love and listen to self and others as God does. Being mindful of pace can be a surefire way to finding and fostering peace.

Howard Thurman knew a little something about this. This is why, whenever possible, he would take a slow train to speaking engagements a few states away. He wanted to make time to feel and think his way into the words and arguments he would share. Similarly, he frequently paused and slowed

down his speaking within his sermon delivery, not for rhetorical flourish but in order to keep pace with the Spirit of God transmitting to and through him. Thurman’s concern for Spirit-centered pace also led him, during a 1958 hospital visit to Dr. Martin King, Jr. shortly after King’s stabbing in New York, to strongly suggest to the patient that he extend his convalescence beyond doctor’s orders because Thurman knew the leader’s opportunities for true rest and decreased pace were few and far between.

Dr. Thurman’s personal hold, pastoral prowess and relational advocacy for what I’ve termed “peace-making through pace-finding” reminds me of the Scottish world-class runner, Olympic champion and Christian missionary Eric Liddell (1902-45) and his running as prayer credo, “I believe God made me for a purpose, but he [God] also made me fast. And when I run I feel His [God’s] pleasure.” And for a runner like myself who of late has been thinking that *being fast* and *staying busy* was not really the *best* but the *only* way to fulfill my purpose in this particular autumnal season, Liddell’s words and Thurman’s practices are good to remember.

Fellow travelers on the contemplative footpath, “P[e]ace be with you.”

**Ridgeway, Assistant Professor, School of Nursing and Health Studies, Georgetown University, is a Shalem board member and in the current class of Shalem’s Leading Contemplative Prayer Groups & Retreats Program.**

# Which Glasses Are You Wearing Now?

**Tilden Edwards**

**H**ow alluring bodies of water can be! I’m sitting in front of one now: a small lake in front of our little place in Delaware. Each day I find myself gazing at it with wonder and questions. I’ve discovered that I see the lake in different ways, depending on the “glasses” I’m wearing.

When I’m wearing my “ego” glasses, then I see the lake in terms of my ego’s desire to protect me from harm and to give me pleasure. They look for danger and ask: “How deep is the

water?” “Are there ticks and other creatures lurking in the tall grasses surrounding it?” Through these glasses I also search for things that give pleasure to the senses and resist those that do not: I’m drawn to the sight of sun flecked waters moved by the wind; I avert my eyes from the dead fish and debris washed up on the shore. These glasses are good and valuable, but they are not the only pair available.

When I’m wearing my “mind” glasses, I see the lake with the questioning scientist’s mind: “How did this lake come





to be here? How can the lake's pollution be lessened? How does my body, which is 90% water and evolved from life in ancient seas, relate to this body of water?" My three-year-old grandson wore these glasses when he asked me, "Where does the rain come from that fills the lake?" These glasses are good and valuable also, but we still have other pairs given us.

When I'm wearing my "heart" glasses, I see the lake as it is, just as it is before my ego fears and grasping and my analytical mind become operative. This is a very intimate seeing, so intimate that I find my eyes inside the "lake-ness" of the lake. I intuitively "know" what it is to be this body of water. The lake and I are mutually indwelling. We're not *one*, but we're not ultimately *two* either. It's a paradoxical seeing and knowing. It carries an intimation of such mutual belonging beyond the lake to all that is. I might be moved to write a haiku poem wearing these glasses, which requires full intimacy with what I see.

Another pair of glasses might appear over my eyes. These I'll call my "revelation" glasses. Whatever may be seen through them is pure gift. I can bring only my naked trust in the ever-present abyss of divine Love to such seeing. With these gifted glasses I no longer feel that it's just "me" who is seeing. I'm being seen through—larger eyes penetrate my sight. Through these glasses, I realize the lake is a *sacred* lake. Its unique, vibrant being is seen as a gracious expression of Being itself.

As when Moses saw the bush afire with the revealing Presence, and Jesus knew the enlightening Spirit alive in the wa-

ters poured over him in baptism, the waters of the lake show their transparency to their holy Wellspring. In the process of such seeing, I might realize my own transparency to that Wellspring—an awareness that my core being is a shining image of God, however often darkened by my dim sight.

These rare glasses can spark a sense of awe and intimate mystery, of gratitude and enabled love. I may also find empowered a personal calling to live more fully from this gifted awareness of a God-soaked world. When we hear these glasses described by great contemplatives, we hear them speak of how each person, and every other shape of creation, has its own unique place and calling in the larger whole. Deep reality, divine reality itself, is shown to be a dynamic, relational Wholeness. In the heart of that Wholeness a mysteriously creative energy is revealed, endlessly shaping and pervading life with its own substance, including this lake in front of me.

I encourage you to notice which pair of glasses you're seeing through at a given time. That noticing will remind you that right now you are seeing reality in only one of a number of possible ways. Be sure to give time for the third pair of "heart" glasses and the contemplative practices that help us wear them. These are the glasses that help us see "what is" more directly and compassionately. Such seeing, I believe, leaves us more vulnerable to seeing through the fourth pair of glasses.

We may be conscious of wearing the gifted fourth pair of glasses at special times; indeed we all see through them in flashes without always recognizing them. We finally don't need to grasp after and recognize them with our conscious minds. Our loving trust in the communing reality of the gracious Presence is enough. The Spirit of that Presence can bring forward its work of blending our sight into its own Sight without our reflective mind's needing to be aware of anything special happening.

Such blending involves a self-forgetfulness the more we live into our larger being in God. We will likely find ourselves less grasping for special spiritual experiences and more willing to simply live in the steady, unknowing trust—a trust that we live and move and have our being in the intimate vastness of God. With that foundational trust, we will likely find ourselves living into the grace and calls at hand more directly and spontaneously. As this life-time blending process unfolds, *whatever* glasses we're wearing at a given time are increasingly tinted with the ebullient Love that is.

**Tilden is Shalem's Founder and Senior Fellow.**

# Going the Speed Limit— A Lenten Discipline

*Carole Crumley*



**M**y normal route to work winds along the streets of Washington, D.C. For over a year I went merrily on my way, not paying attention to speed limits, just trying to get to and from work as quickly as possible. Then the speed cameras arrived, and I started to get warnings in the mail. It slowed me down in certain places where I knew the cameras lurked. But after the warnings, then came the tickets, with images of my traveling too fast. Guilty as charged. Big fines ensued.

So for Lent I decided that my spiritual discipline would be going the speed limit. Any money saved from speeding tickets would be useful alms for other worthy causes. “How hard could this be?” I thought. A little attentiveness and I could both save money and feel holy all the way to work and back.

The first day of Lent was a rude awakening. I discovered that the speed limits change almost block by block in the District. I start out from home along a winding road where the speed limit is 25 miles per hour. This is hard to maintain so early in the morning, but thankfully, as soon as I get on the wider four-lane road, the speed changes to 35. Ah, moving faster feels good. Quickly however, it is back to 25; then I turn the corner and it’s 15 mph at the school zone. Down the hill, it is 25 miles per hour, then 30, then back to 35 and then suddenly back to 20 mph. It is a nightmare of attentiveness. I failed miserably every day. Every day another lesson in humility and imperfection.

At first, I was just frustrated and declared that no one could do this. It was impossible to live by the letter of the speed limit law. Even so, I tried harder. Harder didn’t work. It just made me more aware of my sinfulness and my total incapacity to do this one, seemingly simple thing perfectly.

Late into the second week of Lent, my habits began to change. I was still not going the speed limit perfectly, but I was slowing down. Driving slowly, I began to notice the early flowering trees on my route. Ah, spring beauty; what a way to begin and end the work day! Then I also began to notice the people along my route—those walking, waiting for the bus, taking children to school, the crosswalk guards. Going to work became an opportunity to pray for them, bless their day or just appreciate them. A slow transformation was beginning.

After one long busy day, I got into my car for the drive home, breathed a deep sigh of relief and found myself thinking: “O Joy! Now I get to go the speed limit.” Nothing to hurry for, permission to go slow enough to notice what is happening and be present each moment of the way.

Instead of a goal to be achieved, driving the speed limit had become a gift needing only to be received.

My brother-in-law told me once that he had an issue with a particular traffic light. The red light seemed endlessly long, so much so that he dreaded that light and cursed its existence. Finally, in order to bolster his complaint, he decided to time it. Much to his surprise, the light was only 90 seconds long. Realizing how short the light actually was changed his whole perspective, not just on driving but on life. Suddenly he recognized that the problem was him, not the light. His internal clock must be racing, he thought, running amok. Did he think that he was in such a hurry that he couldn't sit still for 90

seconds? "It's easy to speed through life," he told me. Ninety seconds at the red light, and he was a changed man.

For me, Lent is long past. Scripture reminds me that "we are not under law but under grace." (Romans 6:14) Now, rather than trying for perfection and the letter of the law, I have turned to intent. It is my intention to drive prayerfully and attentively, honoring the posted limits. The speed limit signs are a daily invitation to stay in the present moment, not running ahead of grace or lagging behind, but grateful for grace sufficient for the living of this day.

*Carole is Shalem's Senior Program Director.*

# A Grateful Heart

*Patience Robbins*

"You're going on a six-day silent retreat? Wow! What is that and what will you *do*?" This is the question that my sister posed when I told her I would soon be going to Cape May, New Jersey, for a retreat. I'm not sure I gave a very satisfactory answer. I might have made a whoop of joy, given a huge smile of delight, and said: "Can't wait to get there!" I could already

feel the spaciousness, freedom, and the longing for time to *be* with God, myself, all of life.

What would I *do* in these six days at the ocean with a group of sixty other people on retreat? I pondered all of this as I walked along the beach on the first day, just soaking in the sun, ocean breeze, salt air. I felt alive, loving all of it. All my senses were alert, active, savoring the fullness of life and abundance. "I have come that you might have life and have it to the full," a line from the Gospel of John, was flowing through my being. I felt alive, open, listening to what was invited, no plan or structure, other than meals if I wanted and a time every day to meet with a director. Moment to moment appreciating and loving was what I was choosing and *doing*!

As the days continued, I let myself soak in beauty, goodness, truth as though I were a sponge. And then when I was saturated, it would overflow to everyone that I am connected to as well as the whole world. I was so aware, open and choosing to being a channel for this love and peace for all.

While preparing to go on retreat, I was led to a favorite author and mystic, Etty Hillesum, and so I carried her book with me. I reviewed (perhaps for the fifth time) *An Interrupted Life* and especially perused the letters she wrote from



Westerbork, Holland, the transit camp and last stop before Auschwitz. This passage from a letter in 1943 from Westerbork follows:

*You have made me so rich, oh God, please let me share out Your beauty with open hands. My life has become an uninterrupted dialogue with You, oh God, one great dialogue. Sometimes when I stand in some corner of the camp, my feet planted on Your earth, my eyes raised toward Your heaven, tears sometimes run down my face, tears of deep emotion and gratitude. At night, too, when I lie in my bed and rest in You, oh God, tears of gratitude run down my face, and that is my prayer.... The beat of my heart has grown deeper, more active, and yet more peaceful, and it is as if I were all the time storing up inner riches.*

How this passage resonated with me. I felt like I was in one great dialogue with God and that the beat of my heart had grown deeper and more peaceful. Gratitude was flowing through me as it did her. In contrast, however, Etty had the courage, depth and amazing receptivity to choose this in the midst of oppression, cruelty, hatred and imminent death. I was experiencing this while sitting in my room and looking out at the ocean, hearing the roar of the waves and the cica-das. Or sitting on the porch and watching the sky, each day a different scene of color, light, and movement.

My experience seemed so easy and comfortable compared to Etty's. Yet the invitation was to receive this abundant generosity from the Creator, and then to pour out this gratitude and peace and love for the whole planet. It didn't seem like much. It surely didn't look like I was doing anything, but it felt like I was responding to an invitation: that in this time of chaos and uncertainty for our planet, soaking in beauty, goodness and truth and letting that spill over into the heart of the world, is just what is needed. I believe that the Holy One, the Source and Nurturer of all, is pleased that I am content and delighting in all of creation.

And what happens when I return to my daily life, apart from this retreat? My many years as a contemplative remind me that I am listening, listening in every moment for what may be asked and invited. This retreat will be a well from which I can draw that deep inspiration of being held in beauty, truth and goodness so that I, like Etty, can respond in courage, rootedness and receptivity to all that comes. Ah! My heart is full of gratitude!

***Patience is a member of Shalem's adjunct staff and a long-time group and workshop leader.***

# Weightier Matters of the Heart

**CeCe Balboni**

**O**n an intake form to see an orthopedist last week I was asked to describe my work. It took few words to describe what I “do”—I sit and listen. The doctor was intrigued and initially more interested in my “sitting and listening” for a living than he was in the pain in my hip that had caused me to be so interested in what he did. We were both helpers, both called to the healing professions. He palpates, x-rays, stretches, cuts and repairs, and pain is relieved. The work of those who sit and listen is not so efficient and maybe not even as effective. Spiritual direction, counseling and psychotherapy are, like the skeletal system he treats, weight bearing.

The weight borne in the space we share with others has been described as “the weightier matters of the heart.” Often the particulars are manifestations of the deep human desire to love and be loved, or the costs and consequences of deeply loving, or the bitterness and resentment at the inefficiency and unpredictability of love in the world. Underneath the aches and strife of relational life is this fundamental human longing for love and meaning.

The vernacular phrases used to present what we do not understand, cannot manage or what we long for include: “That scares me;” “They scare me;” “I am really afraid;” “It is all too confusing;” “I don’t know what to do...” These are the phrases used by our media, our political conventions,





and even in our over-the-fence chats with neighbors. This is also the language of religion when the mystery of God *with us* becomes less trustworthy than the fear that drowns deeper wisdom. This language of fear sounds like it describes the interior of a person, but often it only describes a surface experience. Fear is reactive and limiting. Fear has consequences in the world.

Transforming fear to love is the purpose of spiritual formation. This transformation is an ongoing life experience. It is the groaning of all creation. As Tilden Edwards puts it in *Embracing the Call to Spiritual Depth*, "...in contemplative awareness we have tasted the love that casts out fear, and the inclusiveness of creation's family in God that casts out any sense of ultimate divisions between us...we've tasted something of God's richness in the moment that is overwhelmingly sufficient."

One of the profound gifts of Shalem to those who participate in its programs is the gift of language to describe the authentic interior reality of life in unpredictable, threatening and inefficient circumstances. Some of the contempla-

tive language in the vernacular of Shalem includes: *I don't know*, *curiosity*, *graced awareness*, *wonder*, *stillness*, *hiddenness*, *discernment*, *yielding*, *Sabbath*, *truth*, *beauty*, *spirit reverberating*, *mystery*, *desire*, *longing*, *sufficiency*, *slowing* and perhaps the best language of all for the weightier matters of the heart: *Silence*. This language is not original with Shalem, but it is rare in our present age and religious culture.

The 13th century author of the *Cloud of Unknowing* phrased the authentic interior reality as, "A blind feeling of one's own being...." We are uncomfortable with blind feelings of our own being. We need language and community to stay with *blind feelings of our own being*, or ambiguous searches for love and meaning. This unknown author identifies the direction of these feelings as "stretching unto God." Shalem, through broad experiential and educational programs that support contemplative life provides some of the language and community to support waiting in these ambiguous feelings without reactive fear. *Stretching toward God* is an action largely consisting of enduring and waiting for transforming love. Many of Shalem's program participants reflect on the encouragement of knowing others from all ages and traditions that normalize these blind feelings, this deep groaning. Living in the sufficiency of God's mysterious presence is challenging. But finally, this Mysterious Presence is all we have and all we need. It is this alone that transforms fear. It is this alone that heals the world and this alone includes our meaningful participation.

"With God's help," is a humble and dependent refrain within communal prayers in some liturgies. Shalem nurtures openness to God's help through closer encounters with the deeper desire and concerns of the heart, the place beneath the fear. Within this spaciousness, lives become more reflective and less reactive. Courageous and creative shifts in vocational and relational life occur and are beneficial to the world. Rest, refreshment and joy replace confusion, impatience and bitterness. When the heart is engaged from the deep place, one notices more willingness to encounter life as life is from an undefended open stance. There are real consequences in the world, with *God's help*, *with God*, *in God*.

***CeCe, a Shalem board member, is a graduate of Shalem's Spiritual Guidance Program.***

**In silence shall be our strength and hope.**

Isaiah 30:15

# The Intimacy of Transition

*Ann Dean*

September rains bring cool crisp air, soften the fragrance of the last white rose at the garden gate and splatter the pathways with acorns and the first shiny gold leaves from the tulip poplar overhead. Old pines whisper wisdom in the quiet of the morning breeze. Multitudes of wings flutter and glow in the afternoon light,



pausing on their way south, and at eventide the chirping crickets increase their choral practice.

Yet this September I pause and realize it isn't change I am most aware of, but freshness. It is a freshness of the moment that brings invigorating pleasure. It is refreshing. Momentous, even. An old rhythm of Earth is in dramatic motion and delights the senses. The seasons are changing. But change isn't really what I'm sensing. I remember expecting and noticing all kinds of changes in past Septembers. Where did that sense of change go?

This question quietly sits in my heart for a few days. There is a hush of holiness around the question. And now, coming out of silence, I recognize change has become a friend to hold, a reality of life that I have come to accept, even cherish. For some time now, it has become natural to embrace change as a constant, to be present to change as a quality of being rather than an opportunity to compare before and after.

O beloved Unchanging One, how can this be of value to you?

Transition is the word more commonly used for the spiritual journey. Years ago, when I was listening for a new call, uncomfortable and impatient, no one else seemed concerned. "Oh, you're in transition," they would say. Now it seems that everything is in transition all the time. Earth's climate, politics, church, health, technology...the list goes on and on. But my impatience has dissipated. Now I most want to trust in the mystery, in the darkness of unknowing. Deep down I sense the value of living into mystery as the most important thing I can do, trusting the fecundity of darkness.

I recognize a steady intensity of immediacy in my soul's engagement. In the deep rest of apophatic prayer, in attention to headlines and work activities, in all things there is an underlying urgency that is a particular energy of transition. In some gifted way my deepest being has consented to the reality of change, longing to be present with a willingness to become different. As I pray for this willingness to deepen, there is a growing sense of divine love, a lavish love. It is an extravagant intensity of joy.

Might this not be the most crucial work of our time—to expand human consciousness and imagination, to become greater capacities for divine action? I have prayed for ever deeper willingness to change, to accept change, to become a change agent. Though in all honesty change will probably be so slow that my own little life will not witness much more than possibility.

It seems rather odd that change could become a flow of life, a place of belonging. Though I notice and care about specific changes, the Beloved has conditioned my heart to desire intimacy with whatever-is, more than any transition movement. So the acorns fall and the monarch butterflies head for Mexico again. In past Septembers, I thought ahead to sprouting trees and returning wings. This September, I revel in the transparency of nature intensifying rest and the wildness of expanding imagination.

I tremble in joy that the wild world is renewing my spirit with freshness and deep shadows of mystery. Somehow, in the trembling, there is an awakening to hope that quiets surface fears and gives strength for engaging the struggles of our broken world.

Presence is all activity, going I know not where, surprisingly comforting in its mystery, in the emptiness which is the beautiful color of silence. And beneath it all, in the dark womb of unknowing, there is strength and hope for joining the eternal dimension of transition, that life in its fullness is love in transition and anything else is dead.

*Ann is the director of Shalem's Leading Contemplative Prayer Groups & Retreats: Transforming Community and the director of Shalem's Personal Spiritual Deepening Program Leadership Initiative.*

## Beneath the Dawn

—James W. Donnelly

Just beneath the bright rays of the morning sun,  
as they breach the glow that is the dawn which  
heralds our new day,  
lies a band of soulful darkness,  
obscured from our view by the brilliance  
of those first golden spears of light  
that crest the ridge.

Given our ready acceptance of the mountain vista,  
we aren't attentive  
to what should be acknowledged in that darkness –  
even if we are inspired enough to take note –  
for the moment can be so brief  
and the transition so seamless in its yielding  
to the emerging brilliance of our new day.

But that is the very problem.

For what happens, at such a moment as that in our life,  
can be too easily forgotten, if not lost,  
as the sun rises over the horizon and  
dazzles the rest of our life's day  
so that we move on  
with the challenge of living into our future,  
forgetting, or not being willing to deal with,  
what we really should know about  
what happened to us  
in that darkness beneath the dawn.

*Jim is a graduate of Shalem's Spiritual Guidance Program and a member of Shalem's Society for Contemplative Leadership.*



# Contemplation

*Steve Garnaas-Holmes*

In the seminar we circle a candle,  
the teacher speaks a word  
and someone sounds the bell  
and we pause and in silence the bud  
unfolds in our hearts. It's natural.

On the corner of 10th and 40th  
it's not as natural, not  
at first. But here's the secret,  
the actual flowering of the bud:  
every honk is a listening bowl.  
The plane overhead with all  
that mysterious love inside  
sings so that we may attend.  
The commuter train, with all  
those people in its hand, is chanting  
the Psalm of the Day: and now  
in the liturgy of the hours,  
this is the sacred pause: now,  
as the train intones its prayers,  
now is the time.

Why wait for the bell? Why close  
our hearts like shopkeepers' doors  
till it's "time" again? It's time.  
Now, where you are, this moment:  
what is present, dull and profane,  
is the Presence. Your hand on the door  
at the mall is the entrance of the Book,

held high. The sound of your breathing  
is the muezzin, or an infant's cry,  
a bird, the creak of a door.  
With the plainest comment your neighbor  
speaks their heart out into the room.  
Every sound is the robe of the Silence,  
waves on the surface of the sea.  
Every moment, in a hundred ways  
the listening bowl awakens for you.  
The cell phone is the prayer bell.  
Every face is an icon: the child,  
the beggar, the mug shot, the clerk.  
Someone's sigh in the office is an introit,  
a lighted candle. Each moment  
is a call, a whisper, an opening,  
a window inward to God.

All of life is the sound of the bowl,  
resonant within with a Word  
you hear without words, without knowing.  
You open the space within you  
where the Silence sings, where heaven  
rings out and you become  
the great, hollow singing bowl,  
the sound of the Mystery ringing  
and ringing beneath your breath,  
your silence a hymn, and your listening  
the sound of God in our midst.

*Steve is a graduate of Shalem's Clergy Spiritual Life and Leadership: Going Deeper Program.*





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 Margaret Tucker & David Schlafer . Monica Maxon  
 Clair Ullmann . . . . . For election to the board  
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 Cynthia Byers Walter . . . . . Sister Mary Clark  
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 J. Ellen Nunnally Estate . . . . . Jerry May  
 Jenny O'Rourke . . . . . Buck Creamer

### In Memory Of

Diane & Ron Paras . . . . . William E. Wegener  
 Donald & Alixe Park . . . . . Jerry Park  
 Mimi Raper . . . . . Jerry May  
 Ellen E. Ratmeyer . . . . . The wisdom and legacy of  
 Gerald May  
 Jean & David Rogers . . . . . Jerry May  
 Mari Russell . . . . . Her mother  
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 Bob Sauerbrey . . . . . His parents  
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## Scholarship Gifts

Sue E. Czarnetzky  
 Ernest & Suzanne Fudala  
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 Daniel A. Klement  
 Delcy Kuhlman  
 Terry Lockridge  
 Stephanie D. McNeill  
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 Jacqueline L. White

### Chet O'Neal Scholarship Gifts

Gaynell Cronin  
 Carole Crumley  
 Jacqueline Dunlavey  
 Tilden & Mary Edwards  
 Nancy Ellen Nikiforow-DeVore  
 Leah & David Rampy  
 Jacqueline L. White



# Statements of Financial Position and Activities

The Condensed Financial Statements shown below were derived from the audited financial statements of the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, Inc. These condensed statements do not include all disclosures normally included in financial statements prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. The complete financial statements, including statements of cash flows, footnote disclosures and the report of our independent accountants, Aronson LLC, are available for review upon request.

## Condensed Statement of Financial Position as of June 30, 2012 and 2011

	2012	2011
<b>ASSETS</b>		
CURRENT ASSETS	\$ 226,208	\$ 121,098
INVESTMENTS	595,057	569,319
FIXED ASSETS	13,777	11,970
OTHER ASSETS	<u>13,835</u>	<u>17,011</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b><u>848,877</u></b>	<b><u>719,398</u></b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
CURRENT LIABILITIES	<u>81,457</u>	<u>56,835</u>
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	674,664	610,856
Temporarily restricted	<u>92,756</u>	<u>51,707</u>
TOTAL NET ASSETS	<u>767,420</u>	<u>662,563</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>	<b><u>\$ 848,877</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 719,398</u></b>

## Condensed Statement of Activities for Years Ended June 30, 2012 and 2011

	2012	2011
<b>REVENUE AND SUPPORT</b>		
Programs, contractual work and publications	\$ 542,677	\$ 479,643
Contributions	449,967	372,267
Investment income (losses)	<u>26,114</u>	<u>98,711</u>
<b>TOTAL REVENUE AND SUPPORT</b>	<b><u>1,018,758</u></b>	<b><u>950,621</u></b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Programs, including allocated staff compensation	651,369	526,918
Administration:		
Staff compensation & benefits	54,490	49,856
Rent and other	135,791	190,543
Fundraising expenses	<u>72,251</u>	<u>65,547</u>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b><u>913,901</u></b>	<b><u>832,864</u></b>
<b>Total Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets</b>	104,857	117,757
<b>NET ASSETS, Beginning of Year</b>	662,563	544,806
<b>NET ASSETS, End of Year</b>	<b><u>\$ 767,420</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 662,563</u></b>

## Shalem Long-Time Donors

We are deeply grateful for those individuals who have given faithfully to Shalem for 10 years or more and have helped sustain Shalem's vital ministry of contemplative living and leadership.

### 30 years and more

Edward Bauman  
Milo & Wendy Coerper  
Carole Crumley  
June Dunn Davis  
John Denham  
Marilyn Derian  
Susan Dillon  
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Monica Maxon  
Eleanor Merrick  
William & Grace Moremen  
Mary Louise O'Day  
Erin Oliver-Neault  
Barbara & David Osborne  
Claudia & Jack Upper  
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### 25-29 years

Anonymous  
Eleanor & Bob Abaro  
Jeannette & Stanley Bakke  
Bill & Linda Barnard  
Susan Bell  
Margaret Benefiel  
Rusty Butler  
Donald Campbell  
Merrill & Tim Carrington  
Mary Coelho  
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Edna & Doug Noiles  
Clare Openshaw  
Paul & Judith Purta  
Patience Robbins  
Robert & Maggie Silberstein  
Joan Stogis  
Margaret Tucker  
Jean Wilson  
Christine Wood

### 20-24 years

Tom Adams  
N. Franklin Adkinson Jr.  
Paul Bailey  
Hillary Bercovici  
William Bone  
O. Robert Brown  
Tina Brown-Eckart  
Margaret Bullitt-Jonas & Robert Jonas  
Kathryn Campbell  
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Joan Curley  
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Rose Mary Dougherty  
Roderick Dugliss  
Anne & John Elsbree  
Judith Favor  
Sharon Freeman  
Catherine Gibson  
Kent Ira Groff  
Margaret Harris  
Mary Tom Hefte  
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David Jamieson  
Carolyn Johnson  
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Linda Kapurch  
Julia Ketcham  
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Delcy Kuhlman  
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Jean Sweeney  
Elizabeth Swenson  
Marianne Taylor  
Barbara Troxell  
Phyllis Van Lare  
Elizabeth & Bill Ward  
Joanne Ward  
Jacqueline White  
Norma & Larry Williamson

### 15-19 years

Anonymous (2)  
Evelyn Bertsche  
Anne Briggs  
Michael Bucci  
Joseph Burkart  
Jim Christianson  
Mary Jo Colucci  
John Danner  
Ann Dean  
Alida DeCoster  
Rosemary Dickerson

Cathy Eilers  
Jeanne Evans  
Kate Finan  
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Cindy & Stephen Peterson Wlosinski  
Catherine Powell  
Cindy Rogers  
Lyta Seddig  
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Carol & Mid Squier  
Ann Starrette  
Carolyn Stevens  
Beverly Stewart  
Marie Stoltzfus  
Nancy Strickland  
Charles & Lee Tidball  
Jean Woods  
Martin Young





### 10-14 years

Anthony Ahrens  
Betsy N. Anderson  
Anonymous  
CeCe & Gerry Balboni

Ann Barry  
John & Anne Barton  
Robert & Tamala Bos  
Mary Catherine Bunting  
Susan Burke  
Cynthia Chappell

Cynthia Chertos  
Christ Church Georgetown  
Alicia Conklin-Wood  
Gaynell Cronin  
Sue Czarnetzky  
James & Sarah Donnelly  
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Susan Dunn  
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Nancy Elder-Wilfrid  
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Nancy M. Wilson  
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Marilyn & Alan Youel

*If you are not on this list of names and feel you should be, please let us know.*

## Gerald May Memorial Fund Donors

Jeanette Cureton  
Raymond E. & Naomi C. Dungan Foundation





## Shalem's Shekinah Society

Many thanks to the following members of the **Shekinah Society** who have put Shalem in their wills—

N. Franklin Adkinson, Jr.  
Margaret Bullitt-Jonas  
Merrill Ware Carrington  
Jean Crawford  
John Denham  
Rosemary Dickerson  
Susan Dillon  
Tilden Edwards

Alan Evans  
Judith Favor  
Doris Froelich  
Joann Klink  
Ann Kulp  
Kirby Lewis  
Dillon Brooke Morrigan  
K. Sheila Noyes

Linda Allport Neumaier  
Mary-Louise O'Day  
Clare Openshaw  
Laurence Pagnoni  
Don & Alixe Park  
Paul Purta  
Lisa Richey  
Betty Stoddard

Joan Stogis  
Jan Thurston  
Linda Toia  
Nan Weir  
Emily Wilmer  
Sandra Hay Wilson



## Making A Bequest to Shalem

When making your estate plans, we hope you will consider a gift to Shalem. Over the past few years, we have been richly blessed by several bequests, some of them unexpected. Not only have they greatly assisted Shalem's mission and ministry, they are a very special way for the donor's care to extend into the future. Please contact Monica Maxon at the Shalem office, 301-897-7334 or [Monica@Shalem.org](mailto:Monica@Shalem.org), if you would like more information about making a gift.

### J. Ellen Nunnally—A Shalem Foremother Leaves a Bequest



The Rev. J. Ellen Nunnally was one of Shalem's first adjunct staff members and also served on Shalem's administrative staff from 1979-81, the first years of Shalem's existence as an independent organization. After her death in August 2010, Shalem received a bequest from Ellen in memory of Gerald May and to provide scholarship support for those who cannot otherwise afford Shalem's programs.

In addition to leading groups for Shalem and editing the Shalem newsletter from 1979-81, Ellen was an accomplished writer and author of two books, *Foremothers: Women of the Bible* and *Deep Peace: Healing in Our Lives*. Before moving back to Ohio, she spent much of her adult life in the Washington, DC area, where she

served in various Episcopal parishes and as a hospital chaplain. She also taught at George Mason University and continued to write both fiction and non-fiction.

Those of us who knew Ellen Nunnally remember especially her wonderful spirit, amazing creativity, and her keen compassion for all living creatures. We feel richly blessed to have walked for a short while on the path together with such a talented and deeply spiritual woman, and we offer special gratitude for her loving support of Shalem.





## Volunteers & In-Kind Donations

We are very grateful for the many ways our community gives to Shalem. In the past program year, many have given of their time or have donated travel and other expenses.

- **June Schulte** and **Lisa Richey** for their beautiful hand-made cards, created especially for Shalem.
- **Patrick Harris** and **Mel Shapcott**, of **Cyberian Frontier**, our web site managers.
- **Frank Toia, June Schulte, Susan Etherton, Larry Hastings, and Leah Rampy**, whose photographs grace these pages, our web site and our eNews. A special thanks to Jerry Beasley, Ann Barry, Leah Rampy and Kathy Savo for their Iona photos.
- **Paige McAdams**, Shalem's intern, for her delightful presence and invaluable help in the office and at the Gerald May Seminar.
- **Jeremy Klass, Ed Wilson, Stephen Broadhead** and **Gerry Balboni** for their legal advice.
- **Sandra Kerka** for her design work for Shalem's Contemplative Voices Award; **Ana Rampy** and **Clark Lobenstine** for their photos of that event, **Larry Hastings** for his videotaping of the evening; **David Rampy** and **Caleb J. Lee**, for providing music for the program.
- Shalem's **Board of Directors**, who donated their time and talent in so many ways and especially for their help and

sponsorship of Shalem's first Contemplative Voices Award, their assistance at the Gerald May Seminar and donors reception and their work on Shalem's discernment and 40th anniversary committees.

- Shalem's non-Board **Committee members**, who gave so much advice and time over the year: **Tim Carrington, Margot Eyring, Paul Lemon**, and **Therese Taylor-Stinson**.
- **Anne Grizzle**, who offered the Bellfry, her wonderful retreat center, for Shalem's Group Spiritual Direction Workshop.
- **Matthew Wright**, Shalem's seminarian, who helped with Shalem programs in many ways.
- Individuals who made additional in-kind contributions: Ridgeway Addison, Jeanne Anastasi, Nora Becker, Ann Marie Chapman, Kiok Cho, John and Suzanne Clark, Bob Duggan, Tilden Edwards, Gordon Forbes, Sharon Glass, Kathy Gracenin, Joan & John Hatcher, Suzanne Henley, Ann Hisle, Katie Jones, Marti Karchner, Darlene Little, Marjorie Ann Lueck, Leslie Miller, Tiffany Montavon, Bruce Pickle, Ana Rampy, David Rampy, Angelina Rispoli, Frank Sasinowski, Paula Sayers, Helen Scarry, Phil Stone, Mary Bea Sullivan, Matthew Wright

## Special Thanks

We give special thanks to the **Trust for the Meditation Process** and their funding of contemplative leadership in Korea and scholarship help for our seminarian in fiscal year 2011-12.

We also give special thanks to the **F.I.S.H. Foundation** for their support of Shalem's new Online School of Contemplative Prayer.

## Shalem's Mission

To nurture contemplative living and leadership

## Shalem's Core Values

- Awareness that God is intimately present within and among us
- Reverence for the mystery of God's presence
- Desire for spiritual discernment in all things
- Radical willingness to trust God
- Respect for the unique spiritual path of each individual
- Recognition that contemplative living and leadership require spiritual support
- Commitment to action in the world arising from a contemplative orientation toward life

Shalem Institute  
3025 Fourth Street, NE, Suite 22  
Washington, DC 20017

## RENEW, REVITALIZE AND RECLAIM YOUR SPIRITUAL HEART

Shalem offers in-depth programs to support your God-guided career, personal life, and ministry with others.

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- **SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE**

For those in the ministry of one-to-one spiritual direction

- **LEADING CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER GROUPS & RETREATS**

For those leading prayer groups and retreats in churches and other settings

- **CLERGY SPIRITUAL LIFE AND LEADERSHIP**

For clergy in congregational settings seeking to nurture their spiritual heart and leadership

- **PERSONAL SPIRITUAL DEEPENING**

For those wanting support to live each day prayerfully and authentically

