



# CONNECTIONS & INVITATIONS

July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2014

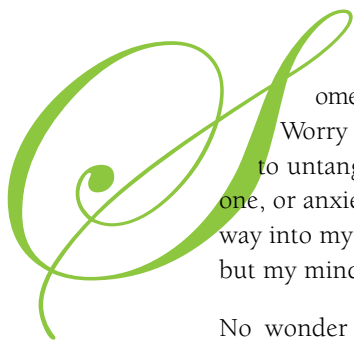


SHALEM  
INSTITUTE FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION



# FINDING STILL WATER

by Leah Rampy



Sometimes I wake in the middle of the night. Worry about the state of our world, the desire to untangle a difficult knot on behalf of a loved one, or anxiety about a mistake I've made pricks its way into my consciousness. I tell myself to let it go, but my mind is stuck in replay mode.

No wonder that Wendell Berry's beautiful poem, "The Peace of Wild Things," is one of my favorites. The poem speaks of personal struggle with despair and fear that is calmed by coming into the "peace of

wild things" and into the presence of "still water." These words evoke beautiful and calming images and an invitation to peace for which, I suspect, we all yearn. Wouldn't we love to give up our despair and fear for this one night?

Yet interior peace can be difficult to find in our busy lives. Stress and anxiety show up all around us—and within us. Occupational stress has been defined as a "global epidemic" by the United Nations' International Labor Organization. Anxiety has been

He leadeth me beside the still  
waters. He restoreth my soul.

-Psalm 23:2-3

called by some experts “the disease of the 21st century.” Where are those healing waters? What will restore my soul?

It seems that in the last few generations we have distanced ourselves from nature. One study claims that our children spend less time outdoors than chickens and prisoners! Could it be that as we relegate ourselves to more time indoors we are distancing ourselves from an important source of healing waters?

Perhaps we are invited to take literally the message to walk by the still waters, to pause for a sunrise, to feel the breeze, to taste the salt air. Doesn't it make sense that the Creator longs for us to relish the beauty, grandeur, and wisdom of Creation? Might we find in nature a gift that can bring us peace and restore our souls?

Our Celtic sisters and brothers believed that through the Book of Creation, we could “read” important messages from the Creator. If we were to spend more time in Creation, what might we learn from this most ancient scripture?

I write this article sitting outdoors in the shadow of the Blue Ridge Mountains. The woods are beginning to show hints of fall color. Hawks are circling above as crickets and bees go about their work singing. As I stop to listen deeply, I hear the message, “Be still. Come into the present. All is well.” I breathe deeply and release into peace.

Perhaps we have forgotten that we are a part of Creation, that we are inextricably linked, woven together in a web of being. In fact, we are like the coastal redwoods that range from Oregon to central California. Some of these magnificent trees live over 2,000 years and can tower 350 feet above the ground. With fierce winds and strong storms, the coast can be a difficult place for trees! Yet these trees persist because they have shallow root systems that extend over 100 feet from the base and intertwine with the roots of other redwoods. This interconnection increases their stability during strong winds and floods.

Any change in the well-being of one tree impacts the others. And so for us. The roots of our well-being are intertwined with other living creatures, and we are all sustained by the same water, soil and sun.

What are we missing when we spend little or no time in awareness of our connections? When all life is spent largely indoors, it seems less likely that we will “stumble upon our true roots in the intertwining biology of this exquisite planet” as John Seed, Australian environmentalist writes.

Our outdoor environment may not be pristine wilderness. Perhaps you might find “still waters” sitting on a park bench, walking in a garden, strolling on the waterfront, or gazing at a tree. What seems to be most important is holding the intention for interior spaciousness and peace as you open to connecting with all.

Recently Shalem invited others to join the staff in a slow walk for peace. We began with prayer and silence in the library, opening our hearts to peace. Our walk led us from the office, past a beautiful stand of trees, along side a busy rush-hour street, and back up the driveway to the office. We were like the coastal redwoods, linking together for the well-being of all. As the breeze, fresh from the recent rain, shook drops from the trees, the intention we carried for ourselves and each other seemed to open us to deeper peace.

My still waters are found in the countryside. Away from the sounds of the city, I move more readily from problem-solving and worry to an open “mind in heart.” I rest in the expanse of sky, the faithfulness of the trees, the smell of the grass, the joy of birds, the beauty of butterflies, the spectacular creativity of the sunset. I exhale fully, more aware of my place in this world community. I sit beside the still waters and my soul is restored. Where are the still waters that will help to restore your soul?

**LEAH IS SHALEM'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.**







# RIDING THE WAVES OF CHANGE

by **Bryan Berghoef**

*"Sit wherever you are, and simply breathe."*

- Mark Nepo

*I*n my case, it was "float" wherever you are. It was Labor Day weekend. Summer's demise was imminent, and we were enjoying one last beach day at Lake Michigan. Seasonal change was in the air, and this wasn't where I had planned to be this fall. My family and I had recently moved back to Michigan after nearly two years in Washington, D.C. We had planned to be in DC indefinitely, a re-location that itself happened after much prayer and with a vision to begin a new faith community.

For a variety of reasons, things didn't work out, and we found ourselves back on familiar turf, sooner than expected. A certain amount of disappointment accompanied the move back to Michigan. We were leaving new friends and a great neighborhood behind. I had to say goodbye to the office staff at Shalem, where I had been gifted with not just great co-workers but good friends. Another new school for the kids loomed. Uncertainty about what was next left us disoriented. We had moved to DC with a big vision. Plans. Dreams. Excitement. We were now moving with none of those.

We love Michigan, and the Holland/Saugatuck area is one of the most beautiful and serene places anywhere. But it was a bittersweet return.

Yet here we were. So we did what came naturally: we went to the beach. Repeatedly. We are definitely a “beach family,” and not having a beach within 10 or 15 minutes was something we definitely missed while in DC. But now even summer—and beach time—was slipping away. So we took one last beach day on Labor Day weekend, knowing it might be the last with cool temperatures on the horizon.

Sunshine and 80 degrees: we couldn’t have asked for a better day this holiday weekend. After setting down our towels, and spreading sunscreen on everyone, the kids were alternating between playing in the shallow water and building sandcastles on the shore. It was hot. So I decided to go out for a dip myself. I swam out past the sandbar, past the buoys marking the swimming area.

I plunged under, kicking my feet in familiar swimming style. I felt an urge to keep on swimming, deeper and deeper and deeper. Why stop? Why do anything? What were we doing here? What is happening with us? Just keep swimming.

Yet as I swam, I felt not only the rush of the cool water; I felt good. I felt a sudden gladness to be where I was. I came up in the blue, deep waters and floated on my back, and breathed. Mark Nepo says repeatedly: “sit

wherever you are, and simply breathe,” in his best-seller, *The Book of Awakening*. In my case it was float wherever you are, but close enough.

As I floated there, the gentle waves pressing me skyward, the sun shining warm on my face, I simply breathed. I could hear all kinds of sounds through the water as my ears would go under and back above the water. Families playing catch with a Frisbee in the water, dads throwing their kids in the water, people standing in the waves, just “shooting the breeze.” All of us squeezing out the last ounces of summer. None of us quite ready to face what was next. And then, I could hear my own kids—splashing, playing, laughing.

And I smiled. And breathed.

As the water occasionally rolled over me, I felt my despair and uncertainty rolling away with it. Each wave, a reminder that each moment is new.

New, yet familiar surroundings. A change of address. A change of seasons. Disappointment giving rise to hope. We’re not where we expected, but I had a new sense that we were here for a reason. I don’t entirely know what that is yet. But as I lay there floating, I found strength and courage in the gift of simply breathing, trusting, being.

**BRYAN IS A SHALEM STAFF MEMBER AND HANDLES SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE LEARNING SUPPORT.**

## WE SELDOM HEAR Steve Garnaas-Holmes

We seldom hear the voice of the Holy One  
who is, after all, fearsomely immense,

Who sits, enthralled, perfectly still as a bird  
watcher, saying nothing, offering only

the merest whispers, hidden in this world  
so cleverly as to seem natural,

so as not to frighten us  
away.

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# EVERYBODY NEEDS A ROCK

by Carole Crumley

*S*omewhere along the way of travels and pilgrimages, I began to bring home rocks. There was no conscious methodology or pattern, just random acts of rocks. Back home, even long after the journey, I could simply hold a rock in my hand, letting the weight/shape/color/texture of it take me in sacred memory to its place of origin and my journey there.

Scripture says that rocks often were place markers on life's journey. Abraham and Sarah journeyed by stages, building an altar at each place where they rested (Gen. 12:6-9). Jacob set up a stone pillar at the place where God spoke to him (Gen. 35:14). Like these ancestors

in faith, rocks remind me that I've been in a particular place, at a particular time. God was with me then. Trusting that God is with me now, I journey on. New Testament scripture names Jesus as "the Living Stone, chosen by God, precious to God." Then it goes even further: "and we too, like living stones are being built into a spiritual house of God" (1 Peter: 2:4).

Once on a pilgrimage in the Sinai desert, our group set out to climb Mt. Sinai. I faded about half way up the mountain. Upset and discouraged, I found a little cleft in a rock where I could sit and collect myself. As I sat, the words of the old Baptist hymn kept com-

ing to me: “Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.” I felt hidden in the rock, sheltered, comforted, held.

When our group left the Sinai and traveled into Israel, our bags were full of rocks. The border guards were puzzled. Finally, as the last pilgrim came through with nothing but rocks in her bag, one of them blurted out, “What do you people do with all these rocks?” No one could answer.

Later when we visited the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem, I saw the large rock where the Church remembers that Jesus knelt, sweat blood, and prayed his last night on earth. The Psalms would have been his prayer book. I turned to Psalm 31 (RSV):

*In you, O Lord, have I taken refuge; let me never be put to shame; deliver me in your righteousness. Incline your ear to me; make haste to deliver me.*

*Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe, for you are my crag and my stronghold; for the sake of your Name, lead me and guide me.*

*Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me, for you are my tower of strength.*

*Into your hands I commend my spirit, for you have redeemed me, O Lord, O God of truth.*

Sunday School pictures of this scene depict a beautiful, quiet garden, Jesus kneeling calmly alongside this impressive rock. Standing there, I imagine it quite differently. In my imagination, Jesus throws himself against the rock, clings to it, draws every ounce of strength from it he can. Finally he surrenders into it. His struggle of faith that dark night brings him to deeper trust—trust in God’s faithfulness even unto death. He bets his life on the Rock of Ages.

John of the Cross used the image of Rock as a metaphor for God. He went on to say that we are basically “chips off the old block,” created in the image of this rock. Deep within us is the “rock-ness” of God, the tower of strength, the refuge, the stronghold that Jesus and so many others found in their desperate hour of need.

On our pilgrimages to Iona, I am always amazed by the rocks we find there. Iona rocks are some of the oldest on the planet, 2800 million years old. That’s 2800 million years of being washed in sun and wind and sea; 2800 million years of stories to tell. Picking

up one of these stones, you hold 2800 million years in the palm of your hand. It puts life in perspective, both its magnificence and insignificance.

Rocks carry history, story, the spirit of place. If I had been more attuned to these things years ago, I might have asked permission to take a rock from its homeland, permission from the land and the rocks themselves. I would have treated them as partners on the spiritual journey. In its place, I would have left a token of my love, or a prayer, in reciprocity and thanksgiving for their willingness to come with me.

The best I can do right now is to bless the rock I’m holding in my hand. It is from Iona and is small, smooth, two-thirds white, one-third light green with flecks of darker green, perhaps seaweed, throughout. Its oval shape has a small hole bored into one side where I imagine another creature took shelter once upon a time.

Finding the perfect rock takes time according to Byrd Baylor, Native American author of children’s stories. She lists 10 rules for finding the perfect rock. Rule Number 6: “The size must be perfect. It has to feel easy in your hand when you close your fingers over it. It has to feel jumpy in your pocket when you run.” The rock I am holding is perfect for both hand and pocket.

What to do with all these rocks? Here are some thoughts.

- Hold in your hand and admire, appreciate their amazing rock-ness.
- Carry in your pocket and use as a touchstone throughout the day, a reminder of God’s presence and your desire.
- Take to friends in hospital as an icon of both God’s presence and your love.
- Place in a special location in your home, such as your home altar, dining room table, or desk as a visual reminder of God, the Ancient of Days.
- Give as gifts.

Finding the perfect gift for my granddaughters is particularly challenging. The eight-year-old is a girly-girl, loving all things fancy and pretty. The ten-year-old is a tomboy, loving all things practical and useful. This year, when I came home from Iona, I gave both of them rocks.

CAROLE IS SHALEM’S SENIOR PROGRAM DIRECTOR.





# AWAKENED BY BEAUTY

by Tilden Edwards

*S*uch an inspired sense of beauty emerged from the experience of the anonymous monk who wrote *The Hermitage Within*. In his *Spiritual Canticle*, John of the Cross sees such beauty beginning with an awareness of our own God-reflecting beauty: “Come beloved, let us behold ourselves in your beauty.... When you looked at me, you made me beautiful.” Gregory of Nyssa in the early church echoes John’s experience when he heard God say, “You have become beautiful by coming close to my Light.”

If beauty is in the eye of the beholder, then when our eye recognizes our own beauty in the divine Beauty, we can come to see everything in the light of divine beauty. Everything in all of creation then shows us its participation in that vibrant Beauty.

Beauty is one of God’s names. St. Augustine famously addressed God as “O Beauty so ancient and so new.” It is one of our names too, when we’re reflecting the divine image that is our deepest identity. Beauty also is a name for everything in creation shaped by the energy of divine Love.

The Hebrew and Greek Biblical words for beauty also can mean “goodness.” In Genesis 1:25, after God’s

creation of the heavens and earth is described, which we normally read “And God saw that it was good,” we could also read as “God saw that it was beautiful.” We could keep these words together and say that whatever is truly good is also beautiful, however ugly its exterior might be to our senses.

Think of the forgiving and compassionate Jesus dying in the ugliness of crucifixion, and the shabby poor refugee sharing what little she has with her neighbor in need, and the gnarled, bed-ridden, incontinent old person’s caring smile and kind word in appreciation of her caregiver’s exhaustion, and so many more examples we could give of an ugly surface to our conditioned senses transformed by the beautiful goodness shining beneath. At the same time, true beauty transcends the dichotomy of good and evil, like the rain that falls on the just and the unjust. It transcends all our mind’s categories in its transfiguring power.

When we touch the depths of beauty in people, we also might find some of the same spiritual qualities of beauty that we often find in nature: simplicity, harmony, and a mysterious quality of radiance. We see this for example in expressions of child-like innocence, in artistic creativity, and in the steady inner dedication to a costly compassionate vocation.



What does the awesome beauty we see and hear do to us? The anonymous monk's words above give us a beginning sense of that. This morning I encountered an example in nature. I came upon a bright yellow sunflower in a field. For a moment it drew me into itself so completely that I was wordlessly inside it. I was in it from my open spiritual heart. I shared its life. I intuitively "knew" it from the inside. We were mutually indwelling.

Then my mind came into operation and I lost the directness of that indwelling as I shaped some inner words for what I saw. First I was aware of the sheer given-ness of the sunflower and myself together; we shared a home in that time. Then my mind remembered that sunflowers faithfully turn toward the sun's moving light all day long. I identified with that connection and saw the sun as an expression of God's shining beauty, revealing my own and the flower's beauty and mutual belonging. I felt its invitation to keep facing toward that loving radiance all day long. Then I found myself welling-up with joyful thanks-giving for this blessed awareness of shared beauty.

My mind with its time-consciousness knows that creaturely beauty is a passing beauty: the flower and I both will die to this earthly form of beauty. But my spiritual heart knows that, in that first mindless instant of immediate mutual indwelling, it knew an eternal beauty whose essence does not die. In my graced heart I live in the eternal now, a radiant, communing fullness.

When I'm in the graced spiritual heart, I know pain when I encounter the ugliness of injustice, suffering, willfulness and illusion in their many forms, but the heart's intimacy with God's Spirit allows it to bear these realities with a compassion born of divine compassion. That beautiful compassion is inclusive; it has no ultimate enemies, since the heart experiences all reality flowing from the same divine Source, however hidden and distorted it may be. Such compassion draws my heart-grounded mind to pray for God's radiant beauty to emerge and transform every expression of true ugliness into itself and to help me see and hold up that beauty in my own awareness and actions.

One of the graces of the beauty we experience when it's shared, as when we look together at an innocent child at play on the seashore, or participate in sincere corporate worship or a community fes-

tival open to everyone, or celebrate a person's life or work, is the way that beauty can transcend our differences and reveal our mutual belonging and joy. Maybe that transcendence connects with what Dostoevsky means when he says, "the world will be saved by beauty" and what Kahlil Gibran means when he says, "we live only to discover beauty, all else is waiting." True beauty is God's radiant glory shining in and around us, in ordinary and extraordinary ways. It ever draws us both to an end-in-itself, communing joy and to a desire to cultivate forms and places of beauty that assist beauty's heart-opening, peace-giving, healing powers.

So, dear beautiful readers, I invite you to look at beauty and its impact in all dimensions of your inner and outer life and see it as an outcropping of God's awesome, loving beauty. Full attention to beauty takes time. If you tend to pass too quickly from the wonder of direct spiritual heart participation in beauty to your mind's interpretation of it, as most of us do, then see what it's like to spend more time with beauty in your vulnerable heart's open presence. You don't need your mind's commentary about beauty nearly so much as you need to be nakedly present in the beauty, available to the divine Beauty's awakening loving light. Give divine grace in the beauty time to fully seep into you before letting your mind's interpretations appear.

For example, if you are moved by the beauty of a sunset. Just be wordlessly in the beauty just as it is, as long as possible, letting the Spirit sink you through the finite beauty of the sunset into the loving, beautiful Light behind it, where you realize your true home. Let the sunset be an icon for you, a door, an opening, for the larger transforming Beauty to be welcomed in you. When your mind comes to the fore, pray for the release of whatever walls of attachment in you keep your sense of home too small and closed-off to the radiant Love's full life in you.

Divine Beauty is, our beauty is, the world's beauty is. Those are the intimately-related raw ingredients for our pristine presence in the fullness of beauty. Allow them to show their living communion day by day. Remember those words of John of the Cross, who realized that intimate communion: Come beloved, let us behold ourselves (and the whole world) in your beauty.

**TILDEN IS SHALEM'S FOUNDER AND SENIOR FELLOW.**



# GOD SURPRISES

by Scott Landis

*S*everal years ago I invited an artist to design a cross for my office. Previously I purchased other works of his so I was quite excited to see what he would create. I was not disappointed. The cross is beautiful in its harsh, abstract design. It contains many eye-catching symbols to contemplate and has become the source of some fascinating conversations with those who visit my office.

During the recent renovation of our church facilities, a new room was set aside for prayer, meditation and spiritual direction called “HeartSpace.” The same artist was invited to design a much larger cross for this room as a focal point. He agreed and stopped by the other day to discuss various possibilities for the cross. In the course of our conversation, we began talking about the cross in my office as we each



offered our interpretations for the various symbols incorporated into his abstract design.

At one point in our discussion, the artist approached the cross and pointed out a particular jewel that hangs near its center. He informed me that the jewel is citrine. He went on to say that for some reason he felt the need to incorporate various pieces of citrine into the design of the cross. My heart began to race as I told him that citrine is an important jewel in my life, yet I was completely unaware of the jewel's presence in the cross until that moment.

Not long ago, I had my jyotish reading done by my yoga teacher who is also one of my spiritual guides. Based on Vedic science, a jyotish reading is an astrological interpretation of one's life, using the exact time of birth. It can unlock some deep questions and reveal insights into seemingly insurmountable obstacles in one's life based on the cosmic energies that surround us. The reading suggested that citrine is an important jewel for me, that wearing it would help release positive energies in my life to enhance spiritual growth and deepen my awareness of the Divine in all of life. I was thrilled to discover this same jewel was embedded in this cross that had been hanging in my office for years.

Naturally I was taken aback by this synchronistic experience. Obviously the artist could not have known this fact about me, but God did and intended those jewels to be placed in my cross long before I ever knew what a jyotish reading was or how this precious stone might occupy an even more profound symbol in my life. I got caught off guard, once again, by one of God's surprises.

I sometimes think that I should no longer be surprised by the countless moment-to-moment experiences that shout, "We are all interconnected." But then I realize I want to be surprised, again and again and again, with this profoundly simple reality. I want to be surprised by the breath, breathing us, as it mysteriously provides us with the contrasts between sep-

arate and together, dark and light, love and loss, that dissolve into deeper unity in experiences like this.

Julian of Norwich writes insightfully of this mystical connection that we all share, this "One-ing" we experience on a deep and profound level as we open our hearts to the connections all around us. In one of her writings, she describes this understanding based on the pain Mary felt while witnessing the agony of Jesus. It is clear that the same could be said for other emotions as well: "Here saw I a great one-ing betwixt Christ and us, to mine understanding: for when He was in pain, we were in pain" (Julian of Norwich, Showings). St. Paul reiterated this same understanding when he wrote, "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it" (1Cor.12:26). We are all connected in ways unimaginable, and that same life energy connects us to the Divine Presence that dwells within and among us.

Each Sunday evening a group of fellow contemplatives gathers in our church chapel for a time of centering prayer. While I enjoy my daily practice of the same, there is nothing like this time of meditation with others as a deeper unity, a sense of one-ing, is experienced with those committed to opening our hearts to Holy Presence. As our spiritual hearts open, and all clinging to situational encumbrances and thoughts dissolve, we become one in a much larger and deeper confluence of silence. A deep stillness binds us as time seemingly melts into irrelevance. In our union there is an inner knowing, a presence of God that regularly surprises me as our lives mesh into serene unity.

Why am I always taken aback by God's surprises? One day I may know why or how, but I hope that sense of wonder never ends whether in synchronistic moments of discovery or in the deep opening of my heart through silence in prayerful unity.

**SCOTT IS A GRADUATE OF SHALEM'S GOING DEEPER: CLERGY SPIRITUAL LIFE AND LEADERSHIP PROGRAM.**

## WALKING PRAYER FROM THE PRAYER VIGIL

May I be deeply rooted in God  
May love flow through me  
May I know oneness with all.



# MYSTERY

by Kathleen Moloney-Tarr

A little quiver of life sits in the cup of my small hands. The soft fur warms my fingers, and I feel the thump thump against my palms. She weighs next to nothing and feels as though she could blow away she is so tiny. Orphaned by the large mowers that cross the field twice a year, we found her in a hole her mother created before she was born. Now my mother allows us to keep the bunny alive with watery milk in an eyedropper and a warm bed box heated by a light bulb on the outside.

When I think about what have I always known, it is this image, these feelings of wonder that flash across my mind and heart. I am in awe of the mystery of life, the inexplicable wonder of life itself, that thump thump against my hand.

I feel it again sixty years later when a tiny hummingbird detours from the porch into the kitchen and cannot find the way back out. I lower the window shades around the room, and he rests a moment on a low sill. I gently cup him in my hands and stand still, feeling the flutter, the soft feathers, the power of breath and heart and life itself.



When I am four my kite flies up, breaks from the string, sails high and away, and drops on my dad's car the next morning on his way to work. I play balaphone by the pond outside my office door and the resident frog hops to the black plastic rim of the pond and dances, one leg extended at a time, to the vibration of ancient melodies. Hawk, owl, deer, even bears and I exchange gazes, nods and know a shared mystery.

My neighbor's flowering plum tree pulls me under her pink blossoms every January. I drink in a scent that transports me to summer gardens filled with dozens of flowers. This tree offers color and scent before forsythia, crocus or narcissus. Many winters I have stood under her snow-covered blossoms, shaking my head at the beauty and glory of her presence.

Newborn twin grandchildren lie together in my arms looking at me as I sing lullabies, tell them the story of their recent birth or speak words to their answering eyes. I whisper secrets of life and tell them how good it is. I sing my eternal love to them.

My father-in-law lies still in our den, smaller than life, breathing slowly in and out. We look at each other. He tries to hide his discomfort; I try to hide my sadness. We both choose to be in this moment, one of our last together, breathing and looking, listening and being silent. I wonder at his life coming to this, as mine most likely will. At life's end, the wonder expands just as it does at birth. The movement of air, the beating heart, the body still.

So much mystery before and after.

I have always known mystery. I know the presence in silence, the surrounding peace found by stilling movement and stepping from the external. All my life I have had some sense of the majestic, the unknown, the indescribable, the beauty, wonder and awe that cannot be explained. Always I have felt connection, especially in nature or in friendship. These experiences and feelings let me know that something in me recognizes the divinity, the mystery in others. That little jolt of surprise, that tiny glimmer of brightness, that sudden heart smile of recognition, of knowing that something is at the heart of it all.

For decades I did not know that this might be what others consider God. I did not think I knew God. But I do know the deep joy of seeing a fox run in the woods or an otter play in the river or a deer grazing with one eye on me or the hawk's sweep into the cherry tree day after day. I know a stirring in synchronicities and Spirit winks and flowering plum blossoms blanketed in snow.

It is this glimmer, this quiver, this warm acknowledgement that has given me joy, comfort and a sense of goodness all my life. Mystery and wonder bring me home; bring me peace and gratefulness now. I have never been away from this. I have always been companioned by divine mystery.

KATHLEEN IS A GRADUATE OF SHALEM'S NURTURING THE CALL: SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE PROGRAM.

## PSALM OF THE GRASS

Keith Walker

Each of countless blades  
rooted in the earth's one bed  
breathes in and out in

the same sea of air  
joins in the living green waves  
that lift and bow low

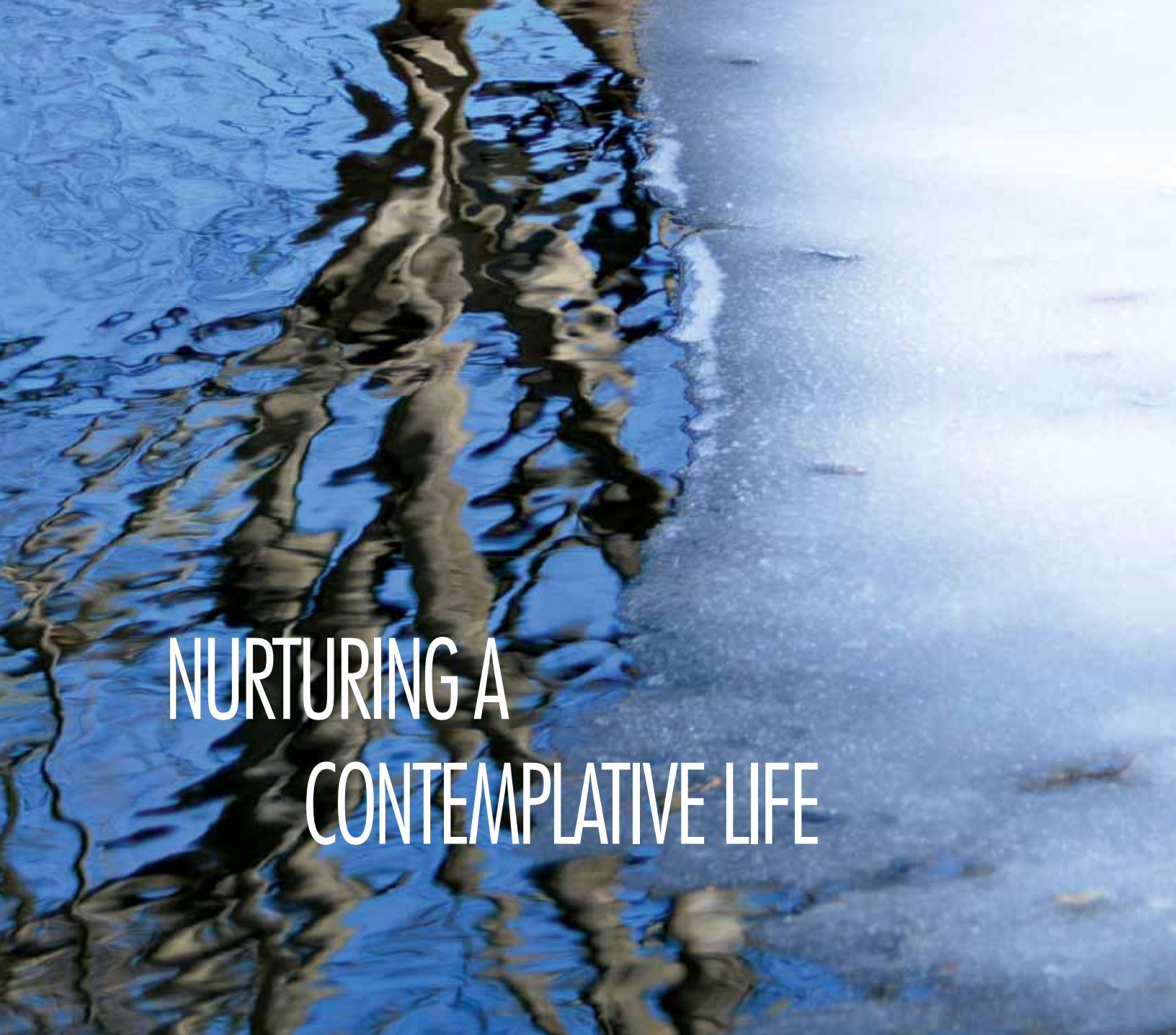
under the passing  
brush of sky. Each fine strand  
nods with a crystal

of dew that appeared  
in the night in the embrace  
of an unseen cloud.

Each bead holds a world  
and burns with a tiny star  
in this moist fragile

galaxy which is  
slowly vanishing into  
the light of its source.

KEITH IS A CURRENT MEMBER OF SHALEM'S 2015 NURTURING THE CALL: SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE PROGRAM.



# NURTURING A CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE

by **Patience Robbins**

A few years ago, I wrote an article for the Shalem newsletter entitled, “My Summer with Young Adults.” I have been reflecting recently on what I wrote in that article and noticed that the experience I reference (at Ghost Ranch in New Mexico) was the beginning of a very conscious desire and call to nurture contemplative life in young adults. It ushered in a life full of young people in a variety of ways.

I also have noticed that those themes I wrote about then still ring true with clarity and vibrancy, and I see how they are applicable to us all, not just to young adults. So I share them again with an added one, compassion, plus some simple prayer practices.

The first thing I want to share and even shout is: You are the Beloved of God. Let this live, flow, be present in every cell of your being. Find ways to take in this truth every day, in an ongoing way. You



are called into being out of love and are the beloved. Love is the essence of life. What practices do you have that nurture that deep knowing, that embodiment of love? A simple one to take on is to come into your heart and feel gratitude or appreciation for something—maybe yourself. And breathe this for a few minutes. Take it in and savor it. Enjoy be-ing alive.

Second, cultivate listening and attentiveness. Take time to pause (even for a minute) and notice what is going on within and around you. In particular, allow yourself to be present to these questions: Who am I? Why am I here? What is my unique contribution to the planet? Engaging these questions continually and authentically can lead you to live fully and powerfully from your true self. How needed in our world! I recall a beautiful prayer from Teresa of Avila: “Lord, you have created me. For you I was born, what do You want of me?” Spend a few minutes each week with this question: How am I to contribute fully and authentically my particular way of loving in the world? And then write a few words or images that come to you.

The third area is to be generous, sharing and open. It can be very challenging to have an open heart in our current times. Because of the atmosphere of bad news, fear, scarcity, and ongoing turbulence in our planet, the temptation may be to freeze, constrict, and tighten and even despair. It is an ongoing practice to continually come back to an open-hearted, generous, willing stance to share gifts, time, money and resources. Take a moment during the day to stand with open arms and hands, listening each day for how love and goodness can flow through you.

The other area that I would now add to this list is compassion. It seems that everywhere I turn, I hear of the need for compassion—for self and the other and what a powerful quality this is to transform oneself and any situation. I am reminded of the many times and ways that divine mercy shows up in scripture and in the lives of holy people (and in my own experience). We are all dependent on the abundant

compassion of our God. For me, what is new about this is not just thinking about compassion but actually feeling it, especially in the midst of messy and confusing situations.

When hearing about a world situation that is full of suffering and violence, allow yourself to hold it in your heart with compassion—held in God’s heart. Or when caught in judgment of self or another, return to your heart and open to that compassion for self in the whole situation, to the ever-present mercy of the Holy One, listening for the wisdom and inspiration of the Spirit within all.

I end with a body prayer that incorporates all of the above themes and grounds us in the truth of our oneness. Please join me in this prayer for our planet as well as all those who will be inspired and attracted, especially young adults, to the mission of Shalem: to nurture contemplative life and leadership.

I invite you to stand. Allow yourself to remember your rootedness in the Source of all life; take a minute to feel that groundedness. Trusting in the Goodness and ever present love of the Creator, intentionally take that into every cell by bending down in whatever way is comfortable and drawing in or accessing this life-giving energy from feet to head. Do this a few times. Then open your arms in a horizontal position so you can feel your open heart and your connection with all of life. Claim your belonging and that you are the beloved by bringing your hands to your heart. Then freely offer this love to all—family, friends, neighbors, city, country, world, planet—by opening wide your arms and hands and sending it out to all. Feel this life and love flowing through you and continue to offer this with gestures of openness and compassion. Bring your hands together in a prayer position and end with a simple bow in gratitude for all of life and for the One in whom we live and move and have our being.

**PATIENCE IS THE DIRECTOR OF SHALEM’S YOUNG ADULT CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE & LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE.**



# SUMMER GIFTS

by Liz Ward

*I*f you have ever let a fresh fig, warm with the sun, fall gently into your hand and slowly savored this sweet, juicy delight, you will understand why it was upsetting to see a beloved fig tree with only gray and barren limbs. For the first time in 34 years, the winter cold had frozen its branches so that not even late spring warmth could call forth its large green leaves.

The obvious thing to do was cut it down and hope for the best. The gardener in me knew this was clearly the right thing to do. Still, something else within me that felt more like Love than denial seemed to want me to wait. There was a sense that this dead, barren tree was inviting my attention, somehow promising wisdom if only I could be present, watch and wait. So I watched and waited. Shakespeare's lines about the "bare, ruined choirs where late the

sweet birds sang" kept coming unbidden while I gazed hopefully as week followed week.

Slowly, tiny leaves began to poke through the dead branches. Gradually bright green shoots shot into life and more and more leaves opened to the mid-summer sun. The strongest and most vigorous shoots came from the middle of the tree, from its center. This seemed like a concrete reminder of new life rising from our center, our life in God. To watch this truth unfold in an organic way seemed an invitation to stay centered and watch for the new leaves in the dead branches of my own being, of my own life.

Also encouraging were the leaves that began to unfurl in the middle of otherwise barren branches. These were less expected and somehow gave me



even more hope. There was something about small snatches of leaves in the middle of otherwise dead branches that seemed a loving gift. What appeared to be fully dead could shine with new life. This somehow renewed my belief in the possibility of a lasting peace in the Middle East or of new cures for dread diseases or of new ways of reversing the destruction of God's holy creation. Watching these new leaves unfold and even bear small, unripe figs kept the flame of hope alive within me. I could sense my own dead branches of frustration and disappointment being cracked open and sprouting new leaves of patience and hope as a hidden Life Force quietly flowed through them.

This sense of hope from the shifting image of the fig tree traveled with me to Buffalo, New York, where my mother-in-law, Mary, now lives with dementia. She asks the same questions again and again as she sits in her wheelchair happily hugging the large stuffed bunny she thinks is a dog. She easily mingles past, present, and future together in a seamless present moment. She accurately names the fresh flowers brightening her room and then asks what her long dead husband had to say today and when he is coming to pick her up. She talks reflectively about the pictures on the wall and then wonders why she has not heard from her long deceased sisters. She figures they have their reasons and hopes they will visit her soon.

Somehow in her dementia she has a heightened awareness of the deep interconnectedness of God's beloved souls. She sees the green branches of present loves and the now dead limbs of past loves as part of one still vibrant and beloved tree. Although she is disconnected from some aspects of concrete reality, she remains in touch with some truth about the endurance of love, the ability of love to transcend time and space and bring meaning and hope in ever-new ways. As her 95-year-old body continues to grow frail and her helplessness increases, her awareness of love and gratitude keeps growing. Although she may not be clear about the flow of events of her life, she seems clearer than ever about the Love flowing through them.

My conversations with Mary stayed with me when pondering the fig tree after returning home. While gazing at the fresh green shoots and the jungle gym

of phantom branches, I noticed how deeply interconnected the living and dying branches still were. They both rose from the same trunk, both were rooted in the same ground, and both were open to the same sky with its sunshine, clouds, and rain. Both were places of rest and refuge for the birds and squirrels. Both, like Mary's living and physically dead loves, were part of a larger belonging in the vast flow of God's compassionate life.

This renewed awareness of loving, timeless interconnections kept freeing and encouraging me, so that it became easy to prune the fig tree's barren branches. It was clear that some branches were dead and it was best to just accept the truth of their loss. Keeping the bare limbs no longer seemed right. The lines from Shakespeare's sonnet on aging rose within me again. The "bare, ruined choirs" had given their gifts and now it was time to strengthen what remained by letting them go.

The tree is much, much smaller now. Its range and scope are greatly diminished, and it has yet to produce a fully ripe fig. It, like Mary, is only a shadow of its former glory. Still it looks healthy and strong in its diminished state, and like Mary, is still offering gifts in this season of its life. The tree and Mary remind me again that letting go or losing the dead branches of our lives can be graced in spite of the loss. It can be difficult to let them go, the losses are real and can be quite painful at first, but something else may be born or live on in fresh ways. The new creation will not look the same, but it still can thrive and offer fresh, hopeful life.

Equally important, however, is the sense that the fig tree with its dead branches and fresh green shoots, and Mary with her diminishment and growing awareness of gratitude and love, are both part of a much larger Loving flow that could whisper me into deeper awareness of God's subtle, mysterious love. Who would have guessed that, ignoring the obvious and trusting an invitation to wait, would, in this case, bring me hope, encouragement, and a deeper sense of peace with the challenges of aging. Truly we live and move in a vast, yet intimate flow of God's mysterious, liberating Love.

**LIZ IS THE DIRECTOR OF SHALEM'S NURTURING THE CALL:  
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Kathleen Weller . . . . .	SGP 2013 Class
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Marilyn Wolf . . . . .	Marjorie Donnelly
Women of St. Peter's Episcopal Church . . . . .	Jayne Shonetell's leadership



#### GIVEN BY

Devon Allen	Gerald May
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Herbert J. Martin	Jerry May
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Joanna Schuman	Gerald May
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Tracy Tucker	Jerry Tucker
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Martin T. Young	Harry & Edith Young

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## Grants

The Trust for the Meditation Process

## Scholarship Gifts

Robert Campbell	Victoria Molta
Sue Czarnetzky	Paul & Judith Purta
Claudia Dollen	Sun Spriggs
Betty Dunlop	Clair Ullmann
Leslie Flemming	Kathryn 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, 2014 and 2013

<b>ASSETS</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>
CURRENT ASSETS	\$ 288,921	\$ 197,945
INVESTMENTS	755,080	817,523
FIXED ASSETS	35,786	37,540
OTHER ASSETS	<u>13,835</u>	<u>43,474</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b><u>1,093,622</u></b>	<b><u>1,096,482</u></b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
CURRENT LIABILITIES	<u>146,094</u>	<u>140,494</u>
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	797,491	754,575
Temporarily restricted	<u>150,037</u>	<u>201,413</u>
TOTAL NET ASSETS	<u>947,528</u>	<u>955,988</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; NET ASSETS</b>	<b><u>\$ 1,093,622</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 1,096,482</u></b>

### Condensed Statement of Activities for Years Ended June 30, 2014 and 2013

<b>REVENUE AND SUPPORT</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2013</b>
Programs, contractual work and publications	\$ 629,293	\$ 575,653
Contributions	457,261	577,213
Investment income (losses)	<u>95,778</u>	<u>72,843</u>
<b>TOTAL REVENUE AND SUPPORT</b>	<b><u>1,182,332</u></b>	<b><u>1,225,709</u></b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Programs, including allocated staff compensation	918,914	752,149
Administration:		
Staff compensation & benefits	59,405	63,998
Rent and other	145,935	145,208
Fundraising expenses	<u>66,538</u>	<u>75,786</u>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b><u>1,190,792</u></b>	<b><u>1,037,141</u></b>
<b>Total Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets</b>	(8,460)	188,568
<b>NET ASSETS, Beginning of Year</b>	<u>955,988</u>	<u>767,420</u>
<b>NET ASSETS, End of Year</b>	<b><u>\$ 947,528</u></b>	<b><u>\$ 955,988</u></b>





## Shalem Long-Time Donors

The following individuals have given faithfully to Shalem for 10 years or more, and we are deeply grateful for their help in sustaining Shalem's ministry.

### 30 YEARS AND MORE

Eleanor & Bob Abaro  
 Jeannette & Stanley Bakke  
 Edward Bauman  
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 N. Franklin Adkinson, Jr.  
 Anonymous  
 Hillary Bercovici  
 William Bone  
 O. Robert Brown  
 Tina Brown-Eckert  
 Michael Bucci  
 Kathryn Campbell  
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 Betty Smallwood  
 Marcus Smucker  
 Marianne Taylor  
 Phyllis Van Lare  
 Jacqueline White  
 Martin Young



## 15-19 YEARS

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Anonymous (2)  
CeCe & Gerry Ballboni  
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Anne Briggs  
Cynthia Chappell  
Mary Jo Colucci  
John Danner  
Ann Dean  
Rosemary Dickerson  
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Carroll Anne Sheppard  
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Marie Stoltzfus

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Ann Barry  
Bernice Bassing  
Henry W. & Martha  
Bruner  
Mary Catherine Bunting  
Susan Burke  
Susan Castellan  
Emily Castner

Alicia Conklin-Wood  
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Sharon Shutler  
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Jo Ann Staebler  
Eugene Steuerle  
Charles Stewart  
Therese Taylor-Stinson  
Cynthia Byers Walter  
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

Raymond E. & Naomi C. Dungan Foundation





## A Spirit Window: Ann Kulp

Adjunct staff member Ann Kulp passed away this summer after a long journey with cancer. She was a dedicated Christian educator who served on Shalem's adjunct staff for 18 years and introduced many of us to Tibetan singing bowls and the power of music as a pathway to prayer. Ann was also a charter member of Shalem's Society for Contemplative Leadership, and in the months before her death, she shared freely about her passion for life (and hummingbirds!) in her online blogs.

Those who knew Ann recall her seemingly boundless energy, her faith and her love of Shalem, especially as she offered Holy Interruptions, an online quiet day in the spring of 2014, and also worked with staff on updating her workbook, Spirit Windows. As many of the Shalem community noted after her death, Ann was a Spirit window herself, so alive and vital, with the Spirit shining through her for all to see.

In addition, Ann was a member of Shalem's Shekinah Society, which meant that she remembered Shalem in her will, and we are deeply grateful for this additional legacy she leaves us. We know her beloved hummingbirds are hovering nearby, reminding us of Ann's bright spirit and her ability to savor each moment.

In our yearnings for the divine Presence, we are reminded that the same Presence also yearns for us.

—Ann Kulp

## 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.	Alan Evans	Linda Allport Neumaier	Betty Stoddard
Ann Barry	Judith Favor	Mary-Louise O'Day	Joan Stogis
Margaret Bullitt-Jonas	Doris Froelich	Clare Openshaw	Jan Thurston
Merrill Ware Carrington	Joann Klink	Laurence Pagnoni	Linda Toia
Jean Crawford	Ann Kulp	Don & Alixe Park	Nan Weir
John Denham	Kirby Lewis	Paul Purta	Emily Wilmer
Rosemary Dickerson	Monica Maxon	Leah Rumpy	Sandra Hay Wilson
Susan Dillon	Brooke Morrigan	Lisa Richey	
Tilden Edwards	K. Sheila Noyes	Lyta Seddig	

Please let us know if you have included a bequest to Shalem in your estate plans. We'd like to say thank you and welcome you as a member of our Shekinah Society!

## Making A Bequest to Shalem

When making your estate plans, we hope you will consider a gift to Shalem. Over the last several years, we have been richly blessed by those who have remembered Shalem in their wills. Not only have these gifts 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 legacy gift.





## Volunteers & In-Kind Donations

Each program year we are blessed by those who give of their time or donate travel and other expenses to Shalem. This year we send special thanks to:

- **Jo Ann Staebler** who coordinated Shalem's participation in the Wild Goose Festival and the Shalem graduates who offered spiritual direction there: **Douglas Battenberg, Joy Celeste Crawford, Sharon Glass, Torrence Harman, Nadine Hathaway, Marshall Jenkins, Regina Proctor, Patience Robbins, Doris Snyder, Therese Taylor-Stinson,** and **Susan Winner**. Thanks also to **Crystal Corman** who tweeted photos and text while there.
- **Susan Etherton, Lisa Richey** and **June Schulte** for their hand-made cards created for Shalem.
- **Patrick Harris** and **Mel Shapcott**, of **Cyberian Frontier**, our web site managers.
- **Frank Toia, June Schulte, Susan Etherton, and Leah Rampy**, whose photographs you see in these pages, on our web site and in our social media, and for **Christy Berghoef**, whose photos often grace our Facebook page.
- **Marianne & Dean Lewis, Orestes Roca Santana,** and **Carlos Exposito** for special help with Shalem's pilgrimage to Cuba.
- **Ketu'rah Biggins**, Shalem's intern, who helped us in the office this past year, particularly in Shalem's library.
- **Sandra Kerka** for her wonderful work on Shalem's 40th anniversary booklet.
- **Shalem's Board of Directors**, who donated their time and talent in so many ways, especially for their assistance at the Gerald May Seminar.
- Shalem's non-Board **Committee members: Leslie Miller and Therese Taylor-Stinson**, who gave so much to the communications/marketing committee over the past year.
- **Jeremy Klass, Ed Wilson** and **Stephen Broadhead** for their legal advice.
- **Anne Grizzle**, who offered the Bellfry, her beautiful retreat center, for group spiritual direction residential programs.
- **Individuals who made additional in-kind contributions:** CeCe Balboni, Douglas Battenberg, Nora Becker, Lerita Coleman Brown, Stephanie Burgevin, Janet Burkhart, Crystal Corman, Phil Cover, Anita Davidson, Ann Dean, Bill Dietrich, Tilden & Mary Edwards, Susan Etherton, Sid Fowler, Erin Gingrich, Sharon Glass, Joan & John Hatcher, Nadine Hathaway, Ann Hisle, Kathleen Jerabek, Marti Karchner, Suzi Kindervatter, Darlene Little, Paige McAdams, Margaret McBride, Leslie Miller, Mary Lou Miller, Karen Mooney, Jean Noon, Linda Nunes-Schrag, Bruce Pickle, Ana & David Rampy, Patience Robbins, Emily Schwenker, Dean Steinacker, Phillip Stephens, Jean Sweeney, Francine Thayer, Tracy Tucker, Clair Ullmann, Theresa Walker, Liz Ward

## Special Thanks

We especially want to thank the **Trust for the Meditation Process** for their support of Shalem's Young Adult Contemplative Life & Leadership Initiative.



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CeCe Balboni  
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## Shalem Adjunct Staff 2013-2014

Franklin Adkinson  
Nicholas Amato  
Douglas Battenberg  
Lerita Coleman Brown  
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## Office Information

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Fax: 202-595-0336

Office Hours: Monday to  
Friday, 8 am-4 pm

[www.shalem.org](http://www.shalem.org)  
E-mail: [info@shalem.org](mailto:info@shalem.org)

## Shalem Staff 2013-2014

### Executive Director

Leah Rampy

### Senior Program Director

Carole Crumley

### Program Directors

Ann Dean  
Patience Robbins  
Elizabeth Ward

### Senior Program Administrator

Christine Jeffrey

### Director of Communications & Development

Monica Maxon

### Social Media & Online Learning Support

Bryan Berghoef

### Special Assistant/Program Administrator

Tanya Radford

### Director of Finance

Martha Sherman

### Director of Online Learning & Technology

Ruth Taylor

### Senior Fellow for Spiritual Guidance

Rose Mary Dougherty

### Founder & Senior Fellow

Tilden H. Edwards, Jr.

*Edited by Monica Maxon*

*Design: Peña Design, Inc.*

*Photography: Sue Clarke, Susan Etherton, Scott Landis, Andrea Noel, Leah Rampy, June Schulte, and Frank Toia*





## 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 FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION



## CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE & LEADERSHIP

# Nurturing Your Call, Going Deeper, Transforming Community and Living in God

Our in-depth programs support your God-guided career, personal life  
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For those in the ministry of one-to-one spiritual companioning

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**SHALEM**  
INSTITUTE FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION

www.shalem.org  
info@shalem.org  
301-897-7334

*Staff: Carole Crumley, Ann Dean, Rose Mary Dougherty, Tilden Edwards,  
Patience Robbins, Liz Ward and others*