

To: Our Long-Term Program Graduates

We trust that if you are reading this note, you are intrigued by the opportunity to bring contemplative practices to your own community through the use of Shalem's online courses. We hope this information helps in your discernment about whether to gather a group. At any point, if you would like to engage in further conversation, feel free to email ruth@shalem.org.

What Shalem Offers

- Shalem will provide spaces for you and each individual in your group in the eCourse, *Opening to the Spirit*. (For specific dates, see shalem.org/programs/online/opening-to-the-spirit/.) For a group, the cost per person is reduced. You may feel free to charge what you need on top of that rate to compensate for your leadership time, rental space or retreat space, etc.
- As you may remember from your eCourse experience, each participant will receive Sunday emails to access the teaching video, guided meditation, reflection questions, and journal space on the course website. There will also be Thursday weekly email check-in's and opportunity to join a conference call.
- We are happy to talk with you as you plan your group. Once you register, we will also provide a brief Leadership Guide as a small offering designed to support your contemplative leadership throughout the course. In addition to a few reminders about creating a contemplative space for the group, the guide will include an outline of the course content and the reflection questions for each week.

Here is an overview of the course material for *Opening to the Spirit* with Carole Crumley:

The **intent** of the course is to offer core practices and understandings to support and enrich your prayer life through contemplative practices of body, breath and mind.

Week 1: Where Are You on Your Journey?

Week 2: What is Contemplative Prayer? (with an audio of the late Gerald May)

Week 3: Praying through Body Awareness

Week 4: Breath Prayer

Week 5: Presence through Body, Breath, and Mind

Week 6: Reflection and Feedback

Week 1 and 6 serve as introduction and closing, and weeks 2-5 include a video teaching and guided meditation by Carole, Gerald May, Tilden Edwards, and Marlene Maier.

Your Role as the Leader:

First and foremost, we have confidence in your capacity to lead a contemplative prayer group, and therefore, we hope you feel empowered to discern for yourself what your role and group may look like and not feel limited by what we describe here. Drawing on your time in Shalem's long-term program and listening with your spiritual heart, we are looking forward to hearing

your feedback about your experience and the container you created for your in-person group to go deeper in community.

As a partner in this process, we ask that you be in touch with us around your group design. Write us a paragraph describing how you are structuring your group. We also will be in touch in Week 6 to hear feedback about your experience.

As a leader, you gather and lead the group and purchase the package from Shalem.

Deadlines:

We must have all of your group member's names, emails and contact information as well as payment from you ideally by **the Wednesday before the course begins.**

Sign into your account at shalem.org and register your group on the Opening to the Spirit program page or contact ruth@shalem.org. We will need everyone's first and last name, preferred email address, and mailing address (at least city, state and zip).

Ways We can Imagine Using the eCourse in a Group:

Example 1: Group Leader

Perhaps you have a peer group that is already gathering at your home each week. Upon hearing about this Leadership Package, you bring it up in conversations, and the six people in your peer group, as well as another four acquaintances who wish to deepen their daily practice tell you they are committed to enrolling in the six-week experience.

Scheduling/Planning:

You find a half-day that works for most of the participants to gather during Week 1 and Week 6 for a beginning and ending retreat time. You also plan to meet once a week for one hour of guided time. During these half-day retreats and weekly gatherings, you perhaps create space to engage together with the practices from the course weekly material, be in silent prayer together, set intentions and reflect on the questions offered in the course material as a listening circle together, or whatever else you feel called to create.

Example 2: Church Group

Perhaps a group of people in your church have been intrigued by spacious, contemplative prayer, or perhaps have even been gathering during Advent or Lent to explore contemplative practices. Upon hearing about this Leadership Package, you send out an email to them and ask if they would like to join as you guide a six-week experience through Shalem's practices of Presence through body, breath and mind. Eight to ten people respond that they would like to join you.

Scheduling/Planning:

You book a room at your church to gather the group for an hour each week during the course. Each person in the group watches the videos and engages with the course material from home. Each week, you gather around a candle in a circle to be with that week's material or perhaps

review the material from the past week. Perhaps you begin the time by reiterating some of Carole's teaching, move into listening to the guided meditation together and experiencing the practice together, then move into 20 minutes of shared silent prayer, time for journaling and sharing around the reflection questions from the course, and joining in a closing prayer together.

If each week is too many times to gather in this busy season, you may simply choose to gather two or four times in-person throughout the six weeks.

There are many other groups of people and structures of time together you can imagine to engage your contemplative leadership with a group of 10 or more.

Costs:

As the leader of this group, you assume financial responsibility for the package. We suggest advertising the \$68 pricing (if you are certain you will get at least three participants) in the letters to potential group members, since you will not know initially which discount you may offer your group (e.g., "six-week session will range from \$50 to \$68, depending on the size of our group").

Groups of 10 or more: \$50 per person, one free registration for a leader

Groups of less than 10: \$68 per person (\$68 for leader registration as well)

Does this timeframe not work for you or your group? See our website for future eCourse dates. Also, feel free to email ruth@shalem.org if you simply would like to envision together how this contemplative eCourse offering may enrich your community.

Many blessings to you,

Shalem Institute