

hen 20 young contemplative leaders gathered at the beautiful St. Benedict's Monastery nestled in the mountains of Snowmass, Colorado, with Tilden Edwards, Thomas Keating, Richard Rohr, and Laurence Freeman for five days in August, one of the first themes that surfaced was societal impasse. In the midst of the idyllic setting, participants remained keenly aware of the needs of the wider world, and drew on Constance FitzGerald's work, "Impasse and Dark Night," to begin to make sense of the turbulence of these times and to see how God was working in the midst. One of the participants grew up in Charlottesville and carried the weight of the violent racism that had wounded her city just two days before. Others' experiences included working with homeless youth in New York, with human trafficking in Africa, and with healing the earth from environmental devastation, to name just a few. No strangers to human suffering, these young leaders sought solid grounding for strength to face the troubled world they inherited.

Constance FitzGerald provided that solid grounding. She maintains that, while St. John of the Cross articulated the experience of

impasse and dark night for individuals, the same process applies to society. On an individual level, when we are certain of ourselves and our prayer is "working," we easily slip into the illusion of control. When things fall apart and we can't see God, God is at work in the darkness, doing deeper work. On the societal level, too, FitzGerald argues, it's when things fall apart and we experience impasse that we are brought to our knees, invited to trust that God is doing deeper work than we can see. All is obscured, yet God has not departed. In fact, something more profound than we can imagine is occurring and will only be revealed in due time, like the birth that follows the darkness of gestation.

Turning to John of the Cross and FitzGerald for hope provided these young leaders, and can provide us, with a foundation for facing the seemingly impossible challenges that face us. We live in times that bring us to our knees. Any illusion of control over the events that surround us has slipped away. As Patience Robbins points out in this issue, this is a time for contemplatives. We must practice living from the heart even as our hearts are breaking, as we face the racism, war, refugee crises, gun violence, political divisiveness, environmental degradation and its accompanying natural



disasters, and more, that surround us. Bryan Berghoef helps us, in this digital age, stay present in the midst of the barrage of information about this hurting world that assails/assaults us. Liz Ward reminds us that we can be carried on the wings of prayer when our own prayer feels impotent. Winston Charles calls the clergy, who minister in the midst of this chaos as well as in the midst of the shifting sands of their religious institutions, into their cells to find their core strength. Trish Stefanik invites us to consider the "interior design" work that God does when we enter those cells. And Tilden Edwards returns us to the young contemplatives meeting at Snowmass to find hope for our troubled world.

Because God is at work, we can live in the darkness. Because we can trust that God's work is deeper than what we see or understand, we can take the next step. Because God is God, the deep mystery beyond human understanding, we can live with open hearts and confidence that good will come of our faithfulness, even when we can't see the path before us.

MARGARET IS SHALEM'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.

PLUMB LINE

STEVE GARNAAS-HOLMES

I am setting a plumb line in the midst of my people.
——Amos 7.8

How easy it is to be off balance, to be askew, to not see straight.

How easy it is to let my own leanings distort what I think is upright.

When I build a great tower and see it is off plumb, do I have the courage to destroy and rebuild?

> God, help me to discern justice, to see love, to stand straight.

Give me faith
to hold a plumb line
to this world —
to be a plumb line:
to stay true,
to bear witness,
held in your hand,
suspended by your grace.

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



NEW CONTEMPLATIVES EXCHANGE: Hope for the Future By tilden edwards To the good to see you again braced me in the Aspert to greet the many people together at St. Benedict's mass. I first met Brothe dict's in a three-day me for the founders of four major Cl

t's good to see you again," said Brother Erik, as he embraced me in the Aspen Airport where he was waiting to greet the many people arriving to spend four days together at St. Benedict's Cistercian Monastery in Snowmass. I first met Brother Erik last October at St. Benedict's in a three-day meeting called by Thomas Keating for the founders of four major Christian contemplative centers in the United States: Contemplative Outreach (Fr. Thomas), Center for Action and Contemplation (Richard Rohr), World Christian Community for Meditation (Laurence Freeman) and Shalem. Fr. Thomas had brought us together to find ways to increase our mutual collaboration as we all sought to further the awakening of Christian contemplative tradition within the broader contemplative openness growing around the world.

In that initial meeting, we found a great deal in common, including a sense of the need for recognition of Spirit-inspired contemplative awareness as the deepest ground not only of the church's life but of all major religious traditions. We also agreed that contemplative practices and understanding can make a significant, positive difference in all dimensions of human living: personal, family, communal, institutional, political, and in relation to the earth. We saw the extra importance today in the ways contemplative awareness can foster a mutual belonging and caring for the common good in our conflicted societal life.

As our meeting continued, we evolved a collaborative step that we could take: bringing together a group of young (in their 30's and 40's) Christian contemplative thought and practice leaders,

for their own mutual stimulus and support and to be among those who potentially could carry our contemplative lineages into the future in fresh, Spirit-led ways. We decided that we would each invite five such leaders to attend a four-day exchange in August 2017.

When those invitations went out last winter, all who were invited responded with an enthusiastic acceptance. When we finally came together, not one person had dropped out, which is so rare in my experience of groups that I was left with an even greater sense that the Spirit really was drawing us together.

The design of the August gathering was influenced by Shalem's experience in its long-term extension programs, where we have evolved ways of helping participants stay open to the Spirit through all that we do each day; it was also influenced by the founders' desire for sufficient, daily, set-aside, silent contemplative practice and prayer times. As founders, we wanted to stay in the background as much as possible and give center stage to the invitees. We led a few prayer sessions, and we gave a few spontaneous comments in plenary sessions, but basically we wanted the invitees to develop their own community, contemplative areas of concern, and any future plans together. Margaret Benefiel, Shalem's executive director, was willing to bring her long experience in facilitating contemplative gatherings to the meeting, as well as to meet daily in the founder's small group at their invitation.

Besides Margaret, I invited Matthew Wright, an Episcopal priest, contemplative retreat leader and writer; Stuart Higginbothom, who has a uniquely contemplatively grounded parish in Georgia; Jessica Smith, a researcher on the national staff of the United Methodist Church; and Bo Karen Lee, who teaches spiritual formation classes at Princeton Theological Seminary. All except Bo are Shalem graduates. The invitees of the other founders included people from six foreign countries: Brazil, the Dominican Republic, The Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Great Britain, and Australia. We asked them all to send brief bi-

ographies to the founders and one another ahead of time, as well as to exchange papers that showed some aspect of their current contemplative insights and areas of concern and action. Many of

the papers included fresh insights related to such subjects as contemplation and mindfulness, interspirituality (across traditions), contemplation and science, the new monasticism, and contemplatively grounded parish churches.

HOPE

TRISH STEFANIK

We live such lost love with the pain of shattered dreams laid waste by words and deeds of damnation tossed about as if that was life. Listen, listen to the one voice that matters that still holds the dream beneath the surface of anything you see with whipped worn resignation or glazed over attention. Take the time to go deep deep down into the stillness of silence where your gift lights the dark and your Beloved has for you a cup of soothing balm of heavenly imagination and wants to show you what is possible.

TRISH IS A SHALEM STAFF MEMBER.

Here are a few of my personal impressions of our time together:

Everyone fell into a sense of community and shared intent together amazingly rapidly, through deep silences, honest, probing conversations at meals and on the side, as well as through animated small groups meetings and plenary sessions around a whole range of contemplative concerns, ideas and questions.

Many expressed a passionate concern for the importance of prophetic actions emerging from their contemplative grounding and scriptural societal values. This included a desire for contemplatives to develop friendships with and programmatic inclusion of poor and marginalized people. One participant had founded a home for homeless children and another's ministry for many years was to go out late at night in New York City, searching for homeless youth enticed by pimps, high on alcohol or drugs, or otherwise lost on the streets, including homeless LGBTQ youth, helping them find a way out of that predatory and self-destructive world. Several others taught contemplative practices primarily to poor people.

A continuing frontier for many was how to "translate" contemplative understanding and practice in such a way that it could be embraced by different age groups, non-religiously-connected yet spiritually open people, and in different institutional settings, and doing so without losing the depth and transformational intent of authentic contemplation. As one participant put it, this would include bringing contemplation into the church and not as some optional and isolated activity but as the "leaven in the lump" of the whole church's life.

Quite a few participants had serious experience with and appreciation of contemplative traditions and practices beyond the Christian, especially Buddhist, Sufi, and Hindu, although the group as a whole was grounded in Christian tradition. I heard expressed a cosmic as well as personal view

of Christ and the Holy Trinity grounded in such modern theologians as Raimon Panikkar, Richard Rohr, Thomas Keating, Teilhard de Chardin, Cynthia Bourgeault, Ilia Delio and Thomas Merton. Fr. Keating



spoke of our group as a manifestation of the Body of Christ in a needed new form, that goes beyond individual friendships and past boundaries yet still highly values formation in the contemplative lineage of particular traditions. Several people moved toward seeing this view of the Body, at its truest and most inclusive as the mind-in-heart human community as it's meant to be.

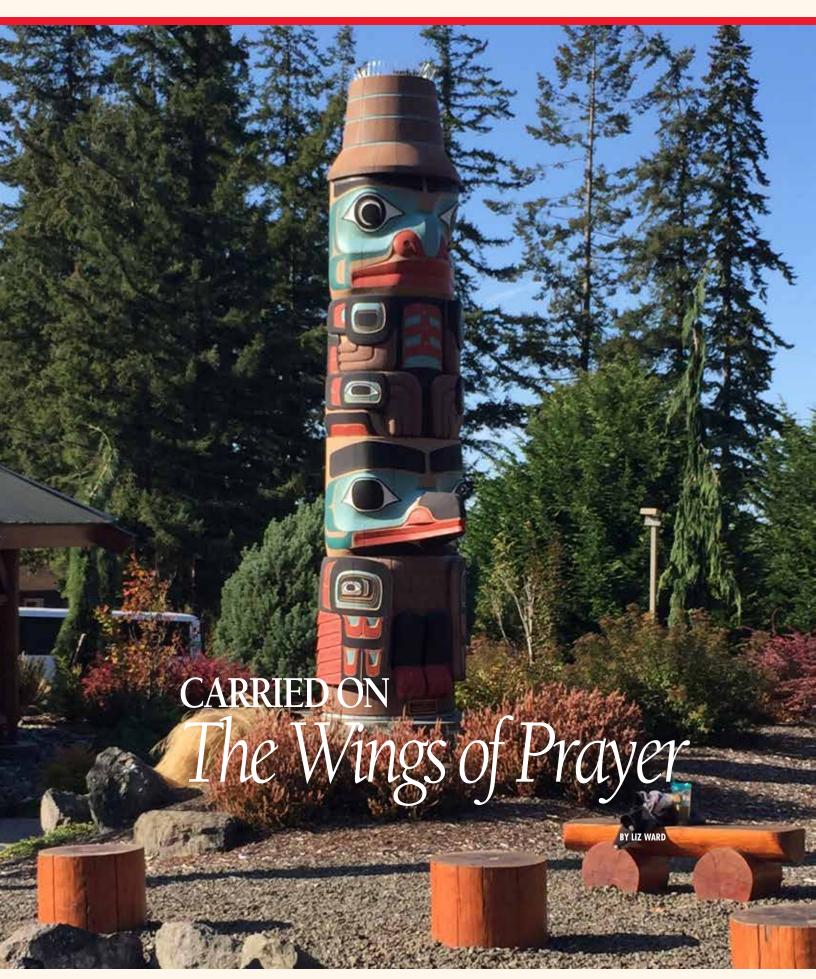
Some other contemplative needs expressed were: insuring authentic elder mentorship and systems that assist mentoring that can communicate especially with younger generations; emphasizing our unity rather than our differences; opportunities for intensive contemplative retreats; physical centers such as those of the founders for learning, inspiration and relationships; fostering Christian meditation (which is more than secular "mindfulness") for children; consistent advocacy of "nondualism," recognizing the integral mutual indwelling of divine, human, earthly and cosmic reality.

On the last morning, in the midst of considering the possible ways they could continue to relate to one another following the gathering, a participant suggested leaving the monastery retreat center and taking a hike together on one of the nearby mountain paths; everyone enthusiastically agreed. They spontaneously continued their conversations in pairs and triads as they walked on

the trail for several hours. For me, that act expressed a primary yearning of the majority of participants: to develop vulnerable, heart-grounded, trusting, and mutually supportive friendships together that could be brought home to nourish their lives and further their contemplative receptivity, imagination and actions. One participant volunteered to develop a new blog for the group's continued interaction, and each founder's group selected a representative to help with the development of any future activities. The invitees shared a strong desire for any development to be as organic as possible and really called for.

At the end, I sensed that everyone left with a fresh feeling of hopefulness, expanded possibilities and support for bringing forward their contemplatively grounded life and ways of extending its gifts to many others. We, the founders, shared in this Spirit-updraft and together felt that here were people who would truly be among our creative contemplative "lineage carriers" to younger generations in the years ahead. I hope and trust the shared smile on our faces was shaped by the Holy Spirit, who is forever opening the future to us, the ever-dawning kin-dom of God!

TILDEN IS SHALEM'S FOUNDER AND SENIOR FELLOW.



an prayer make a difference when grief, frustration, discouragement, and not-knowing swarm like pesky mosquitoes and threaten to poison your heart and mind? This is a question I have thrown at Holy Mystery at various times when dealing with the hard and rocky paths

in my own life and the "slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" in our beautiful and broken world.

If we trust the intimate prayers in the Psalms, the answer can be "yes." In these vulnerable, heartfelt reflections, prayerful transformations abound. The external situation may or may not change, but somehow the psalmist can be changed when turning grief, frustration, and even rage and a desire for vengeance to God in prayer.

So what about in my own life? What is my own lived experience of turning to Holy Mystery with my less than glorious inner struggles during daunting times? How have I been healed and freed by my prayer?

At various times the responses have been different, but there has always seemed to be something sustaining even if it was not a clear and definitive answer. Sometimes I was more closed and blocked in my awareness—because I was looking in the wrong direction or because I was just too exhausted to even look or notice. Other times I was trying to stay open but couldn't find any "bread crumbs" to follow to find my way home. In time, however, something would mysteriously revive my hope and trust and open me to deeper life in God. Usually the answer came on the wings of prayer.

For example, many years ago when struggling with painful losses, I was given, in prayer, the image of a strong pillar of God's peace within me. This image came as a gift and was a clear and visceral image. I could easily imagine a sturdy pillar of calm strength running from my heart to my gut whenever I remembered to turn to God in prayer. This holy pillar felt solid and sustaining inside me and helped me bear challenges more gracefully than when I forgot this gifted source of inner peace.

There was still frustration, sorrow and loss. The challenging external realities did not change, but something inside of me did change. I felt more able to cope and more able to be present to the hard realities before me. I felt hopeful and "soul safe" despite

the external circumstances. It felt like I had been given access to something deep and true, yet often hidden and unknown within me—much bigger than me and yet part of me. It felt strong and stable and mysterious, an unexpected gift.

"My Shalem experience
has been one of the most
meaningful and enriching
experiences of my life. My
contemplative prayer life
seems to continue to evolve
and probably always will be
evolving. I see things differently
now—softer—I see a need
to be gentler in the world. By
being gentler, I can get out of
the way and let the Spirit work
and be heard."

—A PROGRAM PARTICIPANT

This summer brought another painful, thorny path. This time I did not have the energy to struggle with questions and sustained personal prayer. I was too exhausted. This time, however, no prayer image was given. I could still feel prayerful love, gratitude and thanksgiving at times, but mostly I was too upset or drained to sustain my formal prayer. I was, however, being held in prayer by a faithful host of communal and individual prayers. These intercessory prayers felt like a sustaining presence supporting me throughout my days.

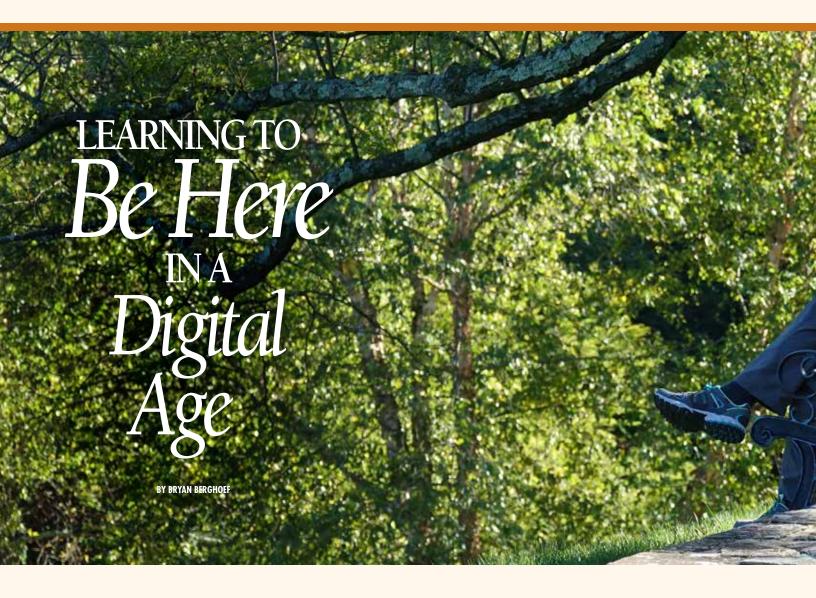
Despite, or perhaps because of, my personal limitations, I was given a deep and prayerful knowing that was not connected to images or words. I had a visceral sense of God's goodness and love despite the challenging external circumstances and my sometimes painfully inappropriate reactions to frustration, disappointment and uncertainty. This spiritual heart knowing also felt prayerfully given, holy and sustaining.

For me it was pure gift that was totally independent of anything I was or was not doing. It felt solid and real despite the lack of proof and the confounding external circumstances. It had a reality that was hard to justify or understand yet seemed believable and true. I knew that I was being held and sustained by the loving intercessory prayer of others and by the deep mystery of God's prayer within

me. My own prayer was too empty, limp, and weak to give me the hope and assurance I kept feeling. Something stronger, more pervasive, and deeper had to explain this mysterious knowing.

This hope and assurance felt like a taste of God's prayer within me. What an amazing gift in the midst of frustrating stress, struggle, and loss. It was as if being carried by the compassionate prayer of others mysteriously opened me to God's prayer alive within me in a new and fuller way. I felt held in a web of Love that was independent of my inadequacies and limitations and beyond the disappointing realities of my daily life. I felt graced by the loving prayers of others and the abiding love of God—carried on the wings of prayer.

LIZ IS THE DIRECTOR OF SHALEM'S NURTURING THE CALL: SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE PROGRAM.



n a long walk in the woods recently, I happened upon a deer in the shadows. My first impulse was to pull out my phone and capture the moment, so I could share it with the world. But I had left my phone behind! While initially frustrated by this discovery, I found that it actually facilitated a different kind of experience. If I'd attempted to pull a device out of my pocket, this woodland creature would likely have been startled by the sudden movement and run off. Instead, I stood perfectly still, and so did the deer. We warily noted each other's presence, neither quite willing to disturb the other.

Because I was not able to share this beautiful creature to Instagram, I was invited instead to simply be present with this animal—to fully exist in that moment. And because it was an encounter that only the deer and I shared, there was a sacredness to it that just might have been diluted had my mind jumped ahead to how I would share this with others via a carefully crafted photo or video (understanding that photography can also be a very contemplative activity). This moment was unique. It was here. It was now. And I was the only one to witness it. It was a powerful encounter, and a learning moment for me.

We live in an era where we are enmeshed with our technology. Our cell phones connect us to the world via phone, text, social media, apps, games, videos, and nearly anything else you can imagine. We are rarely out of reach of anyone by any number of means. For many of us our daily work involves laptops and computers, where we have five or a dozen Internet tabs open at any moment, each with some helpful article or social media feed or Google search waiting to lead us to more information. Additionally, today we find video screens with talking heads nearly everywhere we go, including at the gas pump!

In light of all this, it can be very easy to feel harried and distracted—to feel that life is a constant disruption, in which our task is simply to react to whatever digital signal is the most urgent in any given moment. Such a milieu can easily take us out of any sense of feeling present and undistracted. It can make a spirit of prayer or settling into silence feel nearly impossible on an average day.

Given this deluge of digital content and distraction: How can we stay spiritually grounded? How can we center ourselves in the divine love that we know is always present? I have found that there



are several ways to navigate this technological minefield, and even to allow technology to augment our spiritual connection, rather than detract from it. A few ideas:

Minimize apps. Distracted by every Facebook notification or Facebook Messenger message? Remove these apps from your phone and decide you will only check Facebook from your computer, at a time of your choosing. While it can be fun to see who has liked your most recent post at any given moment, the hyperpresence of Facebook can easily prevent you from being fully present with people or with God. Have a favorite game that you can't put down? Uninstall it for a week and see what happens. When you get the impulse to play that game, choose to say a set prayer or recite a mindfulness mantra.

Drop the phone. Don't literally drop it, unless you have a really good protective case! But do leave your phone behind on certain occasions. Perhaps a walk in the woods would be that much richer if you didn't feel the constant temptation to Instagram the experience or see what's trending on Twitter as you step along the path.

Put your phone on silent mode when in a meaningful conversation with a friend, to ensure you won't be mentally elsewhere.

Download meditation/prayer apps. Technology does not always have to get in the way. Sometimes we can make our devices work for us in our spiritual goals. Insight Timer, Headspace, and Let's Meditate are just a few of the apps available to encourage you to take time for prayer and meditation during your day. Using these apps can be similar to apps that help you maintain a running regimen or exercise routine. Think of it as a spiritual exercise assistant.

Listen to prayerful music. Pandora or Spotify can tune you into a channel of peaceful nature sounds, spa music, chant, or something else that can happen in the background while you work or do another task and can help you operate in a more prayerful spirit.

Read contemplative books. Use your Kindle or Nook app to learn from the wisdom of Gerald May, Thomas Merton, Teresa of Ávila or other spiritual writers.

Take an online course. Shalem and other contemplative organizations have crafted online courses to help you deepen your prayer practice and invite you to explore new approaches to contemplative spirituality. These can be accessed on any laptop or tablet and are flexible to adapt to your schedule. Joining a community of seekers from all over the globe in an intentional online course can be a powerful experience.

These are just a few suggestions of the ways we can navigate the present age of technology to help deepen presence in any given moment and can even help deepen our commitment to prayer and contemplation. No doubt you have some additional ideas about how this can happen. The important thing is your commitment to your own inner intention to deepen your spiritual journey. Once that intention is set, you will find that some of the ideas mentioned above and others unfold naturally as you walk each day on the path of spiritual discovery.

Gerald May, reflecting on the growing world of the Internet back in 1995, noted: "In this vast and surprising landscape I have begun to name and claim what it means—for me, at least—to be a contemplative presence in all my interactions with other people and the world. It means to live in conscious love with the hereand-now Divine, to trust God's love no matter what, to know that God flows through us all continually, to believe that God so intimately pervades us and all creation that we can never, ever be really abandoned."

May the knowledge of this divine love penetrate our hearts and souls, whether we are logged in or logged off, plugged in or unplugged! God is always present and invites us to be so as well.

BRYAN IS A SHALEM STAFF MEMBER WORKING WITH SOCIAL MEDIA AND ONLINE LEARNING.



midst the turbulence, conflict and great uncertainty in our country and world, I struggle daily to remember and live what I know from my many years as a contemplative. I notice that

I can easily feel anxious, fearful and helpless. I notice that I continue to search for an understanding of what is happening and wonder how to hold all of it. Here are a few reflections about my experience and what I see that I want to claim and live.

I am grounded in LOVE. I come from love and want to live in love and know that love truly is the core reality of life. But, if that is so, how do I embody this? What allows me to stay in that open-hearted place? Having just been immersed in Shalem's Spiritual Guidance Program residency (as staff), I was deeply and continually reminded of the heart practice—letting the mind sink into the heart, opening and letting love flow in the heart (joining the flow that is already there). It is just that simple and just that difficult.

I have studied quite a bit of HeartMath, and knowing how easily I think about things and move into judgment or critique or some form of distress, I realize that I continuously distance or disconnect from the life in my heart. Each time I see this and choose to return to my heart and allow the flow of love and goodness (or joy, peace, compassion, gratitude), I am re-wiring my system which then makes it easier to return there and benefits me and everyone around me!

As I remain in my heart, I practice trust—trust that the creative Spirit within me, others and all life is flowing, moving, and dancing. I may not see it or get the whole picture, but I can simply feel trust—give myself over to it rather than the anxiety and fear that seem to run wild. I even attempt to entrust others to our loving Source and again feel within me that all shall be well. I practice asking this question frequently: What is mine to do in love and joy?

Another strong awareness and realization is the necessity of connection and community. I find my strength and even clarity and creativity as I join with others—in prayer, conversation, meet-

ings—who have a common intent to BE loving, authentic, and open to goodness, beauty and truth. This inspires me to live fully and abundantly and to know that communion is the core of our life, of reality. Indeed, we are one, and the moments of experiencing that are transformative and cause me to want more and more of them.

Compassion can be the quality that is a way to return to the flow and to hold all the messiness, confusion and pain. When I am confused, conflicted or in fear or distress of some kind, I can offer compassion to myself for my own pain and overwhelm, and for all the people and creatures who are suffering throughout the planet. This often moves me into a place of peace and opening and even guidance. As we recall our interconnectedness, one with another and creation, compassion is a healing balm that we can cultivate for ourselves and the planet.

These qualities of love, trust, connection and compassion may feel simplistic in the face of major upheaval. Yet, all I have is this one life, lived moment by moment. I know that it is critical to practice what is true in my heart. These qualities can ripple out to all those around me and the planet. They may seem insignificant, but when united with the Heart of Love, they may have the energy of Fire that Teilhard de Chardin speaks of: "Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides

and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire."

PATIENCE IS A SHALEM ADJUNCT STAFF MEMBER.

NO DOOR, NO WALLS

KEITH WALKER

Mornings I pray for an open heart. Evenings I find it locked from inside.

Praying for love to enter, I forget love is waiting to be freed.

These words are nothing and when their mist clears I can find no door, no walls.

How can I find names in the midst of this seamless tapestry of light?

There is no breathing just the waves of a great sea touching the near shore.

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



've been thinking a lot about interior design. Actually, much more than that—I have been involved in defining and setting up the interior of three major spaces in the last year: a new home, a new retreat house, and new offices for Shalem. I have always been interested in interior design; in fact, it was my first major in college. I smile today thinking how that initial interest morphed into my current vocation of inviting individuals and groups to an Indwelling Presence.

But then these two passions are not so disconnected. I desire the environments I create on the outside to reflect the inner values I hold dear—simple beauty and the harmony of the one with the whole. I want the spaces I create around me to invite a deep

breath, a smile, and peace—that which I imagine the Holy Within inviting. I hope that when others enter my house they feel "at home" and when they enter my workplace, they feel something of Shalem's essence. Those who come to the retreat house I pray will be connected with their inner well of refreshment and inspiration.

When I am designing, there's a certain order to the way I set this here and situate that there. I like to bring to each thing a sense that it belongs and is appreciated. I take note of proportion and integrating natural creation. I resist haphazardness and clutter because it too often fills a space leaving no room for the attention and spaciousness that is necessary for creativity and a soul's growth.



In every space, no matter the activity for which the room is created, I like there to be something that invites stillness—that which invites a sacred pause, movement inward, a fresh perspective, or longer view. This connects the space to God's space. I always want to be reminded of and called to be present to the undergirding, allencompassing divine design of life.

In the Shalem offices, at the heart of our space is a library and conference room with a central table and candle to anchor our work in prayer. Holy icons surround us. Our reception area is set up to

invite the visitor to come in and sit a while; a piece of art beckons, "Be still and know that I am God." Photos of Shalem participants convey the spiritual community we nurture.

In my house I've set up a little prayer corner. There I've set a comfortably fitted chair in front of a window facing a tree, beside a small table with a mindfulness bell and a coaster for my coffee cup. There's also some spiritual reading and a journal, a couple of photos of loved ones, and symbols that evoke for me the Holy, including a cross, a painting of a blue heron, a photograph of the night sky over the Grand Canyon, and a rock given on retreat with the word, "tenderness." Sometimes I switch out the symbols with other meaningful ones, but they never crowd or press for attention, only point me to interior awakening.

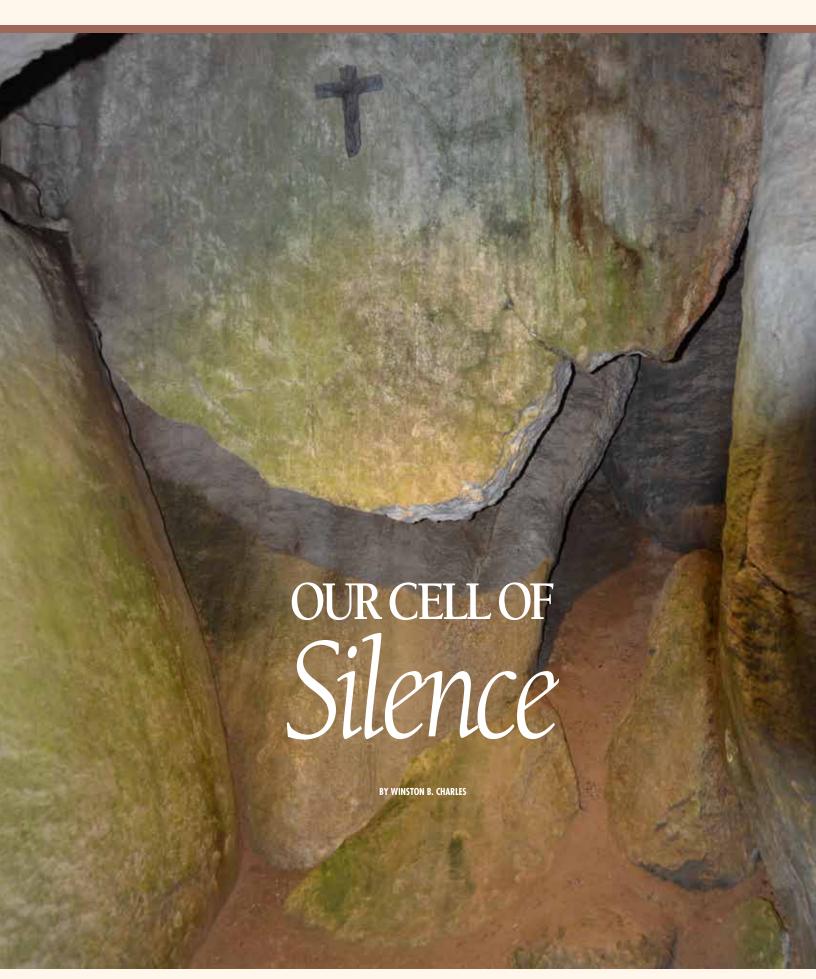
Everything in the retreat space from the pillows and quilts, the reading and art materials, and the quiet and patio setting says, you are loved.

Inspired by St. Teresa of Avila's imagining of the interior life as a castle with many rooms, I have imagined my own interior meeting place with God. My most vivid and longtime conception has been a simple cave-like dwelling illuminated by a captivating fire at the center. There I enter and feel immediately invited to draw near and be warmed. I am softened by the glow. At the fire of the Holy One within, I am recollected to what's at the core of my design.

In my spiritual imagination over time, the cave became a much brighter space, windows added in the round near the ceiling. I even found myself creating colorful art on the walls. One day the ceiling was completely gone and the space was flooded with natural light, fresh air, and birdsong. Eventually I found myself sweeping up embers and any remaining cobwebs of resistance from the corners, and then walking to the cave's opening and being nudged to leave—not God but this particular space that had formed me well for the next thing, an invitation to see and experience the luminosity of the Holy in all places.

I still go away daily to my quiet prayer corner to sit at the archetypal sacred fire of transformation. This is essential for my continued growth. And at the same time, there's less separation for me between interior space and the outer world. God is everywhere—one marvelous design at the heart of living. As an interior designer, I seek to create space and make room for that to be known.

TRISH IS A SHALEM PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR AND ADJUNCT STAFF MEMBER.



ack in my twenties, when I was a young priest, or, as a friend says, "way back when," a story circulated which may very well sound familiar. A man searching for meaning in life (today, we might call him a seeker) heard of a wise sage who lived in an isolated cell high in the Himalayas. The seeker took the long trip to the foot of the mountain, followed the path far up into the heights, finally reaching the secluded hut, finding the wise one sitting next to a small fire sipping a cup of tea. The seeker sat before the sage and, panting, asked him to explain the meaning of life. The sage, without reply, began pouring the seeker a cup of tea, to the top and overflowing. Startled, the seeker asked, "What are you doing?" The reply, "You are too full. You must empty yourself before you can receive."

I count this as one of my early contemplative moments, nascent even, before I had words to express how this story touched me so deeply that it still carries significance these decades later. Its resonance arose strongly when reading one of Thomas Merton's stories in his collection, *The Wisdom of the Desert: Sayings from the Desert Fathers of the Fourth Century:*

A certain brother went to Abbot Moses in Scete, and asked him for a good word. And the elder said to him: Go, sit in your cell, and your cell will teach you everything.

There is such a mystery about entering into Silence. Letting go, letting go, to see what arises or, even more mysteriously, simply to sit—open, receptive, still—with seemingly nothing arising that can be tabulated. Perhaps, this is the deeper mystery. In other parts of our lives, we accumulate answers, skills, directions. In the Silence, what is offered is deep presence beneath all concreteness. Once again, to quote Thomas Merton, this time from *The Asian Journal of Thomas Merton*,

The deepest communication is not communication, but communion. It is wordless. It is beyond words. It is beyond speech. It is beyond concepts. Not that we discover a new unity, we discover an old unity. My dear brothers and sisters, we are already one. But we imagine that we are not. And what we have to recover is our original unity. What we have to be, is what we are.

As director of Shalem's clergy program, I am always so moved by the clergy who come together seeking a way to be that is life-giving for them and for their congregations. Always of interest is what moves them to take that step to journey with fellow clergy for a season and explore a new way of being and leading-perhaps not new at all but an old way discovered anew. Many of these good clergy have dived deeply into numerous continuing education conferences that provided helpful information and skills in a cornucopia of topics: effective preaching, pastoral counseling, family systems, enneagram and Myers-Briggs, dealing with difficult people, managing staff, setting goals and objectives, organizing for success, etc. There is no disputing that each of these offers valuable insights. Then, they come to Shalem with a desire to find a way of being; for, as good as these other programs are, there is a deeper need for communion with God that shapes and reveals, grounds and invites, heals and makes whole, so that all that is known and obtained can be used for the good of the whole.

In the letting go, the opening, the stillness, there is a deep movement of the Spirit that reaches the very depths of one's soul, stripping away detritus of fear and failure, doubt and despair, to reveal a naked openness that receives the healing Presence, most often below any immediate evidence of intimate communion with the Beloved. A shaping and shifting and stripping takes place below consciousness—uniquely effective because of this.

Entering into the Silence is a true act of faith that is, at the heart, trust. Although practical results do not reveal themselves in the moment, there is a deep formation—reformation, conversion, transformation—given by this holy communion with the Divine, whom we trust to be always working for the good.

Gradually—or perhaps at times abruptly and immediately—we notice shifts in how we see ourselves, others, and all of creation. We discover that Oneness within us and with all persons. Letting go, inner stillness, becomes the place to which we return in order to be present with life, to live with one foot in gratitude and the other in abundance, to know, when we fail or fall (and we will over and over again), where to go to be healed, forgiven, enlivened, made whole. From this center we sense our calling and deep desire to live compassionately and courageously both for ourselves and for all creation.

We go to our cell of Silence to be still and know.

WINSTON IS THE DIRECTOR OF SHALEM'S GOING DEEPER: CLERGY SPIRITUAL LIFE AND LEADERSHIP.

Annual Fund Donors

We are deeply grateful for those individuals who gave to Shalem's Annual Fund from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017. Any gifts received after June 30 will be listed in next year's annual report.

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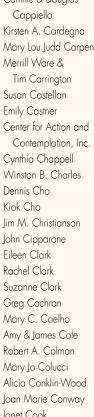
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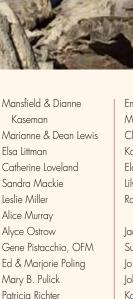
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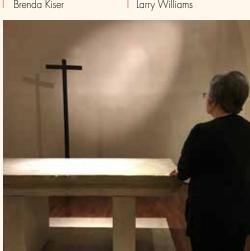
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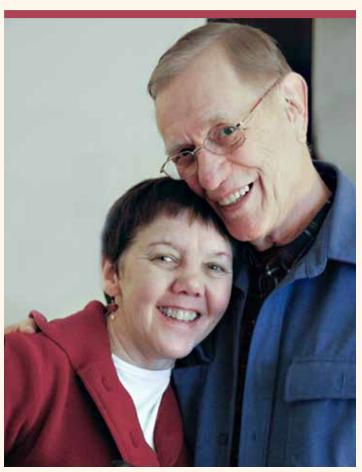


LEARNING TO LISTEN DEEPLY

BY LINDA TOIA

ou can do this, Linda." These words came to me just as I was leaving my monthly spiritual direction session. It was a mid-winter Saturday morning in 2005. Because retirement from my career as an educator was immanent, I had spent the session struggling with questions about my life focus. I'm not at all accustomed to "hearing voices," but there they were, these words that kept repeating themselves like some ancient chant as I negotiated the highway home. My husband, Frank, told me about Shalem, and by June I was enrolled in Shalem's Spiritual Guidance Program. The contemplative path has become foundational to my life.

Learning to listen deeply for the place of Light and Love in ourselves and in each other is a profound way to live. Frank and I give thanks that Shalem offers a variety of opportunities to experience the world from this contemplative stance. We want to make it possible for others to experience what we have found at Shalem, and we see committing to The Shekinah Society as our contribution to future generations of contemplative leaders in the world.



Linda and Frank Toia

Shalem's Shekinah Society

The Shekinah Society is for those individuals who have let us know that Shalem is in their wills. We are grateful for this special support and all that it means for Shalem's future.

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Making A Bequest to Shalem

When making your estate plans, we hope you will consider a gift to Shalem. We have been richly blessed by those who have remembered Shalem in their wills, as Linda and Frank Toia have done. These gifts greatly assist Shalem's mission and ministry and are a special way for a donor's care to extend into the future. Please let us know if you have included a bequest to Shalem in your estate plans. We'd like to thank you and welcome you as a Shekinah Society member!



Volunteers & In-Kind Donations

Many individuals give of their time or donate travel and other expenses to Shalem. This year we are especially grateful for:

- Susan Etherton, Margaret Benefiel, Leah Rampy, Robert Guaraldi, Mary Anne Reese, and Christy Berghoef, whose photographs you see in these pages, on our web site, in our monthly eNews, on our Facebook page and many other places.
- Frank Neville-Hamilton for his continuing help with Shalem's website and database.
- Clair Ullmann for her gifted assistance in our Online School of Prayer.
- Sandra Kerka for her beautiful work on Shalem's Contemplative Voices Award program and Susan Etherton, Aria
 Kirkland-Harris and Jean Sweeney for their invaluable help at the event.
- **Alan Evans** for his fundraising wisdom as we envision Shalem's future.
- Shalem's **Board of Directors**, who donated their time and talent in many different ways, and especially for their assistance at our Gerald May Seminar.
- Shalem's non-Board Committee members: Liz Kuhn, Erika Schleifman, Marty Krepcho, and Susan Pullin, who served Shalem through their committee work.

- **Anne Grizzle**, who offered her beautiful retreat center for group spiritual direction residential programs.
- Eleanor Abarno, Margaret Benefiel, Camille Cappiello, Anita Davidson, Susan Etherton, Sharon Glass, Christina Guerra, Jan Lugibihl, Rhoda Nary, Mary Taylor, and Keith Walker, who are keeping in contact with, and holding in prayer, the recent Spiritual Guidance Program Classes, and especially Susan Etherton, who continues to coordinate this connection and Marty Krepcho, who prays for the pray-ers.
- Wendy Adams, Margaret Benefiel, Bryan Berghoef,
 Kimberly Borin, Laura Ramsey Bratton, Cordelia Burpee, Anita Davidson, Jamie Deering, Scott Landis, Carl
 McColman, Jeff Nelson, Joann Nesser, Patience Robbins,
 Trish Stefanik, Clair Ullmann, Mary van Balen and Liz
 Ward, for their willingness to create and share their original
 blogs with the Shalem community
- Other individuals who made additional in-kind contributions: Erica Aungst, Kevin Bliss, Laura Caperton, Greg Cochran, Phil Cover, Bill Dietrich, Katy Gaughan, Sharon Glass, Joan & John Hatcher, Ann Hisle, Darlene Little, Marjorie Ann Lueck, Leslie Miller, Sue Mosher, Cheryl Notari, Eileen Quinn, Patience Robbins, Emily Schwenker, Phillip Stephens, Jean Sweeney, Francie Thayer, Liz Ward.



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, 2017 and 2016

ASSETS	2017	2016
Current Assets	\$337,021	\$304,786
Investments	638,417	606,004
Fixed Assets	45,589	54,326
Other Assets	13,835	13,835
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>1,034,862</u>	<u>978,951</u>

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities	49,288	107,821
Net Assets		
Unrestricted	921,869	788,623
Temporarily restricted	63,705	82,507
TOTAL NET ASSETS	985,574	871,130

TOTAL LIABILITIES &

NET ASSETS	<u>\$1,034,862</u>	<u>\$978,951</u>
NET ASSETS	<u>\$1,034,862</u>	<u>\$978,95</u>

Condensed Statement of Activities for Years Ended June 30, 2017 and 2016

REVENUE AND SUPPORT	2017	2016
Programs, contractual work		
and publications	\$709,922	\$608,760
Contributions	402,032	387,738
Other Income	13,733	30,184
Investment income (losses)	62,815	22,982
TOTAL REVENUE		
AND SUPPORT	1,188,502	1,049,664
EXPENSES		
Programs, including allocated		
staff compensation	749,579	754,008
Administration:		
Staff compensation & benefits	62,110	18,560
Rent and other	199,107	245,323
Fundraising expenses	63,262	75,840
TOTAL EXPENSES	1,074,058	1,093,731
Total Increase (Decrease)		
in Net Assets	114,444	(44,067)
NET ASSETS, Beginning of Year	871,130	915,197
NET ASSETS, End of Year	<u>\$985,574</u>	<u>\$871,130</u>

Shalem Board of Directors 2016-2017

Eleanor Abarno Dana Greene
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Shalem Adjunct Staff 2016-2017

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Hayley O'Connor & Bill Stone

Elizabeth Ward

Program Administrators

Katy Gaughan & Trish Stefanik

Director of Development & Communications

Monica Maxon

Director of Finance

Laura Caperton

Director of Online Learning & Technology

Ruth Taylor

Social Media & Online Learning Support

Bryan Berghoef

Bookkeeper

Pearl Nana-Atoo

Senior Fellow for Spiritual Guidance

Rose Mary Dougherty, SSND

Founder & Senior Fellow

Tilden H. Edwards, Jr.

Edited by Monica Maxon Design: Peña Design, Inc.

Photography: Susan Etherton (includes cover), Robert Guarldi,

Leah Rampy and Mary Anne Reese

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

Contemplative Life & Leadership

SHALEM'S IN-DEPTH PROGRAMS SUPPORT YOUR GOD-GUIDED CAREER, PERSONAL LIFE AND MINISTRY WITH OTHERS.

Nurturing the Call: Spiritual Guidance

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

Going Deeper: Clergy Spiritual Life and Leadership

For congregational clergy seeking to nurture their spiritual heart and leadership

Transforming Community: Leading Contemplative Prayer Groups & Retreats

For those called to lead groups and retreats in churches and other settings

Young Adult Contemplative Life & Leadership Initiative

For young adults who seek a deeper spiritual foundation for their lives and leadership

The Soul of Leadership: England & U.S.

For help in integrating spiritual heart practices with leadership realities

