

50 YEARS



Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation
Annual Report 2023 | 2024



FIFTY YEARS OF LONGING

by Margaret Benefiel, Executive Director

Fifty years ago, Tilden Edwards gathered a small group who longed to go deeper in prayer, seeking to recover the Christian contemplative tradition. As they met and prayed, they discovered that God longed for them even more than they longed for God. They were drawn deep into the heart of God.

As they continued to meet and pray, they realized the recovery

of this contemplative thread was not just for their own transformation but also for the life of the church and the transformation of the world. Deep contemplative prayer led them to become activists of love in the world. They felt moved to share their experience with others. They also felt led to engage with their own faith traditions, which had, outside of religious/monastic communities, largely lost this contemplative

thread. Tilden was working on a doctorate focusing on spiritual guidance, and he felt drawn to nurture the call to this ministry among those who might not even know they were called to it, for the sake of individuals, for the vital formative grounding of faith communities, and the transformation of the world. Thus, the Spiritual Guidance Program, Shalem's first long-term program, was born.

From this humble, vulnerable, trusting beginning, seeds took root and grew. Other long-term programs eventually blossomed: Personal Spiritual Deepening, Leading Contemplative Spiritual Groups and Retreats, Clergy Leadership, Group Spiritual Direction, Soul of the Executive, Young Adult Life and Leadership, Soul of Leadership, Heart Longings, and Crossing the Threshold. Shalem pilgrimages sprang up, as well. Carole Crumley felt moved to design a pilgrimage to Assisi, Italy, which Tilden co-led with her, and, over the years, pilgrimages to Iona, Ireland, the Middle East, New Mexico, Scotland, Cuba, Paris, the Pacific Northwest, Newfoundland, the Camino, and Avila followed. Shalem Korea was born, and began to offer versions of these same programs in South Korea. Shorter programs complemented the long-term programs: prayer groups, retreats, the Gerald May Seminar, the Contemplative Voices Award, the Group Spiritual Direction Workshop, and online courses. The Shalem Society, a contemplative community of long-term program graduates, was born. Tilden, Jerry May, Rose Mary Dougherty, and others wrote books that shared the message of what they were discovering.

From the beginning, Shalem leaders innovated, breaking new ground as they created programs,

being activists of love in the world. Looking back, we take many of these innovations for granted, forgetting how radical they were then. For example, Shalem's spiritual guidance program was ecumenical, whereas other programs (previous and contemporaneous) resided in specific faith traditions. Second, Shalem created a supervision model congruent with its contemplative orientation rather than simply importing a model from Clinical Pastoral Education, the dominant supervision model at the time. Third, Shalem welcomed women into leadership in its programs. Fourth, lay people were seen as equals to clergy in program leadership. Fifth, Shalem welcomed sexual minorities as program leaders and participants from the beginning. Finally, Tilden was the only first-generation founder of a contemplative spiritual direction program to work with others to help establish Spiritual Directors International.

My introduction to Shalem came over forty years ago when, following my own longing to go deeper, I attended a workshop on spiritual guidance led by Tilden and Jerry May and then enrolled in the Spiritual Guidance Program a year later. The Spirit drew me deep into God's heart. And I discovered contemplative community.



I was hooked. Shalem programs continued to nurture me over the years, and I returned in 2015 to serve as Executive Director for an organization that had deeply nourished my soul.

At that time, the board and staff worked together to discern a strategic plan that would bring more spiritually grounded diversity into Shalem's leadership, both on the board and in programs. We initiated a major fundraising campaign to provide scholarships and program development and to make our programs more accessible to younger people and to BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) contemplatives. Many of

you were part of that major fundraising campaign—thank you for your part! Your support is making a difference in changing the face of Shalem.

When the pandemic hit in 2020, we wondered if Shalem would survive. We thought that contemplative community depended on in-person programs, pilgrimages, and prayer groups. Our experience led us to believe that, while a light introduction to the contemplative life could be had in an online course, the deeper experience of God, of contemplative community, was only possible in person. But as we prayed and discerned together, we were led to ask, “Has the Holy Spirit stopped working just because we can’t meet in person?” and “No!” came as the resounding answer. God still longed for us. People still longed for God. So, through much experimentation through many ups and downs, we offered our Shalem programs and pilgrimages on Zoom. To our surprise, our enrollment increased substantially. The [crisis of the pandemic](#) upended our assumptions and allowed fresh experimentation, both in program design and in our commitment to spiritually grounded Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, to being activists of love in the wake of the murder of George Floyd. Having completed our previous strategic plan, we

started a new visioning process, resulting in [Vision 2025](#), in which we incorporated learnings from the pandemic as we envisioned our future.

To celebrate how God has met us again and again over the past 50 years, we honored our 50th anniversary with a [50-hour prayer vigil](#), a book launch for [Soul Food: Nourishing Essays on Contemplative Living and Leadership](#), a book launch for Tilden’s memoir, [Life Woven in Sacred Time](#), a 50th-anniversary video, a special 50th-anniversary [Contemplative Voices Award](#), with two awardees instead of our usual one, Cole Arthur Riley and Jim Finley, a Holy Week fast for peace, and a closing celebration.

Over the past 50 years, Shalem has sought to respond to the longing for spiritual depth. Through ups and downs, experimentation, and stumbling, amazing fruit has grown and been made manifest in lives transformed and callings revealed. As we enter the next 50 years, we seek to continue to listen to God’s longing and the longing of those around us.

To that end, the board and staff have discerned three primary areas of focus for Shalem in the year ahead. First, we are hiring a consultant team to help us with

our Vision 2025 Focus Area of “Belonging,” our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work. Second, we will address our Vision 2025 Focus Area of “Contemplative Grounding” by looking back at how this has been articulated in the past and looking ahead to listen for how the Spirit is inviting us to articulate it for the world we find ourselves in now, all the while seeking to do the work from a deeply contemplatively grounded place. Third, we will address our Vision 2025 Focus Areas of “Sustainability” and “Capacity Building” by right-sizing Shalem and improving our infrastructure to keep pace with our growth.



In this year's annual report, Carole Crumley and Anita Davidson join me in reflecting on our 50th anniversary and what that means for Shalem. As we live into Vision 2025, Jackson Droney invites us to deepen our trust, and Laura Brokaw invites us to have clarity and courage. Westina Matthews reports on the Trinity grant, which supports us in our DEI work, and Phillip Stephens shares changes in the Spiritual Guidance Program to make it more inclusive. In the Heart Longings program, Tara Pray and Bonnie Epps-Burgess reflect on how they experienced a sense of belonging as they felt welcomed in, and Veronica Asis



WE ARE HERE TO BE LIGHT, BRINGING OUT THE GOD- COLORS OF THE WORLD.

reflects on the same in Crossing the Threshold. Leah Rampy and Monica Maxon reflect on the interconnections among us all, in nature and the human community, and how we are “here to be light, bringing out the God-colors of the world.”

While the longing for going deeper in God's love and the need for love activism have not changed in 50

years, the world we live in has changed enormously, and contemplative grounding is needed to help us through challenges that could never have been imagined at that first prayer circle in 1973. What, we wonder, does God have in store for us next?



CLARITY AND COURAGE

by Laura Brokaw, Board President

2025 VISION STATEMENT: IN 2025, SHALEM WILL BE A DYNAMIC AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY, EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT, WHERE SEEKERS ENGAGE IN TRANSFORMATION OF THEMSELVES, THEIR COMMUNITIES, AND THE WORLD THROUGH SPIRITUAL GROWTH, DEEP CONNECTION, AND COURAGEOUS ACTION.

One of the lines and concepts from Shalem's Vision 2025 is the invitation and calling into transformation through courageous action. According to the Oxford dictionary, courage is "the ability to do something that frightens one," not the lack of fear itself. This year inspired by Esther, "clarity and courage" have been my prayer and invitation in my personal life as well. She has served as an example to the great transformation that can happen through the clarity of knowing our vision and our calling, AND the courage to act on it despite fear or concerns.

While many of us may know the story of Esther, this year I was invited to re-read this book and story in depth. As I read, one thing that stood out to me from her story was both the perseverance and the patience to act in the way that she did. I have often thought of the pivotal moment in which she approaches the king without being called, risking her life. This was absolutely a critical and courageous action! However, I had not gone back and noticed the great courage she needs as she goes to the king not just once, but a second time, and to continue

asking for his presence in multiple dinners to reach the perfect timing in her plea for the salvation of her people, the Jews. In each of these instances, she had no guarantee that he would grant her life or requests and there were very real things to be afraid of such as losing her life. And so, transformation and the salvation of the Jews did not simply happen in one courageous moment, but instead in a lifestyle and series of courageous actions where her vision and purpose to save her people were more important than the fear of consequences she could face.



When I think of the impactful and powerful vision that Shalem holds at this time in Vision 2025, I also think of the continuous courage of Esther. This year alone I feel that I have been invited to speak and act courageously to live into our vision. These moments have resulted in beautiful transformations in some of our organizational interactions and spaces. However, singular acts of courage will likely not be what leads to our transformation as an organization in the ways that we impact the world. Instead, this vision calls us to be

continually courageous and to face our fears. Some of this work may be considering how we align to these principles in our daily organizational items, some may be in the fundamental examen of the ways we engage in a way that is anti-racist, not just being inclusive on paper. Some may be things we didn't even know we might need to examine. Each of these in their own right may have a good reason to bubble up fear. Self examination and change can cause fear in their own right. This is true AND we are called to move beyond the fear

driven by the vision and purpose we have for Shalem as an organization through Vision 2025 in the confidence that for each of the many things we honor, hold, and cherish in Shalem and its 50 wonderful years, we have the opportunity for even more.

Therefore, as we move into our next year as an organization and our personal lives, I invite you to live in courage. Not just for one moment, but consistently, and to explore the transformation that may come.



GROWING IN TRUST

by Jackson Droney, Director of Operations



FOR THE PAST 50 YEARS, SHALEM'S MISSION HAS BEEN "TO NURTURE CONTEMPLATIVE LIVING AND LEADERSHIP."

Reflecting on that mission in this 50th anniversary year, I've come to appreciate how, at its best, Shalem nurtures our trust in God, the Holy One, the Great Love. Through the spiritual deepening we strive to cultivate in our offerings, we come to better awareness of God's presence in our lives and the life of the world, and through growing such awareness, we can trust God's love.

Trust is the foundation of any healthy relationship. Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner, in their decades of research on leadership, have found that more than any other quality, people want leaders who are "credible." They define credible leaders as those who "do what they say they will do."¹ Indeed, Rowan Williams has written, "God is, in simple terms, sublimely and eternally happy to be God, and the fact that this sublime eternal happiness overflows into the act of creation is itself a way of telling us that God is to be trusted absolutely, that God has no private agenda."²

On the other hand, Patrick Lencioni, the author of *Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, has identified the "absence of trust" as the dominant underlying problem that prevents teams from living up to their potential.³ Trust is essential to healthy relationships, and its absence is usually the cause of unhealthy ones.

Reflecting on these ideas, I've come to understand that the most precious resource Shalem has is the trust people place in it. For 50 years, contemplative seekers have trusted Shalem, its instructors and leaders, to support their spiritual deepening. People trust what we have to say about contemplative life and contemplative leadership. Staff, volunteers, and donors trust that our organization will be led in alignment with our values and good governance practices, that all our resources will be stewarded well, and *that we will do what we say we will do*.

Last year, I wrote about a key spiritual question I've wrestled with for years: distinguishing between God's leading and my ego's desires. This year, as I consider what trust means and its importance to Shalem, I'm drawn to a second question: Given human fallibility, how can I trust and be trusted, especially after I let people down and others let me down?

I think this is an urgent question for spiritual organizations in particular. Our society is marred by a persistent and growing distrust of institutions. While God

does not have a private agenda, many human beings do, and there are countless examples going back to antiquity of spiritual leaders manipulating those they serve for personal gain. Many people come to Shalem having experienced something negative, even abusive, from another spiritual institution. How do we, as an organization led by flawed human beings, ensure that we remain worthy of the trust that people place in us?

As I've sat and prayed with Vision 2025 and considered this question, here are five practices that I want to explore. I invite you to join me.

Lead with vulnerability. Leaders can support building trust by owning their mistakes and talking about what they've learned from them. This gives others permission to be vulnerable as well.

Learn continuously. None of us has learned everything there is to know about God and spirituality. As a lifelong learner, I do not want to just consume information—I want to intentionally incorporate what I learn into my life and leadership and be able to articulate my learning process to others.

Avoid euphemisms and platitudes. I've sometimes felt the temptation to resort to platitudes or other vacuous words. When I hear them, I realize they are meaningless and using them is lazy. I want to practice being more precise and explicit about what I mean and not assume others will understand a general statement the same way I do.

Practice accountability. At times I have failed and will fail others, just as others have and will fail me. Where are the safe spaces to practice mutual accountability to grow and learn through our failures? How can such spaces be created and encouraged?

Laugh (at yourself). I love that Richard Rohr has prayed that God provide him with daily humiliation as a way of checking himself. Life can be hard and heavy. And being able to laugh at myself with God through these daily humiliations is a way to keep a healthy perspective. As Gerald May used to say, "There's no such thing as a contemplative emergency."

Over the past 50 years Shalem has much to be grateful for and celebrate. I have enjoyed honoring our 50 years through the events and activities organized by the 50th Anniversary Committee. I can't help but wonder, though, what are the missteps, the stumbles, the difficult chapters that have happened along the way? How have we, as an organization, learned from them? How haven't we? I don't want to induce shame, foment gossip, or scratch open old wounds. Rather, as I reflect on my own life, I'm aware that I've learned as much, if not more, from my failures as I have from my successes. Might the same be true of Shalem's life?

By the time you read this annual report, Shalem will likely have hired consultants to help us become a more equitable and anti-racist organization. As a predominantly white organization, this work will challenge us and invite our learning and humility. I think the five practices above will help me engage that work with honesty and authenticity so that I can better trust and be trusted. Perhaps they will be helpful to you as well.

When dreaming about Shalem's next 50 years, I imagine us becoming more resilient, always allowing space for Divine Mystery to enter in, and growing in our trust in the Holy One by how we strengthen our trustworthiness with each other.

¹Kouzes, J. & Posner, B. (2002). The leadership challenge (3rd ed.). Jossey-Bass, pp. 32-38.

²Williams, R. (2007). Tokens of trust. Westminster John Know Press, p. 13.

³Lencioni, P. (2002). The five dysfunctions of a team. Jossey-Bass, p. 188.

50 YEARS: A LOOK BACKWARD, A LOOK FORWARD

by Carole Crumley, Adjunct Staff

“For all that has been, Thanks. For all that shall be, Yes.” These words written by Dag Hammarskjöld, the Second Secretary-General of the United Nations (1954-1961), have stayed with me over the years. Hammarskjöld was an exceptional public servant, known for his selfless service to his home country, Sweden, and the global community. His death in a mysterious plane crash over Rhodesia left the world in mourning for the loss of such a gracious, extraordinary leader. He is the only person posthumously awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

After his death, a journal of his writings, “*Markings*” was published. Each “marking” revealed the inner hidden spiritual life that flowed through his work and leadership.

In looking back over his life, his prayer was an expression of Gratitude for the endless graces and mercies that had sustained his life, the whole of it. Then, as he looked into the future, even his own dying someday, he expressed his abiding Trust—for a bright future that lies in God’s hands.

As we tried to look backward and forward during Shalem’s 50th-anniversary celebrations, this particular “marking” came to mind. Also for me, when looking backward, gratitude rises. So much has been given in these 50 years that it almost leaves me speechless.

No words are big enough to describe the endless stream of blessings that have come through the years of being part of Shalem.

This flow of God’s love is beyond my comprehension. Meister Eckhart, a 14th-century mystic, wrote that if the only prayer we ever say is “Thank You”, that is enough. For Hammarskjöld, a simple word of thanks said it all. For me, too, “Thanks” is the only word that can begin to touch the depth of my gratitude.

But Hammarskjöld didn’t just look back: he pressed on, focusing on all that shall be. His “Yes!” to the future revealed his abiding trust in God’s goodness, truth, justice, beauty, mercy, and love for the days ahead. His trust, born from experience and circumstances, anchored his life and leadership. His life was prayer, lived in gratitude and trust.

I confess that sometimes I stumble on that trust part. I’m tired of being on the way to something unknown, something new. My trust falters as I look at the world situation today. Wars, famine, disease, climate disaster, hunger,



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prejudice, fear—all abide, infusing my hopefulness with moments of dread. The bright light of trust flickers, dims and verges on going out. My doubt asks, “Can even God’s goodness bring new life to our planet?”

Spiritual pilgrims across time have always experienced trials, tribulations, and uncertainty. Thankfully, they left words of wisdom for us. Lately, when doubt and worry appear, I turn to Teilhard de Chardin, SJ, another 20th century mystic and spiritual leader. He reminds me to “trust in the slow work of God.” All progress, he writes, “is made by passing through some stages of instability.” And he goes on, “it may take a very long time.”

Teilhard seems to speak directly to me and perhaps also to Shalem as it begins its 51st year. As we face global concerns that seem intractable, personal worries about what the future holds, decisions about ways to respond to pressing needs, and questions about how to follow the Spirit that seems to lead across boundaries and borders that we never imagined, Teilhard suggests a way forward.

“Let your ideas mature gradually — let them grow and shape themselves without undue haste. Don’t try to force them on, as though you could be today what time (that is to say, grace and circumstances acting on your own good will) will make of you tomorrow.

Only God can say what this new Spirit gradually forming within you will be.

Give the Lord the benefit of believing that his hand is leading you— and accept the anxiety of feeling yourself in suspense and incomplete.”

As he was dying, Jerry May’s final words to family and friends were, “Trust in God. Trust in Love.” These words might be a lifetime calling for all of us who live in uncertain times to pray for our trust to be empowered and seek to follow the way of deepening love. Perhaps after another 50 years, we will look back and see that mercy and goodness have followed us, even run after us, all the days of our lives. And once again, all we can say is, “Thanks!”



GOD SEEKS ME. GOD IS SEEKING ME THIS MOMENT

by Bonnie Epps-Burgess, Graduate, Heart Longings Program

Again and again, I am conscious that I am seeking God. There is ever present in me a searching, a longing for some ultimate resting place for my spirit—some final haven of refuge from storms and upheavals of life. I seek ever the kind of peace that can pervade my total life, finding its quiet way into all the hidden crevices of my being and covering me completely with a vast tranquility. This I seek not because I am a coward, not because I am afraid of life or of living, but because the urge seems to steady me to the very core.

- Howard Thurman. *Meditations of the Heart*, p. 175-176.

On August 30, 2021, I was diagnosed with Stage 4 Appendiceal Cancer or Cancer of the Appendix. It is a very rare cancer, affecting about 1 or 2 people per 1 million per year. Scientists do not yet know what causes Cancer of the Appendix. All I know is that the pathology report of my tissue submitted for analysis showed that the cancer was alive in my body for six years, and I never felt a thing! None of my regular annual exams since 2008 showed any evidence or indication of cancer. By the time I called my primary doctor about the pain that woke me up at 3:30 in the morning, the cancer had already metastasized and spread to seven organs, four of which were removed, re-sectioned, or shaved in two abdominal surgeries.

**YET, I AM ALIVE! BATTERED,
BRUISED, AND WORN, BUT ALIVE!
I NEVER WOULD HAVE MADE
IT HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR “GOD
SEEKING ME.”**

As I recuperated, I found myself at a spiritual impasse. My inner altar was disconnected; my spiritual fervor (Romans 12:11) had waned. I needed rest, retreat, Sabbath space, time to rebuild, restore, and self-care. Frankly, I needed to hear from God. I had spent over twenty-five years ministering to the needs of others, but now I needed to minister to my own needs. The cancer experience affected not only my body and mind but also my spirit, and I desperately needed a spiritual resuscitation.

I was already familiar with the programs Shalem offered and when I attended the information session for *Heart Longings* and learned that the entire eight-month course would be on Zoom, I did not hesitate to register. Believe me, *Heart Longings* did not disappoint. From the lighting of candles to set the atmosphere in the guided meditations, to the personal testimonies of our leaders, to sharing our personal stories in breakout groups, pairs, or triads, to creative application of contemplative practices, communal discernment, group

singing, listening to songs and poetry, to writing our prayers: we were expertly inundated with fresh new ways to listen for God, and we were given many contemplative opportunities to be present to the Presence of God.

I am so grateful for our whole class gatherings, and, at the same time, my best learnings emerged from the monthly Group Spiritual Direction sessions and the monthly 1:1 encounters with a personal Spiritual Director. I looked forward to them all! Our group leader gave us time for silence, prayer, sharing, music, tears, and laughter! Regardless of distance, cultural background, or denominational preference, we found that we had more in common than we had differences, and now that the program is over, we've decided to meet on our own.

My Spiritual Director helped me navigate questions like, “What has saved my life? What eats away at me? After having cancer, who am I now? Have I come to the end of myself, or am I ready for a paradigm shift? What is my role now? What is my goal now? What brings me to life or makes me come alive?” Howard Thurman says, “Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

There is no doubt in my mind that the melding of the six interactive components of *Heart Longings* successfully brought me back to life! My story is reframed. I give myself compassion and grace. I am at peace, surrendering to silence, able to go deeper and discern what God is birthing in me. I am learning to see what is important NOW. At two years and three months cancer-free, I seek God anew and afresh! I am charged by the Benedictine oblate author of *The Artist’s Rule* “... [To] allow my gaze on the world around me to come from my heart space” [so that], “The eyes of [my] heart receive the world with gentleness, openness, and sacred awe.”



TO SHINE

by Monica Maxon, Former
Director of Communications
& Development

"...and you too have come/into the world to do this, to go easy, to be filled/with light, and to shine."
(Mary Oliver)

On the day my granddaughter, Zoey Rose, was born, my cousin, Henry Mead, died. Hearing about both at almost the same time has linked them forever in my heart and mind and makes me wonder anew what we bring into this world and what we leave behind.

My cousin Henry had serious health problems when he was young, but what I remember most about him is his smile: delighted, impish, as if up to some mischief. This is the young Henry from years ago now, but the beauty of that smile still stays with me. And there is no doubt that my granddaughter's smiles light up my life already—each one a gem, a gift.

For me, these smiles are little slivers of love, reminding me of the brightness inside each of us. Each of us carries that light, and each can extend it. Somewhat like the

familiar children's hymn, we can shine our light anywhere, and it doesn't have to be complicated. It can be as spontaneous as the walkers on my morning walk as we acknowledge each other or as intentional as a Zen smile meditation: love is encouraged and human kindness supported.

These slivers of love are what I see in both Zoey and Henry: the light within each of us if we only have eyes to see. It reminds me how precious life is and how each one of us has the capacity to brighten our world. This is a particularly valuable gift in a country so divided, nations at war, and a pandemic of guns and lingering illness, taking or altering too many lives. Zoey and Henry show me the spark I often forget. and remind me of the difference my light might make if I let it. As *The Message Bible* puts it in Matthew 5:16, we're "here to be light, bringing out the God-colors of the world."

When Henry's sister wrote about the love surrounding him in the weeks before his death, she also shared how his life was a witness to love, how to know Henry was to love him, as one of his friends said and added, "This morning we lost a beautiful man."

Perhaps Zoey doesn't yet realize the gift of love her life is, and

maybe, like many of us, she will take that gift for granted. She likely will face challenges, as all of us do and as Henry certainly did, and some of those challenges might feel like more than she can possibly bear. That's when it's up to me, and all those who love her, to remind her of that spark she brought into this world. Sometimes, it's just a flicker, just a hint of a smile.



In Mary Oliver's poem "When I Am Among The Trees," she writes of the light coming through the branches and how the trees call to her when she feels distant from the hope of herself, telling her what she has come into the world to do. We are all only here for a brief and precious time, but we all have the ability to make a difference, to shine.



“

**‘...AND YOU TOO HAVE COME/INTO THE
WORLD TO DO THIS, TO GO EASY, TO BE
FILLED/WITH LIGHT, AND TO SHINE.’**



A SENSE OF BELONGING

by Tara C Pray, Graduate, Heart Longings Program

Several years ago, during a difficult time in my life, I found comfort in reading books that introduced me to a new way of experiencing God that was different from the AME church I attended as a child. It was different from the Baptist, Methodist, and non-denominational churches I cycled through as an adult. The ancient Christian traditions and spiritual practices spoke to me and became a balm for my soul.

I began discovering, remembering, and reconnecting to my contemplative roots, which began devel-

oping during my childhood. I was a kid who liked to sit for hours on the front stoop of the apartment building where I lived and watch the people and cars go by, somehow finding silence amid a busy city street.

I was a kid who attended Catholic school and was deeply influenced by my 2nd-grade teacher, Sister Veronica, the only Black nun in our school. I don't remember much of what she said in class, but my memories of her have remained with me.

I was also a young adult who loved going to the park, quietly sitting on the bench for hours, and finding joy in nature.

When I began exploring contemplative spirituality, I often read books about God, contemplative practices, slow living, and simplicity. During this time, I also started seeking out ways to be in community with others who shared my longing for a deeper relationship with God.

Fast-forward to 2022, and an invitation to Shalem's Heart Longings

program appeared in my email. There was an immediate stir in my heart as I read the information, and I sensed that I needed to submit my application.

From the first retreat to the last meeting with my small group, I felt affirmed in my decision to embark on an eight-month journey of exploring and deepening my relationship with God. Heart Longings offered me many of the things I'd been searching for to help me grow and transform my spiritual life.

As I reflect on my time in the program, I can see three distinct gifts I received: the gift of vulnerability, the gift of showing up for myself, and the gift of community.

I received the gift of vulnerability every time my small group met. During our time together, God often prompted me to share things I either rarely talked about or never talked about at all. The women in my group always made

space for each of us to be seen, heard, loved and we were always encouraged to look for God in everything.

The next gift was learning to show up for myself by becoming comfortable on Zoom. Before the program, I spent very little time on screen, and the level of discomfort I felt while being on camera was at times, challenging. However, throughout the eight months, I slowly became more comfortable with being seen in a new way. (This is still a work in progress).

The last gift of community allowed me to connect with others who were on a similar spiritual path. Learning and sharing with people from around the world, who desired the same connection was life-giving and affirming. This gift of community reminded me of the book I read by author Robert Benson when I first began my contemplative journey.

In his book, *The Echo*, Benson writes about feeling like he was “other” his whole life. He never felt like he fit in because he lived his life differently from those around him. It was not until he attended the spiritual formation program at the Upper Room that he began to experience a sense of belonging. I resonated with Benson's experiences, and Heart Longings gave me a sense of belonging.

The ending of my Heart Longings cohort was a mix of gratitude and sadness. I miss our twice-monthly gatherings and the relationships I formed, but I am deeply grateful for the experience. The books, conversations, facilitators, and spiritual practices introduced over the course of the program have helped to further shape the relationship I have with God and myself. I will forever be thankful to everyone who was a part of this transformative experience.



HEART LONGINGS OFFERED ME MANY OF THE THINGS I'D BEEN SEARCHING FOR TO HELP ME GROW AND TRANSFORM MY SPIRITUAL LIFE.

WIDENING THE LENS: DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN CONTEMPLATIVE LIVING AND LEADERSHIP GRANT AWARDED FROM TRINITY CHURCH WALL STREET

by Westina Matthews, Former Board Member

From 2020 to 2022, the Shalem Program Committee focused on the issue of diversity, equity, and inclusion through several initiatives, including: 1) meeting with the program directors of all long-term programs, to include reading lists and curricula; 2) engaging and surveying over 100 self-identified Contemplatives of Color/BIPOC Shalem graduates; and 3) reporting to the Shalem Board on these initiatives along with recommended next steps. The Shalem Board agreed that engagement with diverse communities is an important goal for Shalem, particularly in light of Vision 2025, and that more work needs to be done. The full board has taken up

the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion over the past year. Fully supportive of the work ahead, the board recognized that without additional funding, it could not accomplish all that we desire to do. Fortunately, Shalem has been notified that it has been awarded a grant of \$100,000 from Trinity Church Wall Street to support our diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives.

This grant was one of more than \$22 million awarded to 111 nonprofit organizations in New York City, the United States, and abroad. “This is a time of great and increasing need in our neighborhood and across the world,”

said the Rev. Phillip A. Jackson, Rector of Trinity Church Wall Street. “Our faith calls on us to use our gifts to help all people, advancing equity and justice in the here and now—and hopefully for generations to come. We are grateful to be able to make these



Reverend Dr. Ostein Truitt

strategic investments in the work of our remarkable grantee partners, and in work that will have a direct impact on people's lives."

With this Trinity grant, Shalem has an excellent opportunity to support all its participants in connecting their contemplative work with issues of race and justice. Vision 2025, which the Shalem board unanimously approved a year ago, includes a focus area of belonging. "Belonging is the manifestation of God's union with all things. When we are radically inclusive, we embrace the Loving Essence of each individual. A sense of belonging for each of us follows as we are part of something larger than ourselves while honoring who we are and who we want to be." This connection is important to support participants who are serving in a world that needs leaders formed by Shalem to be deeply grounded and spiritually courageous. Addressing the issues of equity, inclusion, and diversity helps to remove barriers between individuals and communities and leads to transformation. The Divine Source invites all of us to draw on that Deep Well of Love. Now is the time for Shalem to say "Yes!" to that invitation and to broaden the traditional understanding of what it means to be a contemplative leader in a diverse world.

Among other things, the grant provides funding for Shalem to hire a consultant to help in the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The grant objectives are as follows:

1. Shalem is attentive to the transparency, integrity, and accountability of its interactions with its internal and external constituents, including its relationships within the larger global, diverse community.
2. Shalem is committed to valuing diversity and communicates publicly its stance on diversity, equity and inclusion.
3. Board, staff, program directors, and participants will represent the breadth of racial,

ethnic, cultural, and gender identities.

4. Shalem is committed to programming, communications and publications that invite and represent the diversity of this country and the world.

Included in the grant is support for Shalem's new book *Soul Food: Nourishing Essays on Contemplative Living and Leadership* (September 2023). We are grateful to be able to provide one-time honoraria to the 17 contributors. And the co-editors (Westina Matthews, Margaret Benefiel, and Jackson Droney) will also direct all their royalties from this book to the Shalem Institute in support of its vision to become a dynamic and inclusive community.

Thank you Trinity Church Wall Street for your "holy yes" to this important work of Shalem.





SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE PROGRAM

by Phillip Stephens, Program Director, Spiritual Guidance Program

On November 11, 2022, the Shalem board approved *Vision 2025: Our Ongoing Hope*. It was a day of rejoicing for the Shalem Spiritual Guidance Program. We immediately added it to the program's required readings. It affirms the strengths of our program while inviting us to prayerfully engage our growing edges. At the end of fiscal year 2023-24, we are delighted to report that we have one of the largest, most diverse groups of associates and staff in the program's history. Our staff and associates are faithfully engaged

with Shalem's Mission Statement, Vision Statement, and Guiding Principles while actively engaging the Focus Areas.

The focus area currently inviting our most attention is known as *Generating*. It reads: "Generating is action fueled by courage, confidence, and hope. Embracing mystery, we seek to discover new ways of expressing the contemplative Christian tradition beyond the usual exchange of information..." As we prayerfully

engage in *Generating*, an observation by Richard Rohr keeps nudging its way into our consciousness:

There must be a way to be both here and in the depth of here. ...[this] is the essence ...the gift of contemplation. We must learn to love and enjoy things as they are, in their depth, in their soul, and in their fullness. Contemplation is the “second gaze” through which we see something in its particularity and yet also in a much larger frame. We know it by the joy it gives. (*Daily Meditations*, April 14, 2024)

Considering how we best companion our associates as they explore the Art of Contemplative Spiritual Guidance, we observe they are independent, self-directed learners aware enough to make learning decisions for themselves. Thus, we are actively engaged in curriculum revision and staff development. We are intentionally moving from a didactic learning model to embrace a learning theory known as Andragogy. Within this model, seminars are primarily experiential, with leaders functioning as facilitators or guides rather than teachers. We redesigned residencies to be more spacious, allowing our associates more time for reflection and processing. We have also added four Zoom Intensives, spaced throughout the program, to provide more ongoing communal engagement.

By nature, *Generating* is a work in progress. Nevertheless, when we pause to reflect on how we’re doing, the following excerpt from the residency reflections of one of our current associates is representative:

...The learning was rich enough to last a lifetime, and I needed and need it for my relationship with God and my ministry. And then there is whatever happened with the Spirit that I will never know fully. To be in this deep, contemplative learning community of spiritual guides with Shalem at the helm was life-changing, formative and transformative. I don’t know if I have words yet, but I needed the communal prayer, the communal opening to the Spirit, the retreat center and nature, and the companionship of delightful companions! The whole experience opened me further to Love and gave Love more room to work in me. I was awakened in new ways and ways that are still working in me now that I am home. It’s how the residency all works together at beautiful Bon Secours that is most important. It has allowed something in me to say a more full YES to God and this ministry, committing myself to be God’s Presence in the world.

(*Associate Reflections*, SGP Class of 2024)



CROSSING THE THRESHOLD: REVELATION OF AN AMAZING SPIRITUAL ADVENTURE

by Veronica Asis

In my early years, the word “Revelation”—on the cover of the James Redfield book, “The Nine Revelations (The Celestine Prophecy)” —caught my attention. When the book came out in the 1990’s, it was a huge hit as the great spiritual adventure that conquered millions of readers around the world. Redfield weaves a tale about an ancient hidden manuscript in the Peruvian jungle that can change the destiny of humanity and lead it to start a new life.

In a similar manner, thirty years later, my attention was caught by the words “*Crossing the Threshold*,” one of Shalem’s long term programs. My soul was drawn to the subtle call to a greater authenticity and grounding in God as the source of my life and leadership. *Crossing*



The Threshold was, for me, an invitation to ground and nurture my daily life with contemplative spiritual practices which brought deep change and personal transformation; and led me to start a new life!

DESPITE MY ANTICIPATION, I NEVER DREAMT OF THE IMPACT OF BEING IMMERSSED IN A GREAT INTERCULTURAL SPIRITUAL ADVENTURE WITH PILGRIMS AROUND THE WORLD. NOR DID I FORESEE BEING BLESSED BY A REAL EXPERIENCE OF GOD: REVELATION ITSELF.

In the mystical experiences along the journey I discovered how to dwell in a sacred space by experiencing stillness and silence as a way to foster spiritual growth. I was also invited to make a loving space in my daily agenda to embody my own spiritual practice, build a personal relationship with myself, and strengthen self-communion. I have discovered the gift of silence, a place in which I can reconnect and build an intimate relationship with God. The spiritual arena of a sacred encounter, revelation, and communion with God.

Each cohort of participants in Crossing the Threshold participates in virtual residencies and peer group meetings during the program. These were perfect settings to create a sacred time and space to plant together seeds of contemplation and find mutual support, encouragement, and loving guidance. I discovered and practiced contemplative ways of being, listening, and responding in a community of sharing. I felt inspired by the Spirit to honor the presence of each one in my life and value the spiritual growth in community gatherings.

Through the lens of contemplation I learned to see with new eyes and to hear with loving ears. Contemplative spiritual practices, books



BEING PART OF THE *CROSSING THE THRESHOLD* PROGRAM WAS A LIFE CHANGER. A GIFT FROM GOD!

and resources allowed me to notice the ways in which God is present and speaking and always bringing a new insight, understanding and inspiration to our lives. I found myself dwelling in mystical spiritual experience and witnessing the movement of the Spirit in my own life and the life of others as an Ever Loving Force calling us to a greater transformation.



I had never dreamt about having an encounter with a “soul friend,” someone who held me in a loving and compassionate way in my ups and downs. My new soul friends inspired my journey and encouraged me to move forward. Some

met my deepest spiritual needs and held me in prayer. One lovingly performed the art of prayerful listening as a spiritual director. All were a blessing from God at this season of my life.

Crossing The Threshold provided the ticket to an amazing spiritual adventure. I could never imagine how much greater it could be to step aside and let God lead the way. Being led by the Spirit is the key to achieving a radical spiritual transformation in my own life and leadership. Finally, I discovered myself treasuring “My own nine Revelations”!

Being part of the *Crossing The Threshold* program was a life changer. A gift from God! As a recent grad, I encourage you to listen to the whispering in your own heart. In God’s perfect timing, God will call you to embark on this contemplative spiritual journey. *Crossing The Threshold* indeed!

A FUTURE SHIMMERING WITH POSSIBILITIES: CELEBRATING FIFTY YEARS OF SHALEM

by Anita Davidson, Chair of 50th Anniversary Committee

In 1973, a young Episcopal priest felt drawn by a new call, a new vision of a deeper contemplative life in God for himself and the world. Others who shared this vision joined him, and the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation was born. Over the past fifty years, Shalem has grown in wisdom and grace, becoming a bright star in the constellation of organizations that promote and invite people into contemplative life and leadership. Thousands of like-spirited people from all over the world, drawn by the same call and vision, have participated in many and varied spiritual formation programs created by Shalem, extending its reach far beyond what that small group of seekers could have imagined.

Fifty years later, the journey continues. We look ahead with great hope to a future shimmering with possibilities, revealing ever-new ways of inviting even more seekers into our shared vision of ourselves and a world transformed through contemplative life and leadership, abiding in the Great Love as one Beloved Community.

This theme statement, crafted in January 2023, served to shape the work of Shalem's 50th Anniversary Committee for the next year and a half. It was a great honor

to reflect as a group on these past 50 years of Shalem's history, begin to look ahead to the next 50 years and consider how we might create a year of events that could invite our Shalem family to celebrate in ways worthy of this momentous occasion.

Given Shalem's focus on contemplative life and leadership, it seemed most appropriate to begin, as in all things Shalem, with prayer. Our kickoff event was a 50-hour Prayer Vigil on Zoom. Thirty-five members of the Shalem Community from all over the world served as hosts for each hour, sharing briefly about their connection with Shalem, and inviting participants into shared sacred silence with a poem, prayer, scriptural reading or something else of the person's choice. One person even used a video! The Prayer Vigil was a magnificent testimony to the breadth and depth of Shalem's influence and to our community's beautiful and growing diversity.

Throughout the year, we hosted two book launches. The first was for *Soul Food: Nourishing Essays on Contemplative Living and Leadership*, co-edited by Westina Matthews, Margaret Benefiel, and Jackson Droney. The editors solicited essays from the Shalem community specifically to honor the 50th Anniversary. The

second launch was for the memoir of our founder, Tilden Edwards, entitled *Life Woven in Sacred Time: Glimmerings from a Long Life*. It was a lovely event and a fitting tribute to that once-young Episcopal priest whose dream came to life as Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation.

Over the year, interviews with a wide variety of Shalem folks were video-recorded and then compiled into a short video commemorating the 50th Anniversary Year and sharing their vision of the next 50 years. This video has been used in many gatherings and posted on Shalem's website and social media sites.

A Zoom birthday party was held in January 2024 to celebrate the past and look with hope to the future with joy and light-heartedness. And we wound up the 50th Anniversary Year with a Closing Ceremony in June, also on Zoom, that included an original chant, *Holy Spirit, Fill Us With Hope*, composed for the occasion by long-time Shalem member, Ed Poling, and a ritual reading of *Vision 2025: Our Ongoing Hope*—the vision and mission statements and guiding principles that will take Shalem into a future shimmering with possibilities.

The events of this 50th Anniversary Year of Shalem were indeed

a labor of love for the 50th Anniversary Committee, and it's been a genuine honor to serve as chair and work with this team of wonderful people who share a "vision of ourselves and a world transformed through contemplative life and leadership, abiding in the Great Love as one Beloved Community." We look forward to continuing being part of making this vision a reality in the years to come.

50th Anniversary Committee Members: Margaret Benefiel, Winston Charles, Susie Dillon, Susan Etherton, Chris Jeffrey, Charlie Parker, Ostein Truitt



DRAWING ON FOREST WISDOM TO WEAVE COMMUNITY

by Leah Rampy, Adjunct Staff

Come with me to an old growth forest. Entering this sacred community, we see majestic trees reaching skyward. Many are so large that their trunks can be encircled only by four people with arms outstretched, fingertips touching. The ground is spongy, formed from centuries of decomposing leaves, bark, stems, and branches. Around us grows a rich variety of smaller plants, mushrooms, and other fungi. Moss and lichen comprised of exquisitely small multitudes spread along roots, branches, boulders, and pathways. This forest is a lively place, filled with the scent of pine and cedar, vibrant with chirps and songs. Unseen insects, birds, reptiles, and mammals live at all levels of the forest, from underground to the high canopy.

An ever-evolving web of beings has been living, dying, reproducing, growing, adapting, and interacting here from time beyond memory. When we visit an old growth forest, we are witnessing

invisible wisdom embedded within each species and in the collective sacred community.

As contemplative leaders, we are called to participate in weaving sacred community in these edge times when so much is uncertain. Healthy ecosystems understand this; they are collaborative communities where members contribute their unique gifts in a reciprocal exchange that supports resilience and well-being.

Although there are many gems of wisdom to be gleaned from observing a forest ecosystem, let's look at just three teachings:

1) We are all kin in the web of life.

Coast redwoods that grow along the western coast of the U.S. have shallow root systems. They can withstand the strong storms that blow in from the Pacific because they intertwine their roots, helping to keep each other upright. At some level, we too understand



that we exist because our lives are interwoven with our relatives. Born of stars, as are all beings, we drink rivers. We eat the sunshine converted into energy by plants. Oxygen needed for life comes from trees and plankton. Without the 10-100 trillion symbiotic microbial cells that live in and on each of us, we could not survive.

Slowing our busy minds, we recognize more fully our connections to the family of beings with whom we share this beautiful, wounded Earth. Sinking into our spiritual

hearts, we see that we have always been enveloped in community, sustained by the One who holds us all. We live by intertwining roots with our kin in this sacred web of community. Everything belongs. There is no “other.”

2) Each of us is endowed with unique gifts that are intended to be shared freely.

Trees give some of the food they produce through photosynthesis to underground mycorrhizal fungi. In return, the trees receive water and minerals that the fungi have hunted and mined from rocks and soil. This “wood wide web” also enables trees to exchange resources with others in the community—and they do. Healthy beech trees give away nutrients to their kin who have limited access to sunlight or water. The weaker beech trees still matter to the health of the forest, for more moisture is retained in the soil when forests remain intact.

In an example close to my home, West Virginia flying squirrels eat truffles that grow at the base of red spruce trees. As they glide from tree to tree, these squirrels broadcast the spores of the truffles; the truffles, in turn, support the growth of red spruce. There is no accounting of the gifts exchanged in this Appalachian ecosystem. It thrives as a “gift economy.”

As we reflect on the reciprocity inherent in ecosystems, we may come to realize that we too have been endowed with gifts that can be offered for the good of our community—human and more than human. Daily we receive abundant, live-giving gifts from this world, and, in response, we are called to consider what is ours to do in support of the web of life.

3) Contributions flow beyond the limits of time, space, and understanding.

When under extreme stress, many trees do not hoard their energy; rather they flower and fruit in abundance to create the next generation. Dying trees offer their leafless trunks to owls and woodpeckers for homes and food. Fallen trees may become “nurse logs,” giving nourishment to plants that grow into and along their bark. Unintentionally, but nonetheless helpfully, squirrels and blue jays bury seeds and nuts and fail to collect them, thus planting a future beyond their lifetimes.

Trees store carbon, regulate climate, mediate the water cycle, support soil health, and enrich biodiversity. The forest ecosystem sustains not only those who live within; it also helps to regulate and maintain Earth’s systems—water cycle, carbon cycle, atmosphere, oceans, weather, temperature.

Gifts ripple out beyond a single ecosystem. Everything is connected.

We are called to a soul journey to rediscover our gifts for the world. Although we may not fully understand how our gifts will be used, we can listen deeply for the still small voice that invites us to plant seeds that we may never harvest. We can trust that the world has been endowed by the Creator with wisdom that exceeds our understanding and that communities living in generous and compassionate reciprocity will co-create possibilities beyond imagining.

Let’s return to the old growth forest. Better yet, let’s walk within the ecosystem that surrounds your home. Perhaps it is vibrant and healthy or maybe it has known many hardships. Gaze upon this place with the eyes of your contemplative heart, seeing with gentle compassion. Notice how beauty reveals herself in connections and collaborations, gifts given and received. Acknowledge your membership in this community. Attend any invitation to offer your gifts. Linger here. Receive the wordless wisdom from this holy web. Allow that wisdom to guide you as you join in the important work of weaving community in these edge times.

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We wish to acknowledge every Shalem donor. If we have left you off this list, we sincerely apologize and ask that you let us know.

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VOLUNTEERS & IN-KIND DONATIONS

We are grateful to the many individuals who give of their time or donated travel and other expenses to support Shalem's ministry. This year we are especially thankful for:

- Shalem's Board of Directors, who donated their time and talent in many different ways throughout the year.
- Shalem's non-board committee members: Tatiana Bien-Aime and Susie Dillon, who served Shalem through their committee work.
- Winston Charles, Anita Davidson, Susie Dillon, Susan Etherton, and Ostein Truitt who put in the enormous effort to plan the events celebrating Shalem's 50th anniversary.
- Those who led an hour for Shalem's 50 hour Vigil: Fay Acker, David Andrews, Katie Archibald-Woodward, Althea Banda-Hansmann, Margaret Benefiel, AY Bryant, Gay L. Byron, Trey Campbell, Winston Charles, Kiok Cho, Lorie Conway, Nancy Corson Carter, Audrey Cox Smith, Carole Crumley, Anita Davidson, Ann Dean, Jackson Droney, Rod Dugliss, Katy Gaughan, Sonya Green, Stuart Higginbotham, J. Lee Hill, Jr., Ambrose Hong-il Kim, Emily Johnson Kellar, David Killeen, Keith Kristich, Geja Laan, Scotty Landis, Kathie Nycklemoe, Peter Nycklemoe, Charlie Parker, Dawn Peck, Julie Pennington-Russell, Leah Rampy, David K. Robinson, Scott Rohr, Robert Seiler, Phillip Stephens, Oommen Thomas, Ostein Truitt, Nicole Uzans, Elmor van Staden, Flora Visser, Elizabeth Ward, Nan Weir, Gerald Westcott, Sarah Willie-LeBreton, and Peter Wiltshire
- James Aalgaard, Margaret Benefiel, Bryan Berghoef, Lorie Conway, Jackson Droney, Susan Etherton, Bob Frank, Katy Gaughan, Christine Jeffrey, Jennifer Oakes, Erlinda Perlado-Mertens, Michelle Walker and Melanie Wilkinson, whose photographs grace these pages, our website, our monthly eNews, our Facebook page and other places.
- Patience Robbins for her leadership of the weekly Prayers for the World and for others who have provided their leadership this year: Nancy Corson Carter, Susan Gaeta, Dirkje Legerstee, Lisa Martin, and Kimberly McOmber
- Rod Dugliss and Scotty Landis, for coordinating the prayer leaders for Prayers for Hope & Healing and the following leaders: Mary Beene, Leideke Bulder, Carole Crumley, Anita Davidson, David Emery, Pat Mousaw, Kevin Omi, Celpha Sands, Dave Stevens and Jeanie Sweeney
- Those who provided leadership, hosted, and/or facilitated the daily Simple Presence and Qigong gatherings: Simple Presence Coordinating Team: Fereshteh Hale, Nan Weir, Anita Davidson. Zoom Hosts: Linda Bryant, Marilyn Burrell, Anita Davidson, Christina Graber Neufeld, Barbara Hanna, David Jadlocki, Nan Weir. Qigong Leadership: Rich Plant (via video). Simple Presence Facilitators: David Andrews, Katie Archibald-Woodward, Peter Bauman, Linda Bryant, Anita Davidson, Diane DeSieno, Denise Diaab, Amy Duncan, Steve Duncan, Gene Foehl, Suzanne Foehl, Elizabeth Foster, Tom Frost, Christina Graber Neufeld, Sonya Green, Fereshteh Hale, David Jadlocki, Kathy Kohl, Geja Laan, Shirley Larson, Peg Marose, Mary McCurty, Leigh Ann Min, Lauren Morton, Mary Pat Mulligan, Sally Nettles, Bill Parker, Anne Peacock, Dawn Peck, Muri Pugh, David Robinson, Scott Rohr, Robin Seiler, John Titus, Ostein Truitt, and Nan Weir.
- Those who planned the Midwest Region's Advent Silent Retreat: Nan Weir, Nancy Flinchbaugh, Liz Kuhn, Nan Weir, and Anita Davidson.
- Mentors and group facilitators for Crossing the Threshold: Sarah Begg, Amy Duncan, Cynthia Insko Lauren Morton, Andrea Noel, Dawn Peck, Sarah Sealand, Patti Snyder, and Katie Zimmerman
- Those who helped to lead the Shalem Contemplatives of Color/BIPOC: Fay Acker, Trey Campbell, Natalie Cone, Susan Gaeta, Bo Karen Lee, Leonard McMahon, Lydia Mercado, Marion Osleyo, Westina Matthews, and Ostein Truitt
- Those who keep in contact with, and hold in prayer, recent program participants: Spiritual Guidance Program: Eleanor Abarno, Bob Abarno, Cindi Bryant, Darlene Carlson, Susan Etherton, Suzaane Foehl, Pat George, Deb Griest, Valerie Harrison, and Renee Regacho-Anaclario,
- Those who have shared their original reflections with us through a blog or eNews article: Veronica Asis, Margaret Benefiel, Donna Bivens, AY Bryant, Winston Charles, Lorie Conway, Anita Davidson, Jackson Droney, Susan Etherton, Ann Folwell Stanford, Craig Hammond, Angela Hooks, Janet Hudson, Sue Hudson, Savy Janssen, Aleksandra Lewandowska, Christine Jeffrey, Martha Kirkpatrick, Rev. Michael Lehman, Linda Longmire, Westina Matthews, Christina Miller, Kevin Omi, Roy M. Oswald, Charlie Parker, Julie Pennington-Russell, Tara Pray, Cole Arthur Riley, Phillip Stephens, Bill Stone, Therese Taylor-Stinson, Linda Toia, Mary van Balen, and Nan Weir.

SHEKINAH SOCIETY REFLECTIONS: PLANNED GIVING WITH SHALEM

by Margaret Bullitt-Jonas, Shekinah Society Member

Years ago, as an adolescent and young adult, I lived in the grip of an eating disorder. Unable to control my cravings around food, I compensated for the binges by compulsive fasting, diets, and exercise. When I was 30 years old, I finally found my way into a Twelve-Step program. I surrendered my life to a Higher Power and began the process of physical, emotional, and spiritual healing. Amazed by the mysterious, holy power released by community, truth-telling, and prayer, I headed to seminary with a burning question: *Who is the God who just saved my life?*

Seminary classes gave me plenty of intellectual fodder, but my soul longed for another form of nourishment. I was hungry not simply for ideas about the Divine but also for direct experience. Alongside seminary coursework, I enrolled in Shalem's Spiritual Guidance Program. I quickly found what I was looking for: a community of practice, a grounding in contemplative prayer, and a pathway to embodied wisdom. In their distinctive ways, Tilden Edwards, Jerry May,

and Rosemary Dougherty gave me practices and perspectives that continue to enliven me.

Shalem played a vital role in forming the foundation of my ministry. After my ordination in the Episcopal Church in 1988, I returned to my seminary alma mater to teach courses on prayer, spiritual direction, and environmental ministry that flowed from what I'd learned from Shalem. I served as a spiritual director and led retreats around the country, eager to share, as best I could, pathways that lead to experiencing intimacy with Divine Presence.

Looking back some 40 years after my first contact with Shalem, I am particularly grateful for its teaching that contemplation and compassionate action are deeply connected: they are as essential to maintaining life as breathing in and breathing out. Contemplative prayer led me to become a climate activist and gave me a new question to hold: *If God can help one crazy addict like me to make peace with her body, is it not possible that*

God can help human beings to make peace with the body of Earth?

Now, in my 70s, I am glad to leave a bequest to Shalem in my estate plans. In a turbulent, swiftly changing world teetering on the brink of social and ecological collapse, the human community needs exactly what Shalem has to offer: contemplative practices and wisdom that connect us to a transcendent, loving Power greater than our small, willful selves. In the Divine Presence our souls are fed. We find space to rest, grieve, and wait. And we tap into an irrepressible, God-given longing to act: to create a more just and beautiful world.



Margaret Bullitt-Jonas

SHALEM'S SHEKINAH SOCIETY

The Shekinah Society is for those individuals who have put Shalem in their estate plans. We give for this special support and care for Shalem's future.

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MAKING A BEQUEST TO SHALEM

When you make 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 estate plans. These gifts greatly assist Shalem's ministry in the world and are a special way for a donor's care to extend into the future. Please let us know if you have included a gift to Shalem in your estate plans. We'd like to thank you and welcome you as a Shekinah Society member!





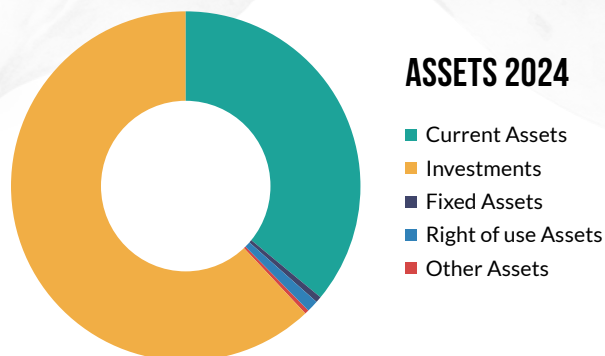
STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION AND ACTIVITIES

The Condensed Financial Statements shown in the following pages were derived from the reviewed financial statements of the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, Inc for the year ended June 30, 2024 and the audited financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2023. 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 functional expenses, cash flows, footnote disclosures and the report of our independent accountants, Dunham, Aukamp & Rhodes, PLC, are available for review upon request.

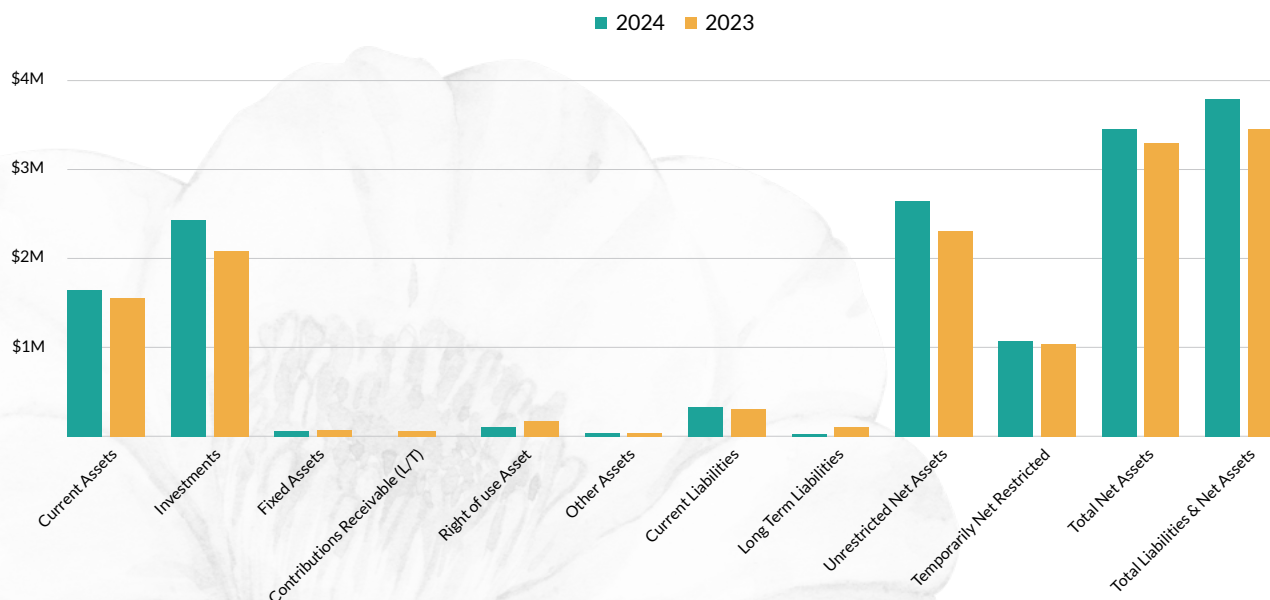
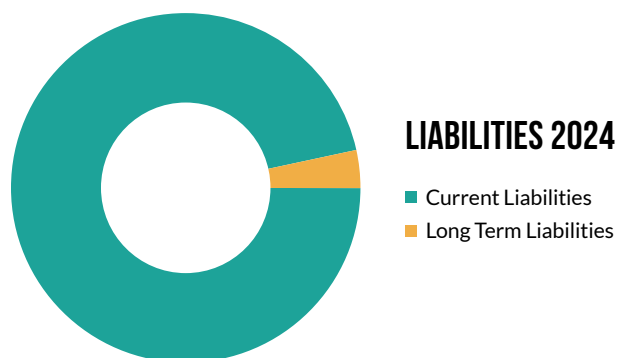
CONDENSED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS OF JUNE 30, 2024 AND 2023

ASSETS	2024	2023
Current Assets	\$1,359,149	\$1,301,463
Investments	2,339,743	2,048,608
Fixed Assets	18,648	22,184
Contributions Receivable (L/T)	-	20,225
Right of use Asset	44,313	81,866
Other Assets	<u>13,530</u>	<u>13,530</u>
Total Assets	<u>3,775,383</u>	<u>3,487,876</u>
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS		
Current Liabilities	169,906	164,600
Long Term Liabilities	<u>6,364</u>	<u>44,795</u>
Total Liabilities	176,270	209,395
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	2,579,402	2,276,939
Temporarily Restricted	<u>1,019,711</u>	<u>1,001,542</u>
Total Net Assets	<u>3,599,113</u>	<u>3,278,481</u>
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	<u>3,775,383</u>	<u>3,487,876</u>

ASSETS 2024



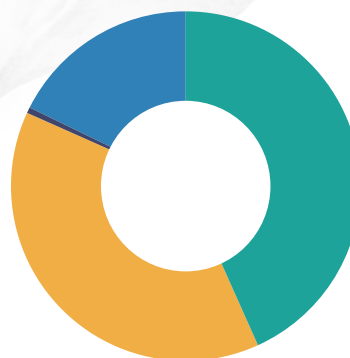
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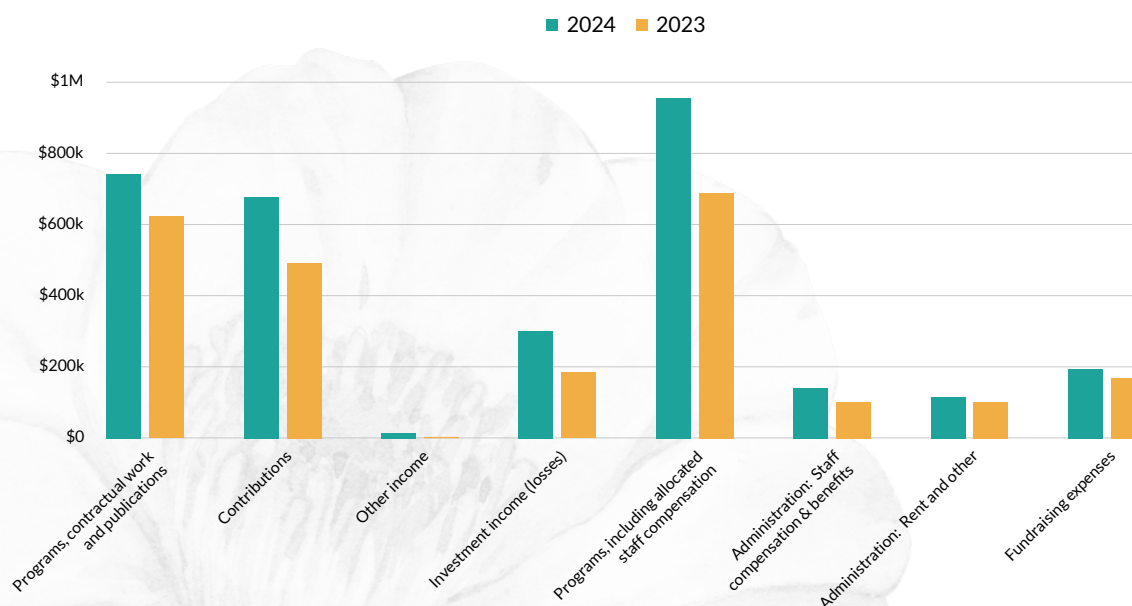
CONDENSED STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES FOR YEARS ENDED JUNE 30, 2024 AND 2023

REVENUE & SUPPORT	2024	2023
Programs, contractual work and publications	\$741,026	\$617,853
Contributions	677,900	491,326
Other income	5,568	880
Investment income (losses)	<u>300,589</u>	<u>184,688</u>
Total Revenue & Support	<u>1,725,083</u>	<u>1,294,747</u>
EXPENSES		
Programs, including allocated staff compensation	955,824	690,035
Administration:		
Staff compensation & benefits	139,406	100,898
Rent and other	115,486	101,549
Fundraising expenses	<u>193,735</u>	<u>169,563</u>
Total Expenses	<u>1,404,451</u>	<u>1,062,045</u>
Total Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	320,632	232,702
NET ASSETS, Beginning of Year	<u>3,278,481</u>	<u>3,045,779</u>
NET ASSETS, End of Year	<u>\$3,599,113</u>	<u>\$ 3,278,481</u>

REVENUE & SUPPORT 2024



EXPENSES 2024



BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF

SHALEM BOARD OF DIRECTORS 23-24

Fay C. Acker

Laura Brokaw

Alfonso "Trey" Campbell III

Natalie Cone Ddamulira

Rhett Engelking

Laura Lee Ernst

Susan Etherton

Gene Foehl

Laura Neal

Karah Palmer

Kathleen Richard

Patience Robbins

Audrey Cox Smith

Morgan Stafford

SHALEM ADJUNCT STAFF 23-24

Sarah Anders

Nicole Anderson-Cobb

CeCe Balboni

Althea Banda-Hansmann

Michael Battle

Margaret Benefiel

Bryan Berghoef

Christian Brooks

Valerie Brown

AY Bryant

Margie Buchanan-Smith

Alfonso "Trey" Campbell III

Deborah Cannady

Winston Charles

Greg Cochran

Lerita Coleman Brown

Lorie Conway

Gordon Creamer

Carole Crumley

Anita Davidson

Aryn K. Davis

Ann Dean

Rodney Dean

William (Bill) Dietrich

Jackson Droney

Margot Eyring

Rhoena Facun

Sarah Forti

Sid Fowler

Katy Gaughan

Jan Gregory-Charpentier

Anne Grizzle

Jim Hall

Stuart Higginbotham

Jodi Hill

Debora Jackson

Jeff Jones

Jacqueline Madison-McCreary

Tony Mazurkiewicz

Chuck McCorkle

Leonard McMahon

Kimberly McOmber

Jenais Means

Laura Neal

Emily Norton

Kevin Omi

Diane Paras

Leah Rampy

Patience Robbins

Emily Schwenker

Trish Stefanik

Phillip Stephens

Bill Stone

Francie Thayer

Ostein Truitt

Liz Tuckermanty

Andrea "Ani" Vidrine

Glen Vinson

Judy Walsh-Mellett

Liz Ward

Nan Weir

Matthew Wright

SHALEM STAFF 23-24

Executive Director

Margaret Benefiel

Director of Operations & Online Learning

Jackson Droney

Director of Administration

Christine Jeffrey

Director of Development and Communications

Charlie Parker (July 2023 –
April 2024)

Communication Coordinator

Tom Sasinowski

Program Directors

Margaret Benefiel

AY Bryant

Lorie Conway

Aryn K. Davis

Sarah Forti

Emily Johnson Kellar

Kathie Nycklemoe

Program Directors (cont.)

Peter Nycklemoe

Julie Pennington-Russell

Trish Stefanik

Phillip Stephens

Program Administrators & Registrars

Katy Gaughan

Michelle Geuder

ArDonna Hamilton

Christine Jeffrey

Office & Development Coordinator

Karin Selland (July 2023 – May
2024)

Outside Accountant

Laura Caperton

Bookkeeper

Stacy Rancourt

Founder & Senior Fellow

Tilden Edwards

OFFICE INFORMATION

Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation

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(301) 897-7334 | Fax: (202) 595-0336

Office Hours: Monday-Friday 9am-5pm

info@shalem.org | www.shalem.org

VISION 2025: OUR ONGOING HOPE

Imagining the future and mindful of the challenges of our times, Shalem is grateful to commence its next chapter embracing opportunities for renewed vision and vitality.

Our faithful work continues with eyes and hearts open to see the greater impact Shalem might have on our hurting world. Our grief and response to the pandemic, racial injustice, political unrest, and the climate crisis has drawn us again to the ancient longing for wholeness and oneness in the Spirit.

With a greater number of people participating in Shalem programs, a new awareness of necessary organizational changes has surfaced. To sense the movement of the Spirit, a Vision Coalition was created and invited to listen to our broad community. Deep prayer and active listening led to drafting a Vision Statement, Guiding Principles and Focus Areas to guide us as we respond to God's life-giving activity: this is Vision 2025.

As Vision 2025 propels us into this next chapter, we invite you to imagine the power and possibility of our collective contemplative discernment and compassion. We invite your bold prayers and courageous hope.

MISSION STATEMENT:

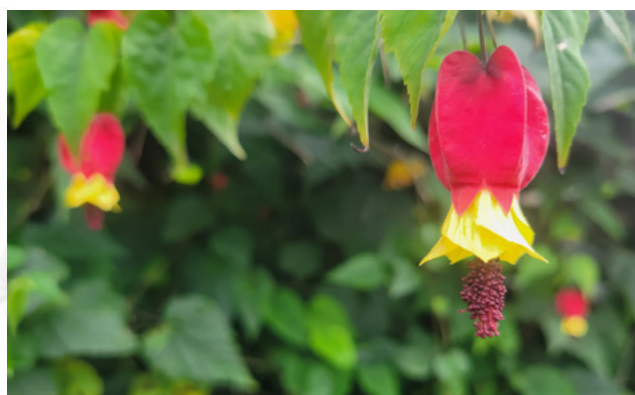
To nurture contemplative living and leadership.

VISION STATEMENT:

In 2025, Shalem will be a dynamic and inclusive community, empowered by the Spirit, where seekers engage in transformation of themselves, their communities, and the world through spiritual growth, deep connection, and courageous action.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Responding to Divine Initiative, we allow the Divine to lead us into shared practices of sacred stillness, deep listening, open-heartedness, and prayer.
- With Holy Awe, we will practice cultivating gratitude, curiosity, joy, and delight, celebrating the power of Love to transform.
- We acknowledge the uniqueness of each spiritual path and welcome the creative possibilities our gifts and experience bring to Shalem and the world.
- Grounded in the Christian contemplative tradition, we will celebrate the diversity of all contemplative traditions and lift up the voices beyond historically dominant ones.
- As beloved community, we will face our fears and act with compassion and courage to challenge injustice, dismantle systems of inequity, and pursue reconciliation.
- We affirm Sacred Abundance within and around us and will seek to act with generosity and trustworthiness as we steward our resources – human, natural and financial.



FOCUS AREAS:

Contemplative Grounding

Contemplative grounding is our expression of the Great Love at the center of all things. As we continue to be drawn to the edge of God's longing, we are invited to a fresh articulation of that expression. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

Belonging

Belonging is the manifestation of God's union with all things. When we are radically inclusive, we embrace the Loving Essence of each individual. A sense of belonging for each of us follows as we are part of something larger than ourselves while honoring who we are and who we want to be. (John 17:21-23)

Capacity Building

Capacity building is not a one-time effort to improve short-term effectiveness; it is the intentional and

continuous imagining of what is needed for Shalem to grow to the next level of operational, programmatic, financial, and organizational maturity so that we may more effectively and faithfully live our mission into the future. (Luke 14:28-30, Jeremiah 29:11-13)

Sustainability

Sustainability occurs when we attract and effectively use enough and the right kind of resources to achieve our long-term goals. Sustainability invites us to prayerfully consider the whys and ways we invite, receive, and utilize our resources. (1 Peter 4:10)

Generating

Generating is action fueled by courage, confidence, and hope. Embracing mystery, we seek to discover new ways of expressing the contemplative Christian tradition beyond the usual exchange of information. (Jeremiah 6:16)



CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE & LEADERSHIP

Shalem's in-depth programs and pilgrimages provide contemplative grounding and the support of a praying community for all aspects of life, whether it be your career, ministry, or personal spiritual practice.

HEART LONGINGS: AN INVITATION TO THE CONTEMPLATIVE PATH

Eight-month program that invites you to ground in a place of calm and love with the support of community through retreats, monthly gatherings, small group time and spiritual direction.

NURTURING THE CALL: SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE PROGRAM

Nurturing the Call offers in-depth support for the ministry of one-on-one spiritual direction.

TRANSFORMING COMMUNITY: LEADING CONTEMPLATIVE SPIRITUAL GROUPS & RETREATS

Transforming Community is designed to equip, encourage and support those called to lead spiritual groups and retreats.

GOING DEEPER: CLERGY SPIRITUAL LIFE & LEADERSHIP

Going Deeper offers support for the spiritual heart of clergy of all denominations and addresses the stressful challenges of a life devoted to pastoral ministry.

THE SOUL OF LEADERSHIP

Eighteen-month program for contemplative leadership that helps leaders integrate spiritual heart practices with leadership realities in order to more truly embody their vocational path.

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD: CONTEMPLATIVE FOUNDATIONS FOR EMERGING LEADERS

Crossing the Threshold is for those who are between the ages of 25-40 and seek a deeper spiritual foundation for their lives.

PILGRIMAGES

In the Footsteps of St. Francis & St. Clare: A Pilgrimage to Assisi

April 29 - May 9, 2025, Italy

Walking the Ramparts: A Pilgrimage with Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross

June 11 - 21, 2025, Spain

On the Camino: Remember, Release and Reimagine

July 17 - 26, 2025, Spain

