

Nurturing the Call: Spiritual Guidance Program Class of 2028

March 2027- December 2028



SHALEM INSTITUTE FOR SPIRITUAL FORMATION

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"The true healing effects of spiritual direction come not from our own efforts as spiritual directors, but when we attend to the Holy Spirit in our interchanges, when we are aware of seeking grace, when God works through our relationships."

— Jerry May



Shalem's Nurturing the Call: Spiritual Guidance Program is designed to nurture the spiritual heart of those called to the ministry of "holy listening," also known as spiritual direction, spiritual guidance, or spiritual companionship. Begun in 1978, this program was the first to offer serious experiential resources and support for an ecumenical mix of spiritual directors. Since its inception, the Spiritual Guidance Program has attracted and been enriched by people from a wide variety of professions and faith traditions from around the world.

Shalem's Nurturing the Call: Spiritual Guidance Program draws on the rich resources of the Christian contemplative tradition to enhance and deepen the spiritual lives of those called to this ministry. At its heart is the radical conviction that spiritual companionship is a form of prayer and that contemplative listening comes not so much from a set of skills but from grounding in one's relationship with God.

To support this understanding, the Program offers an environment that nurtures an increasing openness to the many ways God's Spirit is seeking to be alive in both our participants and in those whom they companion on life's spiritual journey. This is done in a spacious, prayer-filled atmosphere with the support and guidance of committed peers and Shalem's seasoned staff. Always, the emphasis is on an open, immediate awareness of God's presence.

"I believe Shalem's Spiritual Guidance Program sets the gold standard for Spiritual Direction training.... Shalem nurtured my connection with Spirit by encouraging me to be still, cultivate quiet, and develop trust in Spirit as the real guide."

-Lerita Coleman Brown

General Program Information

The design of the Program allows for at-home study, practice, and peer group accountability and support supplemented by two intensive ten-day residencies, held at a facility in the Baltimore/Washington, D.C. area. The Program spans two years with residencies approximately one year apart.



The residencies are scheduled at Bon Secours Retreat and Conference Center, Marriottsville, MD, which is handicap accessible. Meals offer healthy options and take dietary restrictions into consideration.

Program Timeline: March 2027- December 2028

Early Bird (Discounted) Application by: November 30, 2026

Final Application by: January 15, 2027

Opening Session on Zoom: April 3, 2027, 11am-5pm ET

At-Home Work: March 15 – July 19, 2027

1st Residency: July 20 – 29, 2027

At-Home Work: July 30, 2027 – June 19, 2028

Zoom Intensive: October 16, 2027, 11am-5pm ET

Zoom Intensive: January 22, 2028, 11am-5pm ET

Zoom Intensive: April 29, 2028, 11am-5pm ET

2nd Residency: June 20 – 29, 2028

At-Home Integrative Phase: June 30-December 1, 2028

Closing Session on Zoom: January 7, 2029



*"This program opened me up to experiencing the Divine in new and unexpected ways...
Through the support of this program, I developed a contemplative practice that
grounds me and is the center of my vocation and ministry."*

-Cheryl Notari

PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Phillip Stephens, Director of the program, is an Episcopal lay-person and graduate of the 2006 Spiritual Guidance Class. In addition to being an associate of the Order of the Holy Cross, he serves as a spiritual guide and retreat facilitator. His special areas of interest are cross-cultural studies and interspirituality.

See www.shalem.org for a full list of staff members.



WHO SHOULD APPLY?

Shalem's Spiritual Guidance Program is for people who have experienced the mystery of God working in their own lives and who:



- **Companion others on their spiritual journey;**
- **Know others who see in them spiritual maturity and a gift of spiritual companioning;**
- **Desire personal spiritual deepening for themselves as enrichment for this ministry;**
- **Seek spiritual community and mutual support with other spiritually-open directors.**

Each program class comprises approximately 25-30 carefully selected people who feel called to deepen their ministry and experience of spiritual guidance and to further the integration of their personal spiritual awareness. They include lay people, clergy, vowed religious, and professionals representing a wide variety of vocations and faith traditions. People who have informally found themselves sought out by others for attention to prayer and spiritual life may be eligible.

Shalem's program is also appropriate for those who have received professional spiritual direction training and who desire the enrichment that the contemplative disciplines bring to individuals and those they companion.

"Few things in life have been so gloriously transformative as my participation in Shalem's Spiritual Guidance Program.... I've embraced a new way of being: one of abiding, of expanded seeing and knowing from the heart. I've learned a new language: one of silence, metaphor and imagery which have helped give expression to my encounters with God and those that I companion." -Kay Esteppe

Program Components



At-home work includes receiving and offering one-to-one spiritual guidance, mutual support and accountability with a peer group, reading of selected texts including classics and specific topical material, attending Zoom Intensives, preparation of several brief theme papers, brief periodic reports to Shalem, personal journal-keeping, and a personal spiritual practice. In addition, a minimum of three self-scheduled solitary retreat days is required during the two years. Regular staff consultations and responses will be provided.

Residencies include topical seminars, practicums in prayer and spiritual disciplines, individual interviews with staff, supervised peer groups, group processing, and reflection. An attempt is made to foster a community of peers within a prayerful atmosphere. Frequent sessions on prayer will explore a broad range of prayer forms and issues, both theoretically and experientially. Associates will lead regular morning prayer, and 36 hours of the ten days will be spent in a guided silent retreat.



The integrative phase includes continuation of spiritual guidance and peer group participation, one brief report to Shalem, and completion of a six-to-twelve-page paper, which will be due near the end of the Program. Associates are expected to continue in a peer group after completion of the Program, as long as they are offering spiritual guidance.



At-Home Work

Papers:

Four personal, integrative Theme Papers of 4-6 double-spaced pages each are required, each focused on a major theme drawn from the reading and seminar sequences (e.g., Entering One-to-One Spiritual Direction, Discernment, Psychology and Spiritual Direction, Social Contexts). An integrative conversation between an associate and assigned paper reader can be offered in lieu of a written theme paper. A final integrative paper or project is required near the end of the Program. Specific guidelines for these projects are given.

Reports of associates' direction, readings, and personal discipline situations are requested periodically. Associates also need to complete all required program reflections.

Reflection and Feedback:

Associates will be expected to participate in prayerful reflection and feedback concerning their own and others' gifts and growing edges as spiritual companions. Individual meetings with staff and mutual peer reflection will assist this process. It is hoped that this overall experience will enrich associates' ongoing discernment of their gifts and calling to the ministry of spiritual guidance. Associates will also provide periodic feedback to the staff about their sense of the process and content of the program itself. Staff will provide responses to theme papers and major papers, but there are no examinations or grades given. If an associate requires periodic evaluation for academic credit, a pass/fail report will be given as needed to the accrediting institution based upon fulfillment of Program requirements.

Staff Contact:

Each associate is assigned a staff contact person for the course of the Program. This staff person will regularly respond to reports. Staff persons responsible for the particular topical areas covered by the theme papers will respond to them. In addition, associates meet privately with their staff persons during each residency. These times are opportunities for mutual feedback and for associates to deal with special concerns and interests, ranging from Program issues to relationships with their spiritual directors. Other staff consultation can be arranged as needed.

Personal Discipline:

Associates are asked to maintain a daily discipline of prayer and at least occasional journal keeping. The form of this discipline is in the hands of associates, in consultation with their spiritual directors. Some guidelines for journaling around components of the program are provided.

Retreats:

Associates are required to spend at least three self-scheduled, solitary retreat days while participating in the Program. The place, time, and format of these days are up to associates, in consultation with their spiritual directors. These days symbolize the importance of the spiritual guide's own unambiguous solitude as part of his/her ongoing formation. In addition, there is a 36-hour guided, silent Sabbath time during each of the residencies.

Readings:

Readings follow the sequence indicated below with seminar information. Applicants will need to establish a plan for obtaining bibliography readings during the course of the program. Online distributors, theological schools, convents, monasteries and houses of religious studies are good resources. A brief representative bibliography is included to assist with this.

Sample Bibliography: The following list is a small but somewhat representative sample of required or recommended resources used in Shalem's *Nurturing the Call: Spiritual Guidance Program*. This is provided for your information and to assist you in making arrangements for library resources in your area. Some references will be used extensively, and you should seriously consider purchasing these. A full bibliography will be made available after the final selection of applicants.

Sample Books:

Anonymous. *The Cloud of Unknowing*

Bloom, Anthony. *Living Prayer or Courage to Pray*

Dougherty, Rose Mary. *Discernment: A Path of Spiritual Awakening*

Edwards, Tilden. *Spiritual Director, Spiritual Companion*

Holt, Bradley. *Thirsty for God: A Brief History of Christian Spirituality*

Jaoudi, Maria. *Christian Mysticism—East and West*

John of the Cross. *Ascent of Mt. Carmel; Dark Night of the Soul; etc.*

Kelly, Thomas. *Testament of Devotion*

May, Gerald. *Care Of Mind/Care of Spirit or Will and Spirit*

Teresa of Avila. *Interior Castle; Life; etc.*

Thurman, Howard. *Essential Writings*

Walker, Alice. *The Color Purple*



Residencies

Residency Seminars:

The content of seminars includes the following sample of subjects as specifically related to spiritual direction.

First Residency

1. Contemplative Conversation
2. Spiritual Community
3. Discernment
4. Psychology & Spiritual Guidance
5. Group Spiritual Direction
6. Seeing with the Sabbath Heart
7. Wholly Longing: Praying with Eros
8. Intercessory Prayer
9. Creativity & One-to-One Spiritual Guidance

Second Residency

1. Cultivating a Spiritual Heart
2. Pluralism & Spiritual Guidance
3. Discernment and Spiritual Guidance
4. Sin & Reconciliation
5. Time, Sound & Silence
6. Welcome to Silent Sabbath
7. The Saints and Spiritual Guidance
8. Death & Life
9. Everything is Holy Now: Honoring the Journey, Inviting Discovery
10. Listening for the Heartbeat of God

Seminar methods include short lectures, dialogue, individual and small group work focused on particular concrete questions, role plays, and real plays. Practical questions and subjects concerning the concrete practice of spiritual guidance are woven into the sequence. An informal atmosphere of mutual learning is cultivated, together with respect for the experience brought by associates.

Staff-Led Gatherings at Residencies: Staff-led gatherings on contemplative forms of prayer and related disciplines, focused both experientially and theoretically, continue throughout both residencies.



The Integrative Phase

Spiritual Direction

All associates need to be in a regular relationship with a spiritual director of their choosing, normally meeting about one hour per month. Associates also need to be involved in offering spiritual guidance to others. This ministry historically is confirmed as a gift and calling by other people coming spontaneously for continuing attention to their spiritual life. Prior to the Program, evidence is needed that others have sought out the associates for assistance in attending God in their lives, preferably on a regular basis. By the beginning of the Program and throughout, associates need to be offering formal guidance to at least two other people on a regular basis. Normally these are people who would be coming for spiritual guidance whether or not one is in a program. These need not be the same two people throughout the Program. Arrangements for one's own spiritual guidance and guidance with two other persons must be made prior to submitting one's application.

Peer Groups

These monthly, two-hour groups are integral to the Program. Groups consist of five to six other persons who are enrolled in your class. Peer group members rotate in presenting concrete situations of one-to-one spiritual guidance in which they are involved. The primary focus of reflection is the presenter's own evolving faith life in relation to work with a directee. Shalem provides guidelines and support for the structuring of these groups. Participants are expected to attend 30 presentations (15 meetings with two presentations or 30 meetings with one presentation). They are expected to present themselves five of these times. They are able to count the 12 sessions during the residencies as part of the 30 sessions needed.

"The first day of my first Shalem residency when I met the other people in my class, the people in my small group and all of the faculty, I had the experience of feeling totally at home with a group of people for the first time in my life. That feeling not only continued, but it actually grew and continues to grow." -David Canada

Total cost of the 2-year program

(includes start-up materials, program staff and administration and residency room and board fees)

Early Bird Price (By 11/30/26)	Regular Price (By 1/15/27)
\$9,650	\$10,210

The program fees shown here cover about 75-80% of the total costs. The balance is funded by gifts from donors, and as a result, their prayers as well as their financial support accompany you in this program.

Financial Assistance: In some cases of financial need, Shalem is able to offer limited tuition reduction depending on your need and the number of other requests. We ask that you prayerfully consider the amount you are able to pay and the amount you are requesting. We encourage applicants to look for sources of funding from their churches or religious affiliations. If you wish to be considered for reduced tuition, please submit a completed Financial Assistance Form at the time of your application.

Please contact the Registrar with any questions.

Certificate of Completion

A Certificate of Completion will be awarded to those who satisfactorily complete the measurable objectives of the Program. This is not intended as a certification of the person as a spiritual director or validation of one's call to the spiritual guidance ministry. While an attempt is made to help the person discern that call, we believe that the final confirmation is known in the fruits of the ministry and is clarified through the Spirit of Truth alive in the director, the directee, and the community of faith.

Continuation Beyond the Program

Associates who continue to offer spiritual guidance beyond their participation in the Program are expected to continue monthly peer groups and to continue to pursue opportunities to enrich their ministry of spiritual direction.

CRITERIA FOR CANDIDATES

Before filling out an application, we suggest that you look at your situation in relation to the following **ideal** qualifications. Those who combine most of these will be given priority for admission. If you have any hesitation about applying after reading these, please email the registrar for clarification.

Ideal candidates are individuals who

1. Feel called to spiritual companionship for others. This involves specifically focusing on prayer/meditation experience and discernment of and response to God's activity in a person's life.
2. Have experienced a validation of this call by the fact that others have come to them to attend God in their lives.
3. Have had experience with a spiritual director or companion for themselves.
4. Have life experience and history which reflect an ongoing caring for God.
5. Desire a serious experiential program with an ecumenical mix of peers in a Christian context which is open to other faith traditions.
6. Actively express commitment to and seeking of the Truth of God through a religious tradition and open to learning from other traditions.
7. Have evidence of their faith community's support for their ministry of spiritual direction.

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