



A COMMUNITY CONNECTED

*Holding Compassion
and Hope*



SHALEM
ANNUAL REPORT
2024-2025

SHALEM.ORG



While this Annual Report highlights the programs, gatherings, and accomplishments of Shalem's 2024-2025 fiscal year, we would be remiss not to acknowledge a significant moment on the horizon. As we look toward the coming year, Shalem will enter a season of transition as Margaret Benefiel prepares to conclude her service of over a decade as Executive Director.

A Letter from Jeff Ross, Board President

Dear Friends,

This is a seminal year for Shalem Institute as we move through a leadership transition. We give thanks for the dedicated service of Margaret Benefiel, and we now enter a time of prayerful discernment about the leadership Shalem needs for its future. It is important to remember that we have been through a transition in leadership before, and we know the way forward. Rooted in our contemplative heritage, we will reflect on our history, listen deeply to one another, and open ourselves to the Spirit's guidance as we envision what lies ahead.

I invite you to help establish a strong foundation for this search through your daily prayers. Resumes and plans are important, but even more vital is our attentiveness to God and faith that we will be led to the one called to walk with us. With patience and prayer, we trust and believe the right leader will emerge through God's grace.

The Board is creating space for staff, stakeholders, and the whole community to share in this process of deep listening. Our consultant, Sonia Stamm, has already invited your reflections, and I am always glad to hear from you as well. Vision 2025 has helped clarify our priorities, while our founding documents continue to inspire us. Through it all, the Spirit will guide us faithfully. We will also be nurtured through this time with Pamela Leland, who is our acting Executive Director. She will help us to strengthen our board and internal systems so that we are ready to engage our new Executive Director when they arrive in June of 2026.

In this way, our contemplative grounding will ensure that Shalem's search is not only about finding someone with practical skills, but about a leader who is spiritually aligned with our mission and future call.

Please keep Shalem in your prayers, and feel free to reach out to me at frjeffross@aol.com with your thoughts or concerns. With gratitude and trust in the Spirit,

Jeffrey

P.S. I hope you will join me daily in this prayer. Blessings and peace!

Holy and Loving God,

We lift our awareness to Your presence.

We lay down our anxieties and our agendas.

Quiet our hearts, that we may listen for Your Spirit's gentle leading.

You have guided the Shalem community through many seasons.

Guide us now as we seek a leader who will walk with us in faithfulness, who will cherish our mission, and who will help us grow into the future You desire.

Keep us rooted in Your love, so that our choices are driven only by our love of You.

Keep us attentive to one another, so that our listening is deep and our discernment wise.

May all we do reflect Your peace, and may Your Spirit surprise us with grace along the way.

We ask this through Christ our Lord, who calls us to follow and to trust.

Amen.

A Message from the Board of Directors

For over ten years, as Executive Director of Shalem, Margaret Benefiel has led with a spirit of generosity, deep presence, and unwavering commitment to contemplative leadership. Her steady guidance has touched every part of our community, from programs and pilgrimages to the Shalem Society, regional gatherings, and the many events that hold Shalem's heart.

Under her leadership, the Wider World Initiative strengthened Shalem's financial foundation and included scholarship funds dedicated to support all who are drawn to Shalem programs. Today, Shalem prayerfully invites communities representing greater diversity in age, identity, and geography to participate fully through virtual and in-person programs.

With thoughtful discernment, Margaret has guided Shalem through important seasons of growth and has prepared the community with clarity and grace for the leadership transition ahead.

As she turns more fully toward the Soul of Leadership program and her work in contemplative higher education, we honor the gifts she has offered so freely and the countless spiritual seekers and leaders she has supported along the way. Shalem is stronger, more grounded, and more spacious because of her service.

With heartfelt appreciation,
The Shalem Board of Directors



Pat Franklin *Shalem Board Member*

Over the last year, I have served as Shalem's treasurer and a board member where I collaborate with a committed team of staff and board members to monitor and manage the resources that support the programs that the Shalem community values. I am also a mother, grandmother, friend, and neighbor. I work as a public health scientist, teacher, mentor, and leader. While each of these roles differ, a common source centers me - the internal space where I listen to, and honor Divine love. Similarly, members of the Shalem community, program participants – past and present, hold a longing to be centered in that inner source of love. We share common practices in silence and contemplation and seek ongoing community to nurture this source. Yet I am reminded that as we prepare for Shalem's leadership transition, we are also called to engage fully in the communal aspects of Shalem.

The Shalem website states, "Classically, it [contemplation] means immediate open presence in the world, directly perceiving and lovingly responding to things as they really are." The website description continues, "Thus, contemplation is not necessarily quiet and still. It may just as well be very active and noisy." These words are especially true at this time in Shalem's life course. After 50 years of nurturing and sustaining a community of people with shared contemplative practices, Shalem is entering the next phase and is called to be present to a world where much is uncertain and continuously evolving. The planned transition from one executive director to another invites us to hold space and remain open to what is yet to be named in Shalem's future. At this transitional time, I am anchored by the words of Nan Merrill:

O my Friend, counsel and guide me as I create a sacred space within my heart, a place where Divine love reigns. Quell the noisy fears; teach me to see with the eye of the heart, to hear with the heart's ear. May beauty replace the squalor of unbridled thoughts, may peace become my constant companion.

(Meditations and Mandalas: Simple Songs for the Spiritual Life. 1999)

May this spirit embrace us as we move through the next year of leadership transition. May we welcome the next phase of the Shalem Institute with new vision, leadership, and a broadening and deepening sense of community. May divine beauty and peace continue to shape our shared future.

With gratitude and hope,
Patricia (Pat) Durkin Franklin



Wholeness: A Dream for Our Time

Margaret Benefiel

Executive Director

In Shalem programs, we often introduce the meaning and pronunciation of the word "Shalem" by referring to its context in the Hebrew scriptures. "Shalem" means "wholeness," as in the Hebrew phrase "Lev Shalem," a "whole heart." Closely related to "Shalom," the Hebrew word for "peace," "Shalem" complements "Shalom" in envisioning a world of God's dream for us.

God's dream of peace and wholeness is far bigger than our dreams. And God invites us to dream big, too, to see beyond what humans are doing to what God is doing (as Spiritual Guidance Program Director Emerita Liz Ward often reminds us). What a dream God has for our world at this time! A dream of wholeness. What would a "whole country" look like for each of our countries? What would a "whole world" look like for all of us Earthlings? What might "whole communities" look like? Or "whole organizations?" Or "whole families?" Or "whole people?"

I was in South Africa recently for the second residency of Shalem's Soul of Leadership program there, and my co-leaders and I visited the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation. A leader who combined deep prayer, extraordinary imagination, and

“A whole heart. Lev Shalem. Wholeness.”

profound courage, Archbishop Tutu saw beyond the confines of the world's construction of reality. Tutu wanted God's dream to be known on earth, in contrast to man's ways that had constructed the system of apartheid in South Africa. As a Black man living under apartheid rule, Tutu prayed to see the world as God desires it to be, and he was given a dream of a world of wholeness instead of the division of apartheid, the dream of a world of justice and freedom for all. Tutu's commitment to regular listening prayer opened him to the Holy Spirit, resulting in not only vision, but also to the fruits of the Spirit: peace in place of anxiety, joy in place of despair, power in place of powerlessness, courageous action in place of paralyzed fear. In the midst of impossible challenges, Tutu experimented boldly. He worked with others to build community. He led his clergy to stand between police and threatened township residents, he spoke out against the oppressive regime, he led the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Holy Spirit gave him and his colleagues what they needed to transform their world. All the ends of the earth were in awe of what God did through him and the community he built.

Desmond Tutu is just one example of a human manifesting God's dream of wholeness on earth. Along with many biblical examples, we have been given the gift of many examples throughout history, with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Fannie Lou Hamer, and Bishop Marianne Budde as a few recent ones.

God is always seeking people to work through. God's dream of wholeness can only be manifested when people open themselves to being God's hands and feet in the world. In this time and place, how does God want to work through us? How are we to be God's hands and feet?

Maybe you're being called to help make a country whole, as Desmond Tutu was.

Maybe you're being called to help nurture wholeness in a community, as Katy Gaughan, who is on the Shalem staff is, in her community of Greenbelt, MD. She builds community, promotes wellness, and builds relationships through her drum circles and community service there.

Right now, a number of you are helping to nurture wholeness at Shalem during this time of transition. One constant at

Shalem over the years has been a desire to stay rooted and grounded in God. During this year of transition, some of us on the staff and board have been re-reading the Founder's Report, a document written at the time of our founder, Tilden Edwards' retirement, by Tilden and others. It provides a reminder of the deep grounding which has stayed the same over the years, even as there have been changes in how that grounding is manifested in different times and places. In the Founder's Report, Tilden quotes a review of *Holy Meeting Ground*, a book about Shalem's first twenty years. The reviewer (from the Journal of Ecumenical Studies) observed:

"Along the way one gets a sense of how important this [Shalem] community has been to its members, how they work at not idolizing it, and how genuinely they try to keep prayer primary and trust in God's guidance normative."

Over the years, I have experienced all these things. I have experienced the importance of the Shalem community for myself, for the Shalem staff

and board, for the Shalem Society, and for the wider Shalem community. I have also seen us work at not idolizing that community, realizing that we need to keep God, and not other people, at the center. And I have seen us genuinely seek to keep prayer primary and trust in God's guidance normative. I see the board seeking to do this now. I see the staff seeking to do this now. Please do keep the board and staff in prayer at this important time. After I retire at the end of 2025, Pam Leland will start serving on January 1, 2026, as interim executive director for six months. During that time, the board will solidify a job description, advertise for, and then choose a long-term Executive Director who will start in the summer of 2026.

Might you be called to help nurture wholeness at Shalem during this time? Perhaps you are called to be part of the Shalem Society Leadership team. Perhaps you are called to serve on a regional team. Perhaps you are called to be on a prayer team for one of our programs. Perhaps you are

called to make Shalem a higher philanthropic priority during this time of greater need.

At this time when God's dream of wholeness is so greatly needed everywhere in our world, I invite you to ask, "God, what is your dream for me? How am I to be part of your dream for wholeness in our world? Is it in my country? Is it in my community? Is it in my family? Is it at Shalem? Is it some combination of the above? Is it somewhere else?" We can continue to trust the God who has brought us this far to continue to walk with us. We can continue to know that God invites us into God's big dream, God invites us to see beyond what people are doing to see what God is doing, and to step into that big dream with courage and trust.



How are We to Center Down?

Leonard McMahon

Shalem Program Staff

In the fog of life today, in times that seem unprecedented, during a month dedicated to remembrance, I strive to recall that I am not alone; that, in fact, I am in good company, not knowing my next step or the way forward. Others before me, people I celebrate, some well-known and others obscure, also had to discern life without any more knowledge or insight than I possess now. How did they do it? What magic did they harness to make their lives the beacons they are today?

The truth is, they were asking the same of their forebears. They too wanted a moral education. They too wanted to know how to make a way out of no way. It is as Howard Thurman says of each generation, “The questions persist: what are we doing with our lives? —what are the motives that order our days? What is the end of our doings? Where are we

trying to go? Where do we put the emphasis and where are our values focused? For what end do we make sacrifices?”

Thurman names the problem: “The streets of our minds seethe with endless traffic; Our spirits resound with clashing, with noisy silences, While something deep within hungers and thirsts for the still moment and the resting lull.” He suggests that out of the collective dilemma comes something personal: “Where is my treasure and what do I love most in life? What do I hate most in life and to what am I true?”

For each generation of African Americans, the questions persist, and for each generation, the response, thank goodness, also persists. In the midst of it all, Thurman concludes, “How good it is to center down!” African Americans have made it thus far along the way, with their sanity intact, by centering down. “As we listen, floating up through all of the jangling echoes of our turbulence, there is a sound of another kind—A deeper note which only the stillness of the heart makes clear. It moves directly to the core of our being. Our questions are answered, our spirits refreshed, and we move back into the

traffic of our daily round. With the peace of the Eternal in our step.”

The moral genius of the African American tradition is to invite a third party, the Divine, into a strained conversation with an unwelcoming world. We see it in the intercessory prayers of mothers and grandmothers, in the irresistible creativity of artists, in the compelling courage of seekers and tellers of truth, and in the dignified diligence of everyday people. This is what it means to center down. It is to seek what has always been there—occluded, buried beneath disrespect, overwork, anxiety, fear, pain—and what will always be there, for each generation as it engages the questions anew.

My time with Shalem is one way I pay homage to this tradition. As an experienced facilitator for the Group Spiritual Direction workshops, I practice and teach how to invite a third party into the group conversation, how to center down, and how to trust what’s in the stillness. Shalem is a voice in the wilderness of our world right now, and group spiritual direction is a way for each of us to summon our own voice, and to tell our own truth. God knows we need it. As for me, I will continue to center down, and hopefully, prayerfully shine a light for some future soul.





Clergy Spiritual Life and Leadership

Kathie Nycklemoe

Co-Director of Going Deeper: Clergy Spiritual Life and Leadership program

From its inception the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation has been dedicated to teaching, supporting, and sharing the gift of contemplative prayer. Twenty-five years ago I was the beneficiary of this dedication, and I can't imagine navigating life and ministry without it. Imperfect in my own practice and listening, I always benefit from listening for God with others. I can't imagine serving as a pastor these past several years as so much has changed and challenged our listening for God's faithful presence. I have heard this from so many other faith leaders, called upon to lead others who long for God's presence.

I have witnessed the life-giving gift of contemplation and action taking root in the lives of participants of the Clergy Spiritual Life and Leadership Program, from their application essays through their final projects. How can one lead when feeling lost? How can one feed when starving? How can one pray when God seems to be silent?

Deep connection is the key phrase here. Throughout the program participants gather to listen together for the Spirit's presence. Through presentations, prayer, worship, and silence they are fed, and return to their ministry context to share in their listening for God. Peer groups are formed with the intent to support one another. Daily prayer, inclusive and vital readings, a silent retreat, meeting with a spiritual director (among other things) are expected. Through it all, the Spirit is present – guiding, supporting, stretching, loving. Perhaps Rumi's poem, "A Community of the Spirit," names this best.

A COMMUNITY OF SPIRIT
*There is a community of the spirit.
Join it.*
*Feel the delight of walking down a noisy street.
Feel the delight of being the noise.
Close both eyes to see with the other eye.
Open your hands if you want to be held.
Consider what you have been doing.
Why do you stay?
For the security of having food?
Admit it. Here is the better arrangement.
Give up this life.
Get a hundred new lives.
Sit down in this circle.
Quit acting like a wolf.
Instead, feel the shepherd's love.
Be empty of worry.
Think of who created thought.
Why do you stay in prison
when the door is wide open?
Move outside the tangle of fear-thinking.
Live in silence.
Flow down
and down
into the ever-widening rings of being.*
Mewlana Jalaluddin Rumi

Living in the Tension

Jackson Droney

*Director of Operations and
Online Learning*

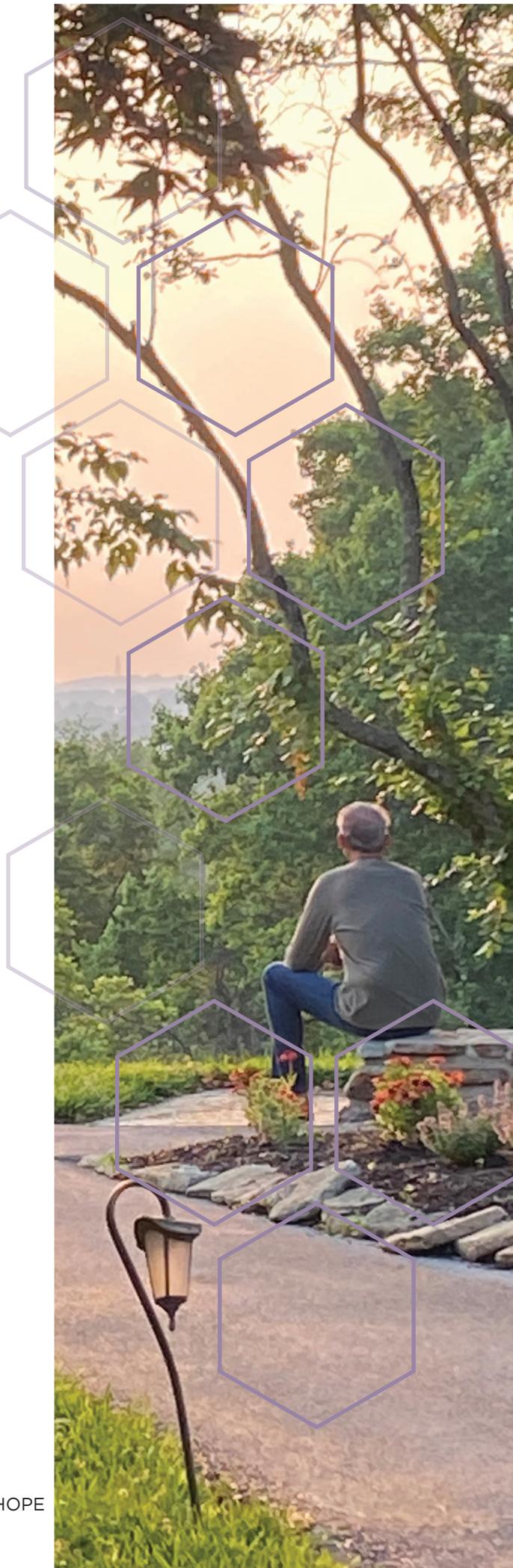
As I consider the Vision Statement of Vision 2025, I've been particularly drawn to the final two words these days: "courageous action." At Shalem, our programs nurture people's "spiritual growth" and "deep connection" so that "courageous action" can bring the individual and world closer to wholeness (with Spirit's initiative and support). In some ways Shalem can be like a labyrinth. People journey to us to encounter the Holy and one another more deeply and then journey back out to the world shaped by their experience, and because of it can't help but make the world around them different – more whole – as a result.

When I think of courageous action, I'm immediately drawn to big names and dramatic acts of courage that have captured my imagination. But as I consider that notion further, I know that contemplative courageous action comes in many, mostly unseen and unnoticed, forms. Courageous action doesn't need to make the news, win an award, or even get a thank you.

People who leave our programs go back to their families, workplaces, congregations, and communities with perhaps a stronger sense of how to encounter the Holy and invite others to do the same. I think of spiritual directors who meet with directees month in and month out to support their journeys. I think of retreat and prayer group leaders who create and sustain nourishing prayerful spaces and who often won't know the impact of their work on others. I think of business executives and organizational leaders approaching thorny issues with their colleagues in a way that acknowledges Presence, ever so subtly, and the effect that has on their bottom line, yes, and also in the lives of their colleagues and those they serve. I think of parents raising their children in ways that are emotionally healthier than what they experienced – and how that impact may outlive them in ways they cannot know.

Contemplative paths are counter-cultural. Please notice that I said paths. I want to name explicitly that I don't believe there is only one contemplative path. I believe there are many traditions of spiritual contemplation and I'm grateful Shalem seeks to embrace and share that diversity and its richness.

Those myriad counter-cultural paths invite us to challenge conventional wisdom and norms. And yet, we still live in this conventional world with all its expectations. The world tells us to go faster, and contemplative paths invite us to slow down.



The world tells us to be better, and contemplative paths say you are enough. The world tells us we should have all the answers, and contemplative paths invite us to admit “I don’t know.” The world tells us to fix and solve, and contemplative paths frequently invite us to just be.

In some cases, it can be risky – dangerous even – to challenge conventional wisdom. Civil disobedience is one such example. But even small daily actions that stem from our contemplative center, from the Spirit’s leading, can be courageous. Driving the speed limit and letting the road raged drivers pass you can be courageous. Setting boundaries with our workplaces, friends, and family members can take courage. Resisting the urge to judge, to blame, and to shame also takes courage. It’s no wonder that some of the contemplative ancestors we look to were not particularly well liked or popular in their time.

Still, I am very mindful that none of us can be any one thing – of the world or on a contemplative path – all of the time. And so, at least for me, the challenge is knowing when to lean in deeper towards my contemplative longing and when I need to pull back a bit. Living in that tension and finding the right balance can be a challenge, including in my work at Shalem. As Director of Operations I work on finance, technology, and human resources – work that doesn’t always obviously lend itself to a contemplative charism. I imagine many of you

experience similar tensions.

Living in that tension during tumultuous and uncertain times in our global context can be particularly challenging. What could courageous contemplative action look like in these days? Here are three ideas from my own struggle that I offer:

1. Offer and receive grace. One of the greatest kindnesses we can offer ourselves and each other is space and understanding when the tumult of life begins to wear us down.

2. Patience. Sometimes we need or a situation needs a little more time to unfold for the path to wholeness to come into focus.

3. Gratitude. Regularly expressing gratitude to God, to ourselves, and to others can change our outlook and that of those around us.

Yes, we need to speak out and join in public protest when challenging injustice demands it. Courageous action can also look like the ways we offer grace, wait patiently, and express gratitude to each other. Sadly, our culture doesn’t always reward those behaviors, but I trust the Holy One seeks to love us in these ways and more. As I imperfectly traverse the tension between the world as it is and the world my contemplative center invites me to, I’ve found these practices to be life giving and sustaining. I wonder what practices are doing that for you in this season?

Lydia E Mercado
Board Member

*Reflections on
how Shalem lives
into the vision of a
dynamic and inclusive
community.*

The Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation offers me connections to contemplatives beyond my local community in Richmond, VA. Serving on Shalem’s Board of Directors this year has strengthened my vision of the contemplative Spirit in our country and the world. And how each one of us can become, or perhaps already is, a beacon of love, justice, peace, compassion and generosity to counter the forces of war, destruction, hate, violence, racism, greed and profiteering. My heart sings “We shall overcome, we shall live in peace, someday” as I work at Richmond Hill listening and holding space for souls seeking to find meaning and purpose amid the turmoil and demands of society.

Courageous Action

Sarah Forti

Co-Director of *Crossing the Threshold: Contemplative Foundations for Emerging Leaders*

To stand in solidarity with those being targeted by ICE.

"When the Cock Crows in America"

Jesus was sent to a for-profit prison
Snatched off the streets in broad daylight
And no one has even noticed that he's missing
But all will be revealed in time
Because he said what you do to the last and the least
Is what you've done to me and mine

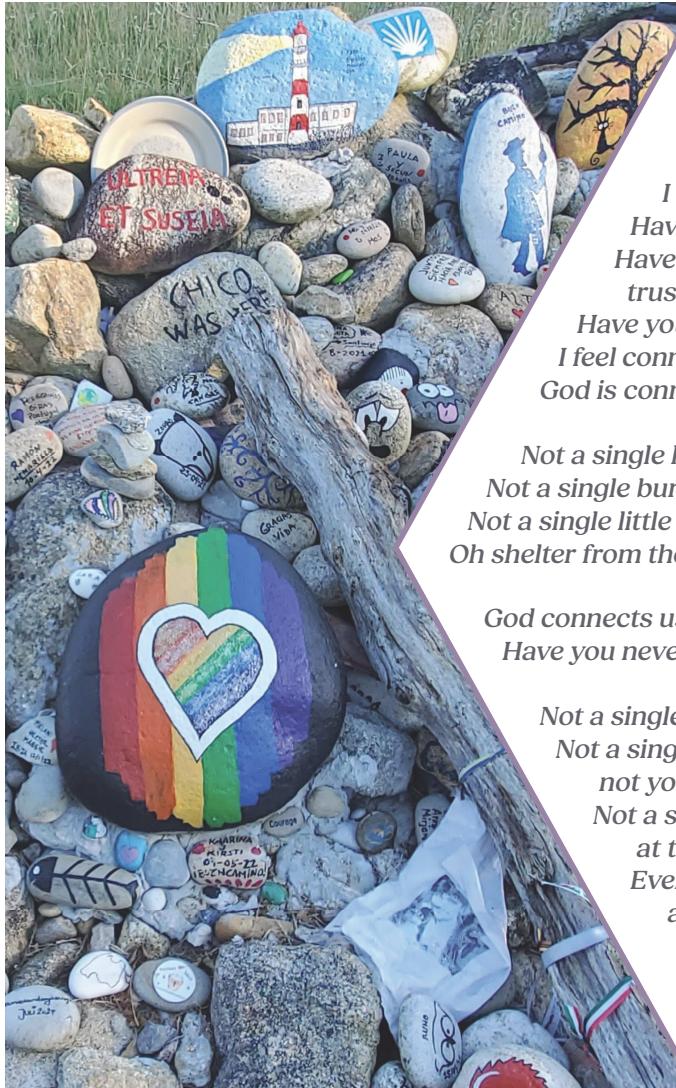
So do me a favor and heed my words
Love thy neighbor no matter what you've heard
In the streets of Heaven gold isn't worth dirt
The gems of God's heart are the people of the Earth

Where have you felt called to act with courage, compassion, or conviction? I have felt called to respond to regional and global situations this year through songwriting.

*Then I was offered seven spiritual blessings
For the flat rate of a thousand dollars
While Jesus Christ is with the poor in El Salvador
And cruelties are done in his honor*

*So do me a favor and heed my words
Love thy neighbor no matter what you've heard
In the streets of Heaven gold isn't worth dirt
The gems of God's heart are the people of the Earth*

*What will you say when they ask you if you know me
When the cock crows in America
What will you say when they hate and disown me*



To stand in solidarity with children who are bearing the burden of war in the Gaza strip.

"Not A Single Little Bird"

*I feel connected to them all, how could you not
Have you never been in a storm with no shelter
Have you never been betrayed by those you
trusted would be better*

*Have you never been walked over while others stood and watched
I feel connected to them all, how could you not
God is connected to us all*

*Not a single little bird is forgotten by God in this hurting world
Not a single burning wing, not your tired, not your lost and limping feet
Not a single little bird is forgotten by God in the land of the living
Oh shelter from the storm, let us never let go of the hope we have in you*

*God connects us to them all, how could he not
Have you never had to fly away from fire with your wings still hot*

*Not a single little bird is forgotten by God in this hurting world
Not a single burning wing, not your tired,
not your lost and limping feet
Not a single little bird is forgotten by God
at the throne of the lamb
Every single burning tear will be wiped
away by Christ's own hand on you*

*God is connected to us all, little bird
And your suffering is not your fault, little bird*

Embodied Vision

Carole Crumley

Program Staff

Recently, I visited friends for a weekend in West Virginia. On Sunday morning, we went to church. After a 30-minute drive, we came upon the local Episcopal church, nestled into the hillside. "Life is old there," sang John Denver, and this church was old. It looked like it could fall down at any moment. But no! Inside, the sanctuary was startlingly fresh, filled with the anticipation of worship. Everything was dusted, polished, ready and glowing.

On the wall behind the last pew, was an exquisite, three-foot-tall icon of the Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus. This iconic Mary seemed to preside from the back of the church, blessing the whole space with her silent presence, even as she tenderly held Jesus in her arms and offered him to us. I wondered how this icon, a loving invitation into the mystery of God's presence, had come to live in a church in rural West Virginia. Perhaps the Virgin Mary is showing up everywhere these days?

Soon the priest came to the front of the church. She was very young, visibly pregnant – a living icon of new birth. She began by calmly inviting everyone to take a few long, deep breaths together. Breathing together seemed natural, the right way to begin. Then she extended the silence, inviting us to open our hearts in prayer for our neighbors, friends, loved ones, and for ourselves. Lastly, she asked that we expand

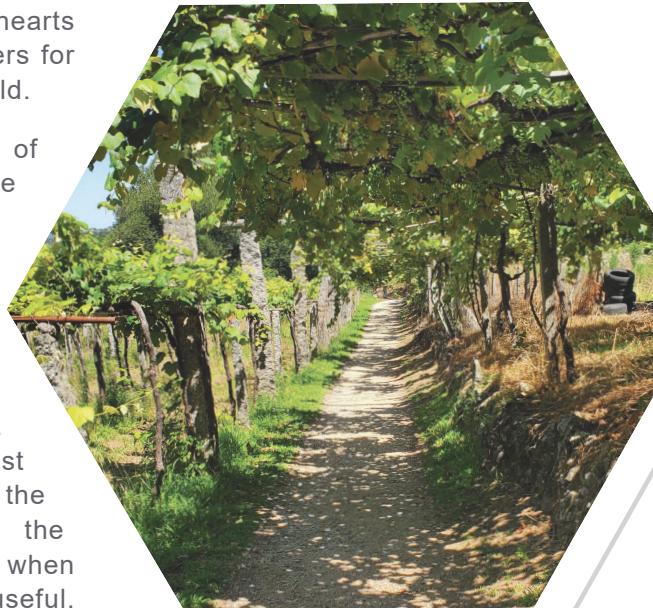
“Country roads, take me home to the place I belong... Bill Danoff, Taffy Nivert, & John Denver

the boundaries of our hearts and silently offer our prayers for creation and the whole world.

After several minutes of gathered silence, the opening hymn began. The church had no organ or other musical instrument, and yet there was music. I twisted and turned, trying to find the source. Evidently, a previous organist had played and recorded the music to every hymn in the hymnal, foreseeing a time when this resource might be useful. A visionary musician plus this recording, a fine sound system, and a tech-friendly parishioner were all that was needed for great music. We sang with all our might.

After the service, I sat with this young priest for a few minutes, thanking her for her inspired leadership – the opening words and silence, the invitation to breathe together, the leaning into God's presence. It had touched me deeply. I asked how she was envisioning her ministry, being so young with a newborn on the way. Smiling, she said she considered herself "a priest for the future church." As I looked at her, I realized she was embodying the church she envisioned, a church filled with new life and sacred presence.

Our conversation reminded me of Shalem's original vision. We trusted that the potential impact of



the contemplative way was for both the transformation of individual lives and the systemic transformation of institutions. We believed that as more and more people discovered contemplation as a way of being and were guided by their inner experience of God, emboldened action would naturally flow into the world. Later, we simply named this vision "contemplative living and leadership."

For over 50 years, we prayed for the grace to embody the vision. And there it was right before my eyes, in this little church in rural West Virginia, Shalem's vision being made real – the interweaving of worship with contemplative prayer and practices for the ongoing transformation of individual lives, the Church, and the world.

Rooted in Truth: Reclaiming Contemplative Spirituality for Justice and Wholeness

ArDonna D. Hamilton with loving assistance from Morenike Oyebode and Tasharah Person
Program Registrar

Contemplative spirituality is often misunderstood. It is not about retreating from the world to commune with God, but rather about finding the strength and courage to engage the world more fully. Alice Walker names this in her definition of womanist: "Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female. Not separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist..."[1] The fifth guiding principle in Shalem's Vision 2025 also speaks to this: "As beloved community, we will face our fears and act with compassion and

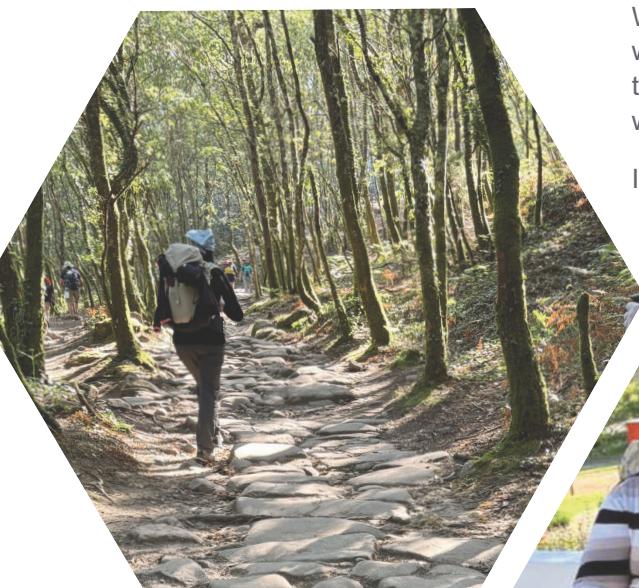
“ *the call to reclaim a life of contemplative spirituality – one that nurtures the soul to survive and inspires a powerful commitment toward just actions and truth-telling – resonates deeply within me and I pray it does within each of you as well.* **”**

courage to challenge injustice, dismantle systems of inequity, and pursue reconciliation." While Black History Month is imperative in celebrating and preserving the rich legacies of African Americans in the United States, it need not be limited to February. Black history is American history and our commitment to justice, equity, and reconciliation must be lived as a daily spiritual practice.

With the inception of Shalem's work with CounterPart Consulting to help us on our DEIB journey, we begin this devotion.

I was groomed toward silence. As a Black woman growing in an anti-black and patriarchal

world, learning to swallow words and my pride to focus on allowing God to fight my battles was a matter of survival. However, survival at what cost? Privileging silence redirected my rage at the injustices of the world into my interior life, causing extra stress and "weathering," or wear and tear on the body, that manifested in an autoimmune disease. In her book, *Violence and Theology*, Cheryl Kirk-Duggan defines violence as "that which harms" and is "relational." [2] She specifies that violence can be "internalized" and embedded in rituals that obscure its effects, offering the following: "If we are not aware of the violence or we have become anesthetized to its existence, what impact does this have on our bodies and psyches at a cellular level?" [3] While numerous studies confirm the positive effects of contemplative spiritual practices, they often do not consider the violence of privileging internalized piety and silence at the expense of speaking truth to power. As I navigate the intersections of ministry, theological studies, and my identity as a Black woman in this precarious moment, the call to reclaim a life of contemplative



spirituality – one that nurtures the soul to survive and inspires a powerful commitment toward just actions and truth-telling – resonates deeply within me and I pray it does within each of you as well.

My ancestors, particularly my grandma Vallie, taught me as a toddler that when chaos rises, stillness, prayer, and the wisdom of nature can be a source of empowerment. As I waddled alongside her on daily walks in my Velcro shoes, it was not the

words nor the thoughts that stuck, but the wind, the trees, and the birds she invited me to marvel at that embedded themselves into my sacred memory. Through the wind, my grandma taught me that God's ruah is ever-present. Through the trees, she taught that their interconnected roots exemplify Ubuntu, a Zulu proverb that teaches, "I am because you are." Today, I remain rooted in the sacred wisdom of my grandmother and other ancestors— recognizing that contemplation is not a method

of escape, but a way to reach deep into the inner call to listen, feel, resist, and speak. I suspect my grandmother's spirit knew this, anchoring me in truth that neither time nor silence can steal from me. As the wind carries her breath and the breath of all our ancestors, may this same wind carry us too. May this wind carry us towards wholeness, courage, and the unshakable call to bear witness to inward sacredness and sacredness within the world. Amen and àṣẹ.

Spirit-Inspired Housing

Jean Sweeney

Former Program Staff

In September 2025, I sat at a tent-covered construction site listening in awe to the kudos for the complex collaborations and partnerships it takes to build a large apartment building for affordable housing in a beautiful urban center just outside Washington, DC. Moments later, I was in a hard hat, shovel in hand, pitching dirt for a 432-unit building being named The Sweeney. It was surreal.

Thirty-six years earlier, four couples in a monthly study/pray/share/eat/drink group had read a US Bishops' report on Economic Justice for All. This put us in touch with the need in our own county, where teachers, firefighters, and some of our own adult children could not afford to rent.

We formed a non-profit which we named Arlington Partnership for Affordable Housing (logo: "In the shelter of each other, the people live"). I remember the quiet day at the beach when we let the name emerge. We bought one apartment with sixteen units and partnered with many. In 2025, there are twenty-six buildings.

I remember feeling that housing wasn't my own specific call. Five of the eight founders spent hundreds of hours persevering to get this APAH off the ground, and I felt a bit guilty. But what was my call?

Love. Oneness with the Holy. Presence to the hard things. Holding to God's way in the world. Joining the LOVE, VISION, JUSTICE already going on. I have been learning more about allowing the love to flow.

You won't be surprised when I tell you that three of us in this couples group were active participants in the life of Shalem: Dolores Leckey, who hung with Tilden in early contemplative prayer groups, Rhoda Nary, who was a peer group facilitator in the Spiritual Guidance Program for many years, and I. And yes, all of the founders have or will have a name on a building. But make no mistake, the Spirit flow is so much greater than we are. Thanks be to God.

Note: APAH is now True Ground Housing Partners, as it goes beyond Arlington now at Truegroundhousing.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)

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Natalie Brunson
Linda Bryant
Holly Cameron
Winston B. Charles

Lorie Conway
Nathaniel Corwin
Mary Consiglio
Robin Cowherd
Emily D'Andrea
Anita Davidson
Nancy Flinchbaugh
Larry Fourman
Sidney Fowler
Kate Fox
Patricia Franklin
Robert Gardenhire
Thomas Gaughan
Sharon Glass
Grace Grant
Ann & John Hisle
Deborah Jarvis
Scott Landis
Terry Lockridge
Westina Matthews
Jo-Ann Murphy
John & Karin Nurnberger
Mary Overholt
Joseph Pae
Barbara Pendergast
Jane Ritchie
Anne Roser
Frank Sasinowski
Constance Seraphine
Jane Sharp
Timothy Teates
Frances Thayer
Barbara Vellmerk-Halpern
George Welch
Nicolette Wellington
Tonya Wenger
Gladys Whitehouse
Katherine Young

SHALEM SUSTAINERS

*Those individuals who support
Shalem's ministry through a
monthly donation.*

Eleanor & Robert Abarno
David Andrews
Bill Bone
Judith Blanchard
Linda Bryant
DeBorah Cannady
Dennis Cho
Greg & Carole Jackson
Cochran
Anne Crosthwait
Anita Davidson
Rodney Dean
Amy & Steve Duncan
Anne-Marie Drew
Jehanne Gheith
Fereshteh Hale
Nancy Harrison
Janet Hudson
Carol Ingells
Emily Jones
Albert J. Keeney
Carol Leach
Karol Libbey
Bruce Lugin
Susan Marie
Leslie Miller
Sally Nettles
Dawn Peck
Patience Robbins
Adela Rose
Janet Salbert
June M. Schulte
Jane Sharp
Jessica Smith
Jo Ann Staebler
Kirk Squires
Diane Thomas Mitchell
Elizabeth Tuckerman
Nancy Weir
Jane Williams
Daniel Yi

LEADERSHIP CIRCLE

*Individuals giving gifts of
\$5,000 and above.*

N. Franklin Adkinson, Jr.
Ann Akers
Anonymous
CeCe & Gerry Balboni
Margaret Benefiel
Rosann Bocciarelli
Karen Colenbrander
Susan Dillon
Roderick Dugliss
Sharon Dunn
Tilden Edwards
Tom Frost
Mark and Brigid Goodwin
Lois Lindbloom
Laura Neal
Clare Openshaw
Pat Pettrash
Frank Sasinowski
Stacy Schroeder
Howard Snyder
Ann Stanford
Sarah Willie-LeBreton

SCHOLARSHIP GIFTS

Margaret Benefiel
Children of Carol
Eckerman
Karen Colenbrander

Sue Czarnetzky
Nancy Weir
Jacqueline Patt

THE SHALEM FUND

Norman Anderson Estate
JoAnn Klink Estate
Joan Stogis Estate

GRANTS

The Bunting Foundation
Center for Action and
Contemplation, Inc.

Eighth Day Faith
Community
Imago Dei Fund



If you are not on this list of names and feel you should be, please let us know.

VOLUNTEERS & IN-KIND DONATIONS

Shalem's Board of Directors, who donated their time and talent in many different ways throughout the year.

Shalem's non-board committee members: Ann Akers, Susie Dillon, and Susan Butler-Jones, who served Shalem through their committee work.

Margaret Benefiel, Bryan Berghoef, Lorie Conway, Jackson Droney, Sarah Forti, Katy Gaughan, Carolyn Harrison, Salli Hartman, Lita Kurth, Lisa Mage, Nan Weir, Susan Marie, Lisa Martin, Julie Pennington-Russell, and Erlinda Perlado-Mertens, whose photographs grace these pages, our website, our monthly eNews, our Facebook page, and other places.

Patience Robbins for her coordination of the weekly Prayers for the World and for others who have provided their leadership this year: Dirkje Legerstee, Tom Frost, Diane Mitchell, and Carol Martin.

Rod Dugliss and Scotty Landis, for coordinating the prayer leaders for Prayers for Hope and Healing and the following leaders: Mary Beene, Liedeke Bulder, Anita Davidson, Catherine Morgan, Pat Mousaw, Kevin Omi, and Celpa Sands.

Those who planned the Midwest Region's Advent Silent Retreat: Lauren Morton, Nan Weir, Liz Kuhn, and Anita Davidson.

Mentors and group facilitators for Crossing the Threshold: Althea Banda-Hansmann, A Y Bryant, Peter Crooke, Jackson Droney, Rachel Field, Liz Forney, Andrea Noel, Mike Palmiter, Dawn Peck, Phillip Stephens, and Ron Wells.

Those who keep in contact with, and hold in prayer, recent program participants: Spiritual Guidance Program: Eleanor Abarno, Bob Abarno, Rachel Bauman, Lara Bolger, Robbin Brent, Cindi Bryant, Darlene Carlson, Elaine Dent, Susan Etherton, Suzanne Foehl, Sarah Forti, Pat George, Deb Gries, Valerie Harrison, Renee Regacho-Anaclerio, Adela Rose, and Jean Sweeney.

Those who have shared their original reflections with us through a blog or eNews article: Margaret Benefiel, Bryan Berghoef, Adam Bucko, Lorie Conway, Aryn Davis, Claire Dodd, Jackson Droney, Rod Dugliss, Cindy Enger, Bonnie Epps-Burgess, Sarah Forti, ArDonna Hamilton, Jiyoung Holt, Prisca Lee-Pae, Justin Lowery, Lisa Mage, Rhonda V. Magee, Leonard McMahon, Phillip Stephens, Ani Vidrine, and Ronald Wells.

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

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, Anita Davidson, Amy Duncan, Steve Duncan, Nancy Flinchbaugh, Christina Gruber Neufeld, David Jadlocki, Nan Weir.

Qigong Leadership: Rich Plant (via video)

Simple Presence Facilitators: David Andrews, Katie Archibald-Woodward, Jiyeon Bae, Peter Bauman, Linda Bryant, Marilyn Burrell, Anita Davidson, Barb Davis, Diane DeSieno, Denise Diaab, Amy Duncan, Steve Duncan, Gene Foehl, Suzanne Foehl, Tom Frost, Christina Gruber Neufeld, Sonya Green, Fereshteh Hale, Barbara Hanna, David Jadlocki, Kathy Kohl, Geja Laan, Shirley Larson, Julie Mark, Peg Marose, Mary McCarty, Leigh Ann Min, Lauren Morton, Mary Pat Mulligan, Sally Nettles, Bill Parker, Anne Peacock, Dawn Peck, Muri Pugh, David Robinson, Scott Rohr, Robin Seiler, Amy Stadler, John Titus, Nan Weir, Ron Wells.

Following the Heart of my Beloved

Elizabeth Anderson

“Shalem” has great meaning to me. Norman B. Anderson, my husband of almost 40 years, was a donor and participant.

Norman attended retreats and workshops. He received and read emails with Wednesday Wisdom, Prayers for the World, Shalem eNews, and announcements and invitations to join enriching activities. I discovered thousands of wonderful emails on his laptop, dated back to 2013.

The Shalem Institute was the hub of my husband’s expanding and evolving return to Christian service, part of his plan following an extraordinary career as an academic clinical psychologist and a national health leader.

Raised in North Carolina by two prominent Baptist ministers, spirituality was in Norman’s DNA. His older brother, in fact, became an ordained minister. For many years, leadership was Norman’s “ministry.” Always affiliated with a church, Norman carried his quiet, resilient presence into every space he entered, whether the White House or a basketball court.

A daily meditator since his 20s, Norman completed the UCLA School of Medicine’s “Training in Mindfulness Facilitation” program in 2016. He incorporated mindfulness practices into his leadership programs. Building the Inner Capacity to Lead was the slogan of his consulting practice.

Norman had an interspirituality orientation, rooted in Christ’s

teachings, and Christian-based contemplative practices were his passion. In 2018, he successfully completed Shalem’s program on leading contemplative prayer groups and retreats. He added these to his consulting practice, while still a full-time faculty member. Once retired, he wanted to be a spiritual director, and was exploring training possibilities.

During the 2023 Thanksgiving break, Norman elected to have a partial knee replacement to continue golf and tennis with less pain.

An unforeseen, avoidable event during surgery exposed him to infection and required a second surgery within a month. Facing unexpected and rather dire outcomes, Norman held fast to his faith in God. He recovered well from the rigorous, invasive treatment for the infection and the second surgery, and was able to return to driving and walking our dog. Even so, Norman concluded that we should return promptly to Metropolitan DC to be closer to his family, our friends, and a wider range of healthcare options.

Norman was always the person to say, “the good thing is ____” when something unfortunate happened. One day he walked into the kitchen after speaking to Shalem, and he was excited and happy for the first time in a long



time. He said, “The good thing is I will now be able to attend Shalem’s spiritual directors’ program! This will be perfect.”

However, it wasn’t to be. Something else unforeseen happened on Feb 29th. Pulmonary embolisms, undetected in the ER, caused his shocking death within hours of hospitalization.

Norman had made bequests to Shalem. I knew what Shalem meant to him, and that his plans to return there provided his final glimmers of hope.

Estate work was grueling and hampered by investment firm privacy protocols. Although I am his trustee, it took months for me to confirm his Shalem bequests. I became determined to follow his heart by also including Shalem in my own estate plans.

I am who I am because of Norman’s love and faith. Following his heart doesn’t stop with his death—or mine.

**MAKE A GIFT TODAY AT
DONATE.SHALEM.ORG**

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!

SHALEM SHEKINAH SOCIETY

The Shekinah Society is for those individuals who have put Shalem in their wills for the special support and care of Shalem's future. We'd like to thank you and welcome you as a Shekinah Society member!

N. Franklin Adkinson, Jr.
Mrs. Norman B. Anderson
Anonymous
Margaret Bullitt-Jonas
Jean Crawford
John Denham
Rosemary Dickerson
Susan Dillon
Tilden Edwards
Susan & Jon Etherton

Alan Evans
Judith Favor
Anne Findlay-Chamberlain
& D. Rodney Chamberlain
Suzanne Foehl
Mark & Brigid Goodwin
Linda M. Kapurch
Joann Klink
Kirby Lewis
Sandra Mackie

Monica Maxon
Carl McColman
Kathleen Moloney-Tarr
K. Sheila Noyes
Linda Allport Neumaier
Mary-Louise O'Day
Clare Openshaw
Laurence Pagnoni
Leah Rampy
Lisa Richey

Lyta Seddig
Betty Stoddard
Jan Thurston
Linda Toia
Nan Weir
Emily Wilmer
Sandra Hay Wilson



STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION & ACTIVITIES

The Condensed Financial Statements shown below were derived from the audited financial statements of the Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation, Inc for the year ended June 30, 2025 and the reviewed financial statements for the year ended June 30, 2024. 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, 2025 and 2024

ASSETS	2025 Audited	2024 Reviewed
CURRENT ASSETS	\$1,523,007	\$1,359,149
INVESTMENTS	2,609,052	2,339,743
FIXED ASSETS	13,826	18,648
CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVABLE (L/T)	-	-
RIGHT OF USE ASSET	6,364	44,313
OTHER ASSETS	<u>13,530</u>	<u>13,530</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 4,165,779	\$ 3,775,383
LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS		
CURRENT LIABILITIES	107,796	169,906
LONG TERM LIABILITIES	-	6,364
TOTAL LIABILITIES	107,796	176,270
NEW ASSETS		
UNRESTRICTED	3,117,130	2,579,402
TEMPORARILY RESTRICTED	<u>940,853</u>	<u>1,019,711</u>
TOTAL NEW ASSETS	4,057,983	3,599,113
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	\$ 4,165,779	\$ 3,775,383

Condensed Statement of Activities for Years Ended June 30, 2025 and 2024

REVENUE AND SUPPORT	2025 Audited	2024 Reviewed
PROGRAMS, CONTRACTUAL WORK AND PUBLICATIONS	\$ 664,972	\$ 741,026
CONTRIBUTIONS	830,066	677,900
OTHER INCOME	270	5,568
INVESTMENT INCOME (LOSSES)	<u>279,352</u>	<u>300,589</u>
TOTAL REVENUE AND SUPPORT	\$ 1,774,660	\$ 1,725,083
EXPENSES		
PROGRAMS, INCLUDING ALLOCATED STAFF COMPENSATION	908,412	955,824
ADMINISTRATION:		
STAFF COMPENSATION & BENEFITS	133,363	139,406
RENT AND OTHER	129,625	115,486
FUNDRAISING EXPENSES	<u>144,390</u>	<u>193,735</u>
TOTAL EXPENSES	1,315,790	1,404,451
TOTAL INCREASE (DECREASE) IN NET ASSETS	458,870	320,632
NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR	3,599,113	3,278,481
NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR	\$ 4,057,983	\$ 3,599,113

2024-2025 SHALEM BOARD AND STAFF

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Tatiana Bien-Aime
Laura Brokaw
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Natalie Cone
Laura Lee Ernst
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Patricia Franklin
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Lydia Mercado
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Brenda Bertrand
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Francie Thayer
Elizabeth Tuckerman
Elmor van Staden
Andrea "Ani" Vidrine
Judy Walsh-Mellett
Liz Ward
Nan Weir
Matthew Wright

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Margaret Benefiel

Director of Operations & Online Learning

Jackson Droney

Director of Administration

Christine Jeffrey

Communication Coordinator

Tom Sasinowski

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Lorie Conway
Aryn K. Davis
Sarah Forti
Emily Johnson Kellar
Amy Molina-Moore
Kathie Nycklemoe
Peter Nycklemoe
Julie Pennington-Russell
Phillip Stephens

Program Administrators & Registrars

Anna Franklin
Katy Gaughan
Michelle Geuder
ArDonna Hamilton
Christine Jeffrey

Outside Accountant

Laura Caperton

Bookkeeper

Stacy Rancourt

Founder & Senior Fellow

Tilden Edwards

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 times, and spiritual direction.

Nurturing the Call: Spiritual Guidance Program

Nurturing the Call offers in-depth support for 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.

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 foundation for their lives.



Upcoming Pilgrimages

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

APRIL 14-24, 2026, ASSISI, ITALY. Experience the awe-inspiring town of Assisi where pilgrims have sought wisdom for centuries.

An Anchor for the Soul: Iona Pilgrimage

MAY 19-27, 2026, IONA, SCOTLAND. Experience the spiritual treasures of this sacred island and draw on Celtic wisdom and vision for new life and fresh possibilities.

On the Camino: A Pilgrimage to Remember, Release & Re-imagine

JULY 17-26, 2026, SPAIN. Join the centuries of pilgrims who have walked the Way of St. James - the Camino de Santiago - for spiritual deepening, healing, and inspiration.

OFFICE INFORMATION

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1226 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20005
(301) 897-7334; Fax: (202) 595-0336

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9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
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DESIGN BY: Jill Beebe, BE INSPIRED 