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February 5, 2021

Dear Amy,

Congratulations on your acceptance to Shalem's Spiritual Guidance Program, Class of 2022. The Admissions Committee is grateful that the Holy One has drawn you to our program nurturing this prayerful ministry at this time in your journey. We hope that the breath of spiritual wisdom and the depth of experiential support our program offers will nourish your spiritual heart as it opens ever more fully to our loving God and to this sacred call. We look forward to journeying with you in the weeks and months ahead as you are blessed by the Spirit's movement in this ancient ministry of holy listening.

The Admissions Committee is touched by your beautiful contemplative application and the glowing recommendations of those who know you well and are aware of your gifts for spiritual companionship. Please give Alan Seale, Harriotte Coke, and Nayiri Karjian our sincere thanks for their thoughtful, encouraging recommendations. Their strong support as well as your own prayerful reflections made our discernment easy.

We are moved by your desire to stay deeply grounded in God, your desire to expand hearts through contemplative awareness, your compassion, and your humble willingness to learn. We love your mature self-awareness as manifest when you share the following insights:

I believe that God has called me to this ministry. If not, I would not be applying to this program. I strive always to accompany those I companion in a constant discovery mode, inviting them/us to get out of our own way and allow God to be our Guide. I am able to set aside the tendency to want to solve the problem or simply make someone feel better, asking God to speak through me in the questions I pose and the prayers I share. Because spiritual direction is so countercultural, I long to practice this ministry of holy listening and prayer with others who also feel called to it so that I may continue to grow and deepen my relationship with God and all of God's creation.

We are glad that you have a rich history of receiving formal spiritual direction since, as you already know, having this lived experience is an important gift for one offering spiritual guidance. We are pleased that you already have two directees to journey with during the program. As you already understand, these formal guidance sessions are meant to be monthly meetings of one-on-one formal spiritual direction with a focus on the directees' personal relationship with God as it is reflected and challenged in all aspects of their life and prayer.

We invite you to contact SGP graduate Cindi Bryant at encbryant@msn.com or 571.722.2376. Cindi can share with you contact information for graduates who might be interested in forming a peer group which follows the Shalem peer group guidelines and/or inviting new associates into their existing groups. The peer group is a wonderful support and a place for accountability for this ministry of holy listening.

At this time, Shalem does not feel it will be safe to offer an in-person residency in August. We ask you, therefore, to hold the ten days of our scheduled residency clear for a virtual residency from August 10 to 19. We will reduce the cost of the program by \$1,000.00 since we will not have to pay for ten days of room and board. This reduction will be distributed over all the payments of the Payment Plan you choose.

In addition, Shalem will be offering you tuition assistance for the Spiritual Guidance Program as we are impressed by the sacrifices you are willing to make for this ministry. The Tuition Reduction Committee has met, and at this time, we are able to offer you \$2,000.00 in tuition reduction.

Also, we are attaching information about grants and other ways to raise money so you can pursue other opportunities for raising money for tuition. If you are still in need after pursuing other options, please contact me since you will then be qualified for additional scholarship assistance in our multi-step process. Although we don't want money to be a block to following a call, we do hope that others will support your call, if that is possible. Please note that this tuition reduction is not reflected in the payment plan you choose when completing your commitment form. The actual amount of your payments will be calculated once you have completed the process.

To formally accept and reserve your place in the program, please complete and submit the commitment form by clicking on the following link: <https://shalem.org/1111/01/11/sgp-commitment/>. When filling out the commitment form and choosing a payment plan, **please make sure that you complete Step One: Sign and Accept so that we receive your signature and commitment form before moving on to Step 2: Choose a Payment Plan.** Please read the page carefully and contact Katy@shalem.org if you have any questions. A start-up packet of program information will be emailed to you by mid-March 2021.

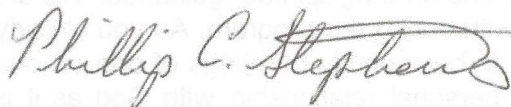
Perhaps this quote from Elizabeth of the Trinity will inspire your spiritual guidance in the weeks and months ahead:

O Unchanging One, may each minute draw me further into the depths of Your Mystery. Give peace to my soul. Make it your heaven, a home for your love, a place of rest. May I never leave you there alone; may I be totally awakened, totally trusting, adoring, opened totally to Your creative work....

O Eternal Verb, Word of God, I want to spend my life listening to you; I want to be totally teachable, to learn everything from You. Through all the nights, all the emptiness, all the powerlessness, I want to place my attention on you, and live in your great light.

Wishing you a rich and blessed spiritual journey,

Sincerely,



Phillip C. Stephens, Director
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