

Sacred Listening Circles

What is it?

As with individual spiritual direction (or companionship), the focus is on the Spirit as the “director.” It is a process where a small group gathers regularly to support each other in an ongoing responsiveness to God in all of life, based on the belief that in Christ, God enters our pain and joy. It is open to all, both lay and clergy.

Three conditions are essential to the life of the group. Each participant must be willing—

- to commit themselves to an honest relationship with God;
- to attend the meetings regularly;
- to enter into the group process through prayerful listening and response, opening their journeys for reflection with others.

Shared Desire for God

What draws people to the group is a reciprocity of desire, God’s desire and their desire. Having been touched by God’s desire, they want to make their desire for God the determining factor of all their choices. The group’s primary task is to make the shared desire explicit and to hold one another in it.

Yet as much as people know this faithful looking is why they are together and really want that for themselves and for the group, they unintentionally collude to avoid it—becoming busy about many things besides listening. A process is needed that will help people do what they want the group to do. (See back of brochure for a brief description of this process.) If you have questions or want to sign-up for this adventure in the spiritual life, contact Ed at 301-766-9005 (elpoling1@gmail.com).

Dynamics of the Process

A three-hour meeting time allows space for the unfolding of the process of group spiritual direction with a group of four people (three minimum, five maximum), each open and seeking God’s best for the other. If, for example, eight enroll, all would meet together for an opening time of prayer, then go in silence to two groups, each with a trained facilitator. It is important to commit to all sessions.

LEADERSHIP

Ed Poling is a minister in the Church of the Brethren, having served congregations in Maryland and Pennsylvania. He is trained as a spiritual director by Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation (Washington, DC). Rebecca Rothenhoefer is a United Methodist layperson trained as a Group Spiritual Direction facilitator by Shalem Institute.

SCHEDULE

All meetings will be held on Tuesdays.

October 5, 2021	3:00 – 9:00 pm
(Retreat format with bag supper)	
October 19, 2021	6:00—9:00 pm
November 2, 2021	6:00—9:00 pm
December 7, 2021	6:00—9:00 pm
January 4, 2022	6:00—9:00 pm
February 1, 2022	6:00—9:00 pm
March 1, 2022	6:00—9:00 pm
April 5, 2022	6:00—9:00 pm
May 3, 2022	3:00—9:00 pm
(Retreat format with bag supper)	

The opening and closing days will be a retreat format with bag lunch.

READINGS

Each participant is asked to read & meditate with *The Sacred Art of Listening: Forty Reflections for Cultivating a Spiritual Practice* by Kay Lindahl. Copies can be ordered through Amazon.com.

COST

Participants are asked to contribute \$25.00 for this eight-month program. In addition a love offering will be taken for Haven Lutheran Church for the use of the building.

LOCATION

All sessions will be conducted at Haven Lutheran Church 1035 Haven Road Hagerstown, MD.

COVID PROTOCOLS

We request that all participants be fully vaccinated against COVID and wear a mask in the building.

REGISTRATION FORM - SACRED LISTENING CIRCLES

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Briefly answer these questions. (Please include answers on an additional sheet with this Registration Form.)

1. What has been going on in your life with God that makes you think Sacred Listening Circles might be right for you?
2. Do you have a spiritual director (companion) for yourself? Or been in a faith-sharing group? (Not required but helpful to know.) If so, what has been of most value to you?
3. What do you hope to give and receive through this experience?
4. Can you commit to all the meeting dates?

If you have questions, contact Ed at 301-766-9005 (elpoling1@gmail.com).

Please return this form and additional sheet to Ed Poling at 161 Stanford Road., Hagerstown, MD 21742

The Process

The time begins with about 20 minutes for people to gather in prayer and silence with a common desire to dedicate this time on behalf of some person or cause in our world. Out of the silence, the facilitator invites someone to begin sharing when he or she feels ready.

Sharing by one person (about 10 minutes) As each individual shares, the group listens prayerfully throughout without interruption.

Silence (3 to 4 minutes) This allows space between sharing and response for a deeper sharing to arise.

Response (about 10 minutes) This is a period for dialogue, questions and observations that have come up in the silence. The facilitator encourages caring yet honest responses, trust in God's caring love for the presenter rather than holding onto one's personal agenda for the person.

Silence (about 5 minutes) During this time people pray for the person who has just presented. The presenter may wish to make notes on what she or he heard.

The "Sharing—Silence—Response—Silence" is repeated, with a short break midway, until all members have presented.

Prayer for absent member (10 minutes) This prayer reflects that the most important thing members can do for one another is to pray, especially for one unavoidably absent. Members also pray for one another between meetings.

Reflection on the time together (10 minutes) This reflection is not meant to analyze, but to provide a gentle noticing, God and the group together, an honest focus on the group's attentiveness to the rhythms of grace in each person's life—and whatever has served this prayerful attitude or gotten in the way.

(Portions above adapted from Shalem Institute, Washington, DC)

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October 2021- May 2022

Group Spiritual Direction

Haven Evangelical
Lutheran Church
1035 Haven Road
Hagerstown, Maryland

Sponsored by
Parish Education Team