

# Registration Form

Send to: BFM Spiritual Formation Program

Gail Thomas, Registrar

5816 Grosvenor Lane, Bethesda, MD 20814

301-530-3628 [quakergail@gmail.com](mailto:quakergail@gmail.com)

Name .....

Address.....

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Email .....

Phone .....

## Program Cost:

Program tuition is **\$35 per person** (\$40 for registrations postmarked after September 26) **plus \$15 for required text** (waived if you already own the text - 'Listening Spirituality, Vol. I' by Patricia Loring).

Tuition (\$35/\$40) \$.....

Text (\$15, if needed) \$.....

Additional donation to help support others (optional) \$.....

**TOTAL ENCLOSED** \$\_\_\_\_\_

**Full payment is due before the Opening Gathering.** Please make checks payable to Bethesda Friends Meeting. **Scholarship monies may be available** - inquiries should be made to the Registrar.

**I have read the Program Description and commit to participate in all of its components.**

(signature)\_\_\_\_\_

**Please notify the Registrar of any special needs you may have, including child care**

## Program Components

### • Opening Gathering

An opening session (all day Saturday) to introduce the Program, to foster community among participants, to organize Study groups, and to begin the process of choosing an individual spiritual discipline.

### • Personal Spiritual Discipline

A regular spiritual practice, chosen by the participant

### • Study Groups

Groups that meet monthly to discuss readings and to share a meal

### • Spiritual Friendship Groups

Small groups formed within the Study Groups, which meet monthly and offer one another spiritual support

### • Potluck Winter Gathering

An opportunity to reconnect with the whole program group and renew our commitment.

### • Closing Gathering

A time to reflect on the whole Program and to share something of its fruits in our lives. What gifts have we received? How do we feel led to respond to the grace given?

### Important Dates

Opening Gathering - Saturday, October 9, 2010

Winter Gathering - Sunday\*, February 13, 2011

Closing Gathering - Sunday\*, June 4, 2011

\*at rise of Meeting

**Opening, Closing and Winter Gatherings held at Bethesda Meeting**

# Spiritual Formation Program

**Are you seeking deeper spiritual experience?**

" In the experience of Friends, faith in God finds its expression in a way of life based on spiritual rather than material values...

"Friends may choose to set up 'spiritual friendships' designed to encourage and mutually uphold their spiritual journeys. We respect the insights found in the lives and writings of spiritual men and women of all ages...

"The individual Friend should lead a life rooted in an awareness of God's presence in all times and places..."

*Faith and Practice of Baltimore Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends*

## Bethesda Friends Meeting

*October 2010 - June 2011*

# Spiritual Formation Program

Since the beginnings of the Religious Society of Friends, Quakers have sought to listen faithfully to the promptings of love and truth in their hearts, which they have understood to be the leadings of God, or the Seed, or the Inner Light. The Spiritual Formation Program encourages Friends in this practice of listening to such promptings and taking them seriously. It aims to provide a nurturing spiritual community in which participants support one another on their spiritual journeys.

The Spiritual Formation Program is sponsored by the Adult Religious Education Committee of Bethesda Friends Meeting, in concert with the Meeting's Ministry & Worship and Pastoral Care Committees. Our Program is adapted from the successful program originally developed by Baltimore Yearling Meeting which in turn has been offered by several other Yearly Meetings.

The Program has several components:

- gatherings of the whole program community
- an individual spiritual discipline
- study groups for reflection on readings
- small groups for support and spiritual friendship

## Gatherings

The **Opening Gathering**, held in the spirit of a retreat, begins our commitment to the Program and the community. We gather to:

- attend faithfully to the Inner Light, offering one another our care and encouragement as we begin to explore our leadings;
- reflect on Quaker spirituality and how we are formed inwardly by openness to the Spirit within;
- discern a spiritual discipline to adopt; and
- form study groups and begin to plan its schedule.

A potluck **Winter Gathering** helps us to reconnect with the whole Program community, to renew our sense of excitement and commitment, and to support one another.

The **Closing Gathering** is an opportunity to evaluate the program prayerfully and to consider possibilities for continuing spiritual nurture.

## Spiritual Discipline

Participants commit themselves to following a spiritual discipline - a regular practice with a spiritual intent - throughout the Program. This discipline is a crucial component of spiritual formation. Disciplines can include traditional practices like daily worship, journaling, meditation, and devotional reading, but might also include other practices such as yoga, walking, gardening, or playing a musical instrument.

Participants are encouraged to choose a discipline that adds positively to his/her spiritual life and that can be embraced with joy. The Opening Gathering includes time and support for discerning which practice to choose. The discipline chosen may become a lifelong practice, or just for the duration of the Program. Either way, participants are likely to gain from making this intention and from the support of the Program community.

If one's life is busy, such an undertaking might seem daunting. People often find, however, that such disciplines actually help them cope with life's pressures, as well as enrich their lives through deeper spiritual perspectives and fuller engagement with life.

## Group Reflection

Throughout the Program, two kinds of groups provide community to support discernment of the Inner Light and how to respond to its leadings.

- **Study Groups** of 8 to 10 participants meet monthly to discuss the readings.
- Smaller **Spiritual Friendship Groups** of 4 to 5 people also meet monthly to allow members to reflect together on their experiences in the Program, including their chosen spiritual disciplines. These more intimate settings allow insights to arise and friendships to grow.

## Readings

Readings for discussion in Local Study Groups have been selected to illuminate spiritual experience, scripture, prayer, community, the Religious Society of Friends, and ministry. Some reading is required for the program and there is a required text: - **Listening Spirituality, Vol. I by Patricia Loring**. Study Groups may also elect additional readings.

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**Participants are asked to commit themselves to All of these components. Experience has shown that this combination of activities is vital in fostering individual spiritual growth and a sense of community.**

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## Leaders

- **Bill Dietrich** is a longtime retreat and workshop leader, spiritual director, and an adjunct faculty member of the Shalem Institute in Bethesda.
- **Susan Kaul** is a graduate of Earlham School of Religion and provides pastoral care at Friends House Retirement Community.
- **Gail Thomas**, an educator, has led retreats and workshops. She has completed the School of the Spirit and facilitated several other spiritual formation programs.