**Introduction to Group Spiritual Direction**

*The FAQ may help you discern the Spirit’s prompting to this place of*

*belonging, prayerful listening, and spiritual growth.*

**What is Group Spiritual Direction?**

* During individual or group Spiritual Direction (GSD), an experienced spiritual companion facilitates a prayerful sharing-listening process that awakens and deepens awareness of Divine presence and dynamic Spirit activity in hearts and lives. God directs spiritual encounters; as a companion, I create a sacred space and guide a process inviting a person/group to be open and responsive to Divine presence and move. ***Group Spiritual Direction uniquely recognizes God’s revelation through the Spirit’s move within a sacred community of people with diverse backgrounds and experiences.***
* GSD is not group therapy. We gather and share our vast experiences, practice listening attentively, and offer gifts from the Spirit; we do not advise, counsel or problem-solve.

**Why Group Spiritual Direction?**

***Our hearts are restless until they rest in you.*** - St Augustine of Hippo

* God is always present and dynamically active; but, *we may not be present to God.* The press of the month, week, day or preceding moment can knock us off our intentions. We canbenefit from a community that invites us into an intentional, prayerful process of settling and centering, listening and sharing.As we spend time together, engaging with one another and God’s Spirit, **we become more attentive and attuned to one another and the Spirit.**
* By God’s grace and through Christ’s Spirit, **we hone the spiritual practice** **of *praying our lives*** by sharing life stories, listening attentively to one another and God’s Spirit, and offering gifts received from the Spirit (Barton, 2004; Vest, 1998). As a result, we can experience extraordinary holiness, healing and wholeness within the grounded reality of our ordinary lives, deepening our relationship with God and others.
* GSD responds to a deep longing for Godly relationships*.* Many have lost, forgotten or never experienced the communal nature of Christian spirituality and the Spirit’s move in and through communion with others (Armas, 2021; Holmes, 2021; Palmer, 2009). In a world punctuated by division, we can deepen our **sense of belonging, interdependent community, and *common ground***  as a sacred gift (Nouwen, 1986, Thurman, 1971). As we deepen our experience of the Spirit through a body of diverse believers, we **discover joy within the** **expanse of God’s radical love** for and through us as a Beloved community (Holmes, 2017; Thurman, 1976).
* In GSD, we **exercise spiritual humility,** living life beyond self with spiritual friends by prayerfully listening for the Spirit as we enter and hold another’s story (Benner, 2011; O’ Donohue, 1997; Doughtery, 1995).

**What might I experience in GSD?** *Whatever God wants to give you!*

* As we **discover prayerful presence** with God within a sacred community, we may **“receive, experience, and reflect God’s love”** through the process of *praying our lives* (Fryling, 2009, p 87; Vest, 1998).
* During GSD, we gather as a small community, each from our own different experiences and place on our spiritual journey to experience Divine presence in and through our lives. Your Spiritual Companion **welcomes and guides the sacred community through contemplative life-story practices** that enhance prayerful listening to one another and Christ’s Spirit.
* Our first session provides **a foundation** for future sessions. We learn about our regular session structure, review our group covenant, explore features of our contemplative prayer process, pose questions, and get to know one another better as God’s Beloveds.
* During each regular session, the companion guides our sacred community in the **practice of contemplative prayer in community through sharing and silence** as we:
* Casually gather together (prior to the formal start time)
* Settle & center on God using a short lectio or guided meditation.
* Intentionally slow our fast pace in the company of spiritual friends, seeking and savoring the move of Christ’s Spirit in the stories we share and hold. Prompts may help a sharer decide what life story to share. We ask God’s Spirit to bless the sharer as we listen to a person’s story, asking clarifying questions if needed.
* Call on the Spirit to give us a small gift for that person - a word, phrase, image, song, or scripture passage. Share that gift and allow the sharer to respond.
* Give God thanks, reflect on our process and receive a sending blessing.

**What do I need to participate?**

* Desire for and openness to spiritual growth through intentional contemplative presence with God and others.
* Commit to attend & engage in the guided practice of prayerful listening presence by sharing life stories and gifts from God’s Spirit.
* Covenant with one another as a sacred entrustment (see Covenant Guidelines)
* Invest 1.5- 2 hours for 8 sessions (see booking opportunities or contact Debra directly)