



Answering God's Call

~from the inside out~

This distinct one-year experience is open to all who long to:

- Deepen their relationship with God
- Respond to the Spirit's invitation to live out their sacred purpose
- Be part of a kindred community to nurture them in the process

At the deepest level, this work frees participants to identify and follow their God-given passions and fulfill their highest purpose. Jesus showed us what it means to be fully alive, living in deep relationship with the Father, rooted in the gospel of the kingdom and serving in the power of the Holy Spirit. We're invited into that kind of life – right here and now.

Cohort 7 BEGINS Saturday
OCTOBER 26, 2024

The Sacred Invitation

Welcome to Answering God's call from the inside out
Starrette Farm Retreat, Statesville NC

This one-year program includes 5 two-day and 2 one-day retreats for a total of 12 in-person days and monthly virtual short-sessions, that are specifically designed for those who hunger for a holistic approach to the inner work that deepens their life with God as it equips and empowers them to love, live, and lead from their Divine center - wherever God may call, increasingly manifesting the character and power of Christ.

Why The Sacred Invitation?

In a culture competing for the passion of the reaction of our hearts, minds, and souls, and believing that Spirit-led people are the future of the church, *The Sacred Invitation* offers a vision of vocation - to create a life of meaning and purpose, described by John Wesley, as doing all the good we can, in all the places we can, for all the people we can, for as long as we can.

*The Sacred Invitation is a Christian spiritual formation experiential practicum of Deeper Journey Ministries, Inc .
and The Lydia Group LLC Christ-centered retreat ministry.*

How does the program work?

Over the course of the year, students discover their birthright gifts, explore their spiritual journey, read books and articles, view life-changing documentaries, engage monthly in a variety of soul-forming activities, develop a spiritual community with a small group of co-learners, and experience teaching and formational activities built around time-tested concepts. A blend of intellect and experience, individual and community, social justice and contemplation, the program is deeply centered on Christ and rooted in the Gospel. The robust curriculum helps students become more open, receptive, and responsive to God's transforming grace in their lives.



Little by little, the fern unfurls the parts she once hid to the world (author unknow)

As participants renew their love relationship with the triune God; discover, develop, and use their signature strengths and ground themselves in the vitality of a committed community to share their journey; slowly - over time - spiritual growth takes place. Little by little, participants, like the fern, unfurl the parts once hidden, allowing the creation of a vision of loving service for healing of the world.

Who should apply? If you are experiencing a void in your life that you can't fill with "stuff" from the secular world; if you are called to be a leader in your church but hesitate because you don't feel you have the right "tools"; if you are someone who wants to make a difference in the lives of those marginalized by society; if you are concerned about molding the spiritual lives of those you love; if you are looking to grow your relationship *with* Jesus in order to grow disciples *for* Jesus, then *The Sacred Invitation* journey might be for you.

NOTE: *For those who serve as Lay Servant Ministers in the United Methodist Church: Completion of this course has been approved for Advanced Lay Servant Ministry Course Credit*

2024/2025 Retreat Dates, Themes, and Time

All retreats follow a similar format outlined below. Between sessions participants are guided and supported with virtual trust circle sessions, book discussions, and suggestions for resources to facilitate growth toward goals.

Oct. 26, 2024	Welcome Meet -n- Greet (1-day, begins at 10am)
Nov. 16-17, 2024	The Inner Life of a Fruitful Disciple: <i>Sowing Seeds of Transformation</i>
Jan.11, 2025	Family Awareness & Discovery (1-day, begins at 10am)
Feb. 8-9,2025	Nurturing Sabbath: <i>Living Sane in an Insane World</i>
May 17-18, 2025	Called To Contribute: <i>Honoring Your God-Given Gifts</i>
Aug. 2-3, 2025	Ritual & Rhythm: <i>Arranging Your Life for Spiritual Transformation</i>
Oct. 4-5, 2025	Holy Hospitality: <i>Creating Open, Inclusive, Safe Space for Others</i>

Each 2-day retreat is held on Saturday, 1pm until 8pm and continues Sunday from 9am until 3:30pm. Dinner on Saturday, lunch on Sunday, and refreshments throughout are provided.

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EXPLORE TODAY! A soul satisfying God-glorifying experience awaits! Listen to what others say here:
www.thelydiagroup.com/the-sacred-invitation



View the Farm and spacious retreat house at www.TheLydiaGroup.com.

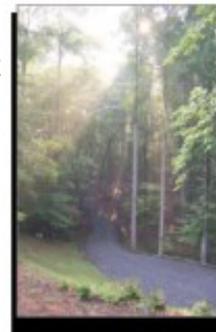
Retreat Location

Retreats are held at the Starrette Farm Retreat in Statesville, NC. The private sanctuary (est. 1888) spans 25 acres of rolling woodland and walking trails. It is only five minutes from the intersection of I-40 and I-77 on Highway 64 East. The Farm is a “day apart” venue only.

Lodging is on your own and not included in retreat cost.

Numerous Statesville hotels are only ten minutes

(or less) from the retreat house. Fairfield Inn gives us a deep discount. Sleep Inn gives a discount too. Both are located only 7-minutes from the retreat house.



SAMPLE FORMAT ~ 2-day retreats

SATURDAY: 12:45pm arrival, check-in

- 1:00 SESSION 1 Welcome - Introductions, Laying the Altar
- 2:00 SESSION 2: Thematic formational topic with helpful applications
- 2:30 Break with refreshments
- 2:45 SESSION 3: Deepening Understanding
- 3:30 Trust Circles (*spiritual direction groups of 4-6 with experienced facilitator/remains the same*)
- 6:00 Regather to celebrate what has been given
- 6:30 Dinner with guided group reflection
- 7:40 Night prayers (an integral part of the retreat)
- 8:00 Depart in silence

SUNDAY: 8:45am ARRIVAL IN SILENCE

- 9:00 Centering / Morning Worship
- 9:45 Break
- 10:00 SESSION 4: Action and Application of Concepts
- 10:45 Reflection assignment to help solidify and integrate your learning
- 11:45 Regather to celebrate what has been given
- 12:00 Lunch
- 1:00 Trust Circles for Group Spiritual Direction
- 2:00 Break
- 2:15 SESSION 5: Equipping & Empowering
- 3:30 Closing ritual and departure

What are Trust Circles for Group Spiritual Direction?

The purpose of a Trust Circle is the formation of a community of companions and co-listeners for the voice of God in the story of each individual life. We help each other recognize and be more responsive to God's movement and invitations. Trust Circles use the Group Spiritual Direction model (used internationally) created by Rose Mary Dougherty, S.S.N.D. through her work at Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation. In her book, *Group Spiritual Direction: Community for Discernment*, Sister Rose Mary writes of how her awareness for a “group” spiritual direction experience heightened through her reflection on John Wesley's “class meetings,” the Society of Friends' Clearness Committee, and Wesleyan scholar David Watson's model of Covenant Discipleship groups.

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LEADERSHIP TEAM



George Stewart is a graduate of School of the Spirit and a two-time graduate of The Sacred Invitation spiritual formation programs. He received his training in Retreat Leadership and Development at Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation. In 2018, while participating in The Sacred Invitation, he fell in love with God’s mission of Starrette Farm Retreat. Since 2020, George has been a steward of Starrette Farm Retreat. His call is leading/facilitating retreats and supporting others while they lead. George attends Clemmons UMC and serves as a Lay Leader.

Tom Peckham is one of the founding facilitators of The Sacred Invitation having served on cohorts 1-5. He is an alum of School of the Spirit (Cohort 7), Shalem Institute's Group Spiritual Direction program, and Renovare's Fellowship of the Burning Heart pilot program. He is a commissioned Stephen Minister and has served as a Stephen leader and trainer. Tom has facilitated several spiritual formation classes and has also been a Trust Circle for Discernment group leader. He earned his MBA degree in New England and served as I/T Director and CFO for a home health/hospice agency.



Nancy Bellamy, The Sacred Invitation program director, has served as steward of Starrette Farm Retreat since 2020. She is an ordained Chaplain, spiritual director, and spiritual formation coach. She is a two-time School of the Spirit alumna and a two-time graduate of The Sacred Invitation. Her degrees in Accounting and IT and studies at Shalem Institute for Spiritual Formation in Spiritual Direction and Group Spiritual Direction has helped her cultivate a business mind within her ministry heart.

Roxanne Morgan oversees our soul food & hospitality service. Through her work as a spiritual director and retreat facilitator, she delights in engaging people through creativity to experience transformation.





Frieda Farfour Brown, Ph.D. is The Sacred Invitation Visionary, advisor, and presenter. Professionally she is a clinical psychologist, a retired university professor, and a program developer within both churches and the community. She is devoted to helping others identify their character strengths and spiritual gifts and discover meaningful ways to use these strengths and gifts in the service of others. She is a two-time graduate of School of the Spirit.

Ann Starrette, a founding Sacred Invitation presenter, oversees the Office of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care, anchored at The Lydia Group, LLC retreat ministry she founded in 1998. She is founding director of School of the Spirit. Ann earned her business degree from UNC-Charlotte and her master’s degree in Spiritual Direction and Formation from Richmond Graduate University School of Ministry, Atlanta. Ann sees her role as quietly planting holy seeds that help people reimagine the Divine, unlearn rigid religion, and see God everywhere.



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COST AND REGISTRATION

INVESTMENT

For those accepted into the program, generous financial support makes it possible to offer The Sacred Invitation twelve-month experience for only \$950 per student - a substantial saving off the program's cost. In addition to meals, refreshments throughout, instructors, retreat facility, and supplies, our overarching purpose is to provide resources that will sustain pastors, non-profit leaders, and laity in the "long obedience" of their vocational vision.

Don't let finances get in the way if this program is right for you. Some tuition assistance is available! Travel, lodging, books, and non-refundable application fee (\$50) are not included.

TIMELINE

The Sacred Invitation / cohort 7 begins October 26, 2024, with an application deadline of September 1, 2024. Onboarding begins early October.

- Participation is open to all denominations and limited to 24 people who seek a Spirit-led life.
- Participating in *The Sacred Invitation* is an investment in both time and money. We are committed to helping eliminate the financial obstacle for those accepted and need financial assistance. Please contact Nancy Bellamy directly if you need financial assistance.
- CEU: Seven (7) Continuing Education Units will be awarded to participants meeting specific performance requirements.

Applications due September 1, 2024

TO APPLY:

- Your non-refundable application administrative fee of \$50 is due with your application. Two ways to pay:
 - PAY BY CHECK: Your check made payable to Deeper Journey Ministries with "The Sacred Invitation on the memo line (your check is your receipt) - or -
 - PAY ONLINE by credit card here [APPLICATION FEE](#) (click on APPLICATION FEE)
- MAIL your application and check (unless you applied and paid online)
 - TO: The Sacred Invitation, Program Director, PO Box 1288 Troutman, NC 28166

Applications will continue to be reviewed until September 1, 2024, or until the entering class is full.

You can learn more about The Sacred Invitation at
www.thelydiagroup.com/the-sacred-invitation

- Accepted participants will receive a detailed agenda, reading and engagement list, directions to Starrette Farm and more in the weeks prior to our first retreat together.

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PERSONAL DISCERNMENT

Because the program requires a significant financial investment from its participants, it is necessary for you to discern if *The Sacred Invitation* is right for you at this time. Consider the following discernment questions before you apply:

- Are you able to attend all sessions?
- Do those you are responsible for/your family know of your interest in *The Sacred Invitation*? Is there anyone with whom you need to have a conversation before beginning?
- What, if anything would you need from others to participate fully and freely?
- Are there any current priorities you need to consider re-arranging, or special circumstances you need to consider in order to fully participate?

Questions? Contact Nancy Bellamy, Program Director, at (336) 971-7275

APPLICATION / Cohort 7

****Please note retreat dates and check your calendar to confirm your availability before you apply****

Please be ready to pay a non-refundable \$50 administration fee upon submission of this application. Subsequent submissions are free.

Name _____ Date _____

Church _____

District (if Methodist) _____

Mailing Address _____

Zip Code _____

Email _____

Phone _____ Cell _____

Birthdate _____

Current Work and/or Life role: Please briefly describe the nature of your current position and the character of the organization and/or community you serve.

What has moved you to accept *The Sacred Invitation*?

What would God say to your soul today?

What are the spiritual practices you engage in regularly?

How do your spiritual practices address your spiritual needs?

What is your experience with spiritual direction (group and/or individual)?

How can your LOVE be a light in a dark world?

In what ways do you LIVE to do good in all the ways you can?

What passion drives you to LEAD (equip and empower) others in the way of Love?

How do you envision your life changing after completing this program?

How did you hear about *The Sacred Invitation*?

Along with completed application (unless you registered online and or prefer to pay by credit card), please mail your non-refundable application fee of \$50 (check or money-order) made payable to Deeper Journey Ministries with "*The Sacred Invitation*" on the memo line) to:

The Sacred Invitation / Program Director
PO Box 1288
Troutman, NC 28166

If you prefer to PAY ONLINE by credit card, go here:

[APPLICATION FEE](#) (click on APPLICATION FEE)

**Your check is your receipt*