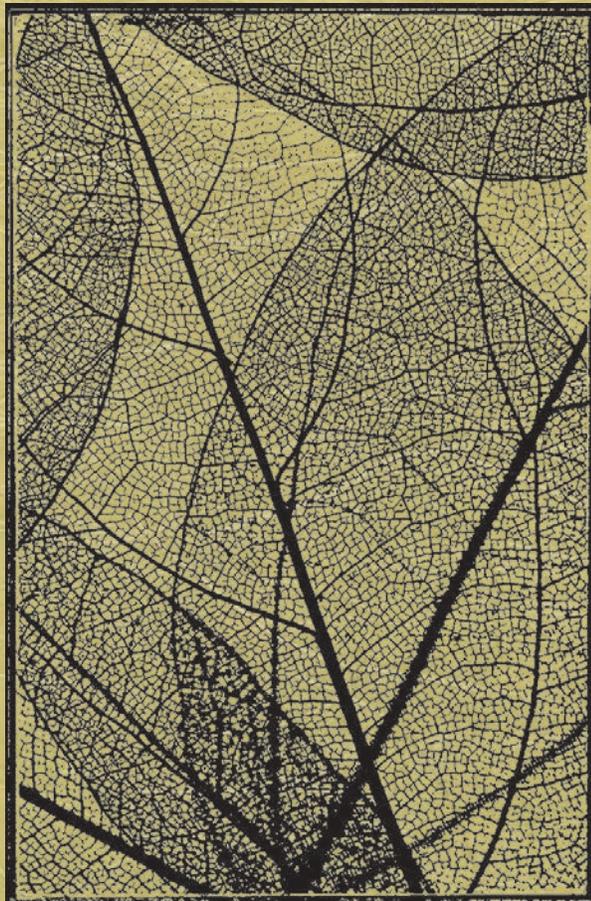


SACRED INTERSECTIONS:  
SPIRITUAL  
FORMATION PROGRAM



BALTIMORE  
YEARLY MEETING



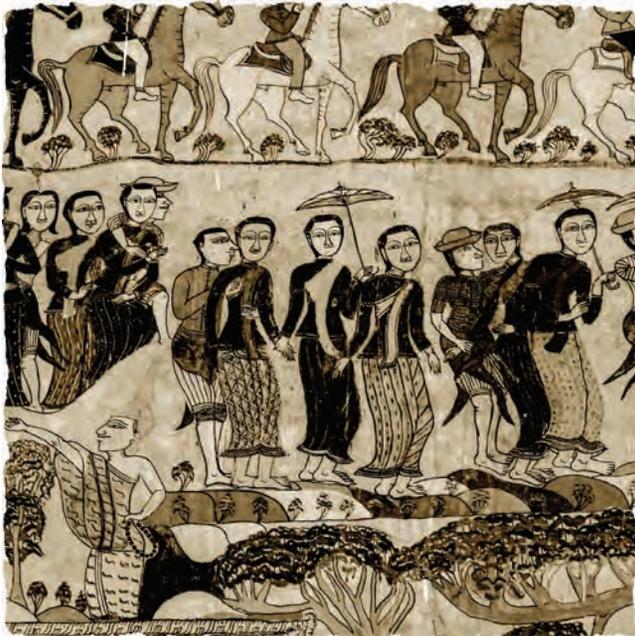
We are all pilgrims on a journey...





## ☪ THE JOURNEY

We are all pilgrims on a journey, taking different routes to the same destination. We are all seekers on a quest, searching for that which is greater, and our relationship to it. It is a journey not of miles, but of increments by which we, nonetheless, hope to arrive at the Ground of Our Being. To stand in God's Presence and—once there—dwell in the Center. For much of the way, we journey alone, seeking a course that is uncharted and freely chosen. Yet along the way, we encounter other pilgrims and share the experience in moments of sacred intersection that feed our spirit, deepen our experience, strengthen our resolve, and build community. And we know it to be good. This is the Spiritual Formation Program. And you are invited to journey with us.



## ☯ ALONG THE WAY

Our Spiritual Formation Program offers practical ways for seekers to deepen their personal spiritual experience while building spiritual community. No matter where you are on your journey, the Spiritual Formation Program meets you there. It never tells you to “hurry up” or “slow down,” nor does it suggest to you where you “should be” on your journey, or how to get there. Think of it as a sort of Way Station along the path. A welcoming, inclusive, and unconditional Way Station offering guidance, sustenance, and companionship. All who enter are transformed. Individual participants are aided in keeping their spiritual destination in sight and remaining Spirit-centered. Friendships are nurtured and community is built. Spiritual leadership is developed and Friends’ Meetings are strengthened. All this and more is revealed as we traverse our separate journeys. Together.



## ☪ PROVISIONS: PRAYER, PRACTICE, READINGS

Provisions are offered along the way and are plentiful. They come in the form of humble prayer, faithful practice, and spiritual readings. Your local Meeting is a good resource. Though none are required for participation, the Spiritual Formation Program recommends and encourages the daily practice of one or more spiritual disciplines. Only you can discern to what discipline or practice you are being led by Spirit. And there are many. The traditional Christian disciplines include prayer, contemplation, scripture study, lectio divina, religious readings, and journaling. Other traditions include yoga, meditation, and t'ai chi. You may create your own. A daily walk in the woods can do wonders. A spiritual practice is right for you if it stills your soul, brings you to rest in God, and holds you in The Light. It is in those moments of rest and reflection that the pilgrim recognizes the journey is inward. And home.

## ☪ GATHERING: FRIENDSHIP, SHARING, TABLE FELLOWSHIP

An essential part of our Spiritual Formation Program is coming together in community throughout the year (the “year” generally begins in September and ends in May). These gatherings serve to deepen the personal spiritual experience and build strong community. Friends are invited to “come as they are”—convinced or uncertain, wholehearted or broken; with the understanding that each of us holds a piece of the Truth. And remembering that, like a beautiful mosaic made from a thousand shards of glass, it is often out of such brokenness when the face of Love is reflected in a million dazzling refractions. And that of God in everyone is revealed in all its glory.

Gatherings come in all sizes and formats. Friends in the Spiritual Formation Program gather for retreats in the fall and spring and in Small Groups and Large Groups at their local Meeting. These gatherings are explained on the following pages.





## ☪ RESPITE & REFLECTION: SPIRITUAL RETREATS

The Spiritual Formation Program offers two weekend retreats in a pastoral setting at a regional retreat center. The retreats are welcome respites from our busy lives and offer plenty of time and space for spiritual reflection and renewal. The retreats are open to all Friends from Meetings across the BYM area. Each retreat engages participants in exploring their own unique spiritual lives and sharing discoveries within small groups and with other individual participants. There is also time to explore Quaker spirituality, to discover new practices and readings, and to enjoy table fellowship, socializing and quiet time. Some preparation and planning for the local Spiritual Formation Programs for the coming year is also included.

## ☪ ACCOMPANIMENT: LARGE GROUPS

The Large Group of a local Meeting is comprised of all local Meeting participants. Large Group meets once a month over table fellowship (provided by the group) at their local Meeting House. After sharing a meal together in friendship, the gathering settles into shared reflection on a selected reading, which has been considered ahead of time by each member. The love, friendship, and support experienced within these groups inevitably spills over to the Monthly Meeting and is shared in ways that nourish and sustain all its members and attenders.



## ☪ ACCOMPANIMENT: SMALL GROUPS

Small Groups of 4 to 6 individuals are formed among the members of the Large Group. The group, also known as a Friendship Group, meets once a month, at a time and place designated by the group. Small Group gatherings provide opportunities for participants to share deeply about their personal spiritual journey. Friends gather in mutual respect, listen attentively, and share humbly. Through these intimate groups promising seed is sown, trusting friendships are cultivated, and spiritual support for the entire Meeting takes root and grows strong.



## 🌀 GUIDES & SIGNPOSTS: POINTING THE WAY

Though one's spiritual journey is deeply personal and can only be undertaken at one's own pace along a singularly chosen path, it's nice to know there are guides and signposts along the way. We all need them. Truth be told, we'd be lost without them. They serve a vital purpose: not so much leading the way as gently pointing us in the right direction and keeping us on course. Friends understand that Spirit is our true Guide, our North Star. But, practically speaking, local Spiritual Formation Program also benefit from the support of what we call facilitators. If you have previously participated in a program, perhaps you would consider serving in this way? Program facilitators help their local meeting organize and coordinate its Spiritual Formation Program primarily in terms of logistics and communication. Ideally, every program should have a facilitator or two. Please, thoughtfully consider serving in this capacity in your local Meeting. To learn more, contact the program at: [bymspiritform@bym-rsf.org](mailto:bymspiritform@bym-rsf.org).



## ☪ STARTING OUT: HOW TO BRING A SPIRITUAL FORMATION PROGRAM TO YOUR MEETING

Our journey affirms that the Spiritual Formation Program deepens the personal spiritual experience, builds community, and enriches the Monthly Meeting. So how can you bring a program to your Monthly Meeting? Talk with others in your Meeting, and gather interested Friends. If way opens and the group decides to create a Spiritual Formation Program in your Monthly Meeting, the following resources and tips will help.

- ☪ Designate someone from your Monthly Meeting to be the local facilitator. Post his or her contact information on your Meeting's website, in your newsletter, and on the Meeting House bulletin board.
- ☪ Request materials to promote the creation of your program from BYM. Materials include newsletter inserts, brochures, and retreat registration forms. These too are available through the BYM website. Ask your newsletter editor and Meeting web master to post them in each.
- ☪ Talk up the program, making periodic announcements after Meeting for Worship. This is particularly important regarding the retreats and registration for them.
- ☪ Encourage members and attenders to visit the BYM website for additional resources and information.
- ☪ Inform interested participants about funds available from BYM to help defray the costs of the retreats.
- ☪ Reach out to the Spiritual Formation Working Group for additional assistance. Visit [bymspiritform@bym-rsf.org](mailto:bymspiritform@bym-rsf.org).



## ARRIVAL

We will not cease from exploration, and  
the end of all our exploring will be to arrive  
where we started...and know the place for  
the first time.

*T.S. Eliot*



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The Spiritual Formation Program

is sponsored by

Baltimore Yearly Meeting

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