



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 6 BEGINS | Saturday & Sunday **NOVEMBER 11-12, 2023**

The Inner Life of a Fruitful Disciple

Sowing Seeds of Transformation

Starrette Farm Retreat, Statesville NC

This one-year program includes 5 two-day and 1 one-day retreats for a total of 11 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 and direction 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 call** - 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 in strategic partnership with the United Methodist Foundation of Western North Carolina and The Lydia Group llc ecumenical and inclusive spiritual formation / retreat ministry..

How does the program work?

Over 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 holy listeners, 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.



*Little by little, the fern unfurls the parts
she once hid from the world (author unknown)*

As participants renew their love relationship with our 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 occurs. Little by little, participants, like the fern, unfurl the parts once hidden, creating a vision of loving service for the world's healing.

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.

2023/2024 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.

Nov. 11-12, 2023	The Inner Life of a Fruitful Disciple: <i>sowing seeds of transformation</i>
Jan. 13, 2024	Family from the Inside Out: <i>using the genogram for self understanding and awareness (1-day)</i>
Feb. 10-11, 2024	Nurturing Sabbath: <i>living sanely in an insane world</i>
May 18-19, 2024	Called To Contribute: <i>leaning into your God-given gifts</i>
Aug. 3-4, 2024	Ritual & Rhythm: <i>arranging your life for spiritual transformation</i>
Oct. 5-6, 2024	Holy Hospitality: <i>creating open, inclusive, safe space for others</i>

Each retreat begins on Saturday at 1pm (*except first retreat, which begins at 10am, and includes lunch*) until 8pm, and continues on Sunday from 9am until 3:30pm. Dinner on Saturday, lunch on Sunday, and refreshments throughout are provided.

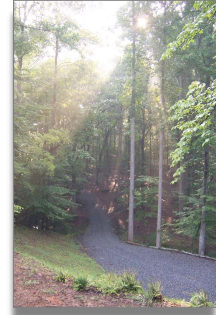


View the Farm and spacious retreat house at www.TheLydiaGroup.com.

Retreat Location

Retreats are held at the Starrette Farm Retreat in Statesville, NC. The private homestead (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

SATURDAY: 12:45pm arrival, check-in

- 1:00 SESSION 1 Welcome - Introductions, Laying the Altar
- 2:00 SESSION 2: Thematic Formational Topics with experiential learning
- 2:30 Break with refreshments
- 2:45 SESSION 3: Deepening Understanding
- 3:30 Trust Circles (*spiritual direction groups of 4-6 with an experienced facilitator*)
- 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: Application of Concepts
- 10:45 Reflection assignment to help solidify and integrate learning
- 11:45 Regather to celebrate what has been given
- 12:00 Lunch
- 1:00 Trust Circles for Group Spiritual Direction
- 2:15 Break
- 2:30 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.

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

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LEADERSHIP TEAM

Frieda Farfour Brown is a licensed clinical psychologist with over 45 years of practice as a therapist, educator, supervisor, program director/manager, retreat leader, and writer. She has a PhD from the University of Louisville, a masters from UNC-Chapel Hill, a masters from Duke Divinity School, and has taught at four different universities. She established *The Rainbow Connection*, a church/mission-based preschool, which has served children for the last 40 years. Frieda has also helped create and nurture the Stephen Ministry at Davidson UMC, the Reimagining Health Collaborative at Duke Divinity School and the Kingstown initiative. Author of five books and numerous published articles, her participation in the first national training program for positive psychology sparked her interest in finding ways to help others find meaningful ways to use their God-given gifts in behalf of the greater community. She is a two-time graduate of *School of the Spirit*.



Ann Starrette 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* and co-program director of *The Sacred Invitation*. Ann earned her business degree from UNC-Charlotte and her master's degree in Spiritual Formation & Direction from Richmond Graduate University. As a spiritual director, teacher, and retreat leader, Ann views her role as quietly planting inner seeds of freedom, growth, and change toward wholeness. Ann (and husband Tom 1938-2019) are founding stewards of Starrette Farm Retreat in Statesville.

Roxanne Morgan oversees our soul food & table hospitality service. She has a God-given artistic bent that delights in fostering creativity and helping others discover and live out sacred rhythms in their lives. Roxanne does this through art, nature, retreats, and spiritual companionship. A trained and seasoned spiritual director, she is a *School of the Spirit* graduate and now serves with The Lydia Group, LLC retreat ministry, *School of the Spirit*, and *The Sacred Invitation* retreats. Contact Roxanne at WayfaringAnamcara@gmail.com



EXEMPLARY GUEST PRESENTERS



Nicole Greer is a spirited entrepreneur, vibrant coach, national speaker, consultant, and master collaborator. She is a founding facilitator and integral contributor to *School of the Spirit's* leadership team. Called to contribute no matter the setting, visit her here: www.vibrantcoaching.com

Noel Sweezy, The Sailing Pastor, is the founder of Common Ground in Stanley (CommonGround is an unCommon Place for ALL God's Children to connect to God, each other, and creation!). Noel has a heart for holy hospitality, whether on land or sea. Visit him here: <https://sailingpastor.com>



Craig Sefa, an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church, is the author of *I Arise Today: A 40-Day Journey through St. Patrick's Breastplate Prayer* and *When Every Space is Sacred: Cultivating an Awareness of God's Presence in Everyday Life*. With a passion for Spiritual Formation and Discipleship, Craig seeks to use his gifts to echo the still small voice of the Holy Spirit in our noisy world. Learn more about Craig here, "Echo," at <https://craigsefa.org>.

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COST AND REGISTRATION

INVESTMENT: \$750 (value/cost is \$1300 per student)

For those accepted into the program, generous financial support makes it possible to offer The Sacred Invitation twelve-month experience for only \$750 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. Some tuition assistance is available! Don't let finances get in the way if this program is right for you. Travel, lodging, books, and non-refundable application fee (\$50) are not included. Early applicants save money.

TIMELINE

The Sacred Invitation / cohort 6 in-person retreats begin November 11-12, 2023, with an application deadline of September 1, 2023. Onboarding begins early October.

Apply early and save money

Early registration deadline: by June 30, 2023 (save \$100) = \$650

Applications will continue to be reviewed until **September 1, 2023**, or until the entering class is full.

- 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 (nancy@starrettefarmretreat.com) if you need financial assistance.
- CEU: Eleven (11) Continuing Education Units will be awarded to participants meeting specific performance requirements.

PERSONAL DISCERNMENT

Because the program makes a significant financial investment in 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 (or most) sessions?
- Do those you are responsible for at work / or 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 to be able to fully participate?

- **Questions? Contact Nancy Bellamy, registrar, at nancy@starrettefarmretreat.com or (336) 971-7275.**

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Candidate Application / Cohort 6

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-(if one) _____

District (if Methodist) _____

Mailing Address _____

_____ Zip Code _____

Email _____

Phone _____ Cell _____

Birthdate _____

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?

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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 ***The Sacred Invitation?***

PAYMENTS:

- **SUBMIT** your non-refundable application administrative fee of \$50. Two ways to pay:
 - PAY BY CHECK: Your check made **payable to Deeper Journey Ministries** with “TSI 6” on the memo line (your check is your receipt) - or -
 - PAY ONLINE by credit card here: <https://buy.stripe.com/14k02l0oygFu5cQ4gh>
- **SUBMIT** your application and/or check (unless you applied online)
 - SEND TO: DJM Registrar, PO Box 1288 Troutman, NC 28166

Applications will continue to be reviewed until **September 1, 2023**, or until the entering class is full.

You can learn more about The Sacred Invitation here:

www.thelydiagroup.com/the-sacred-invitation



Nancy Bellamy (TSI 5)

The Sacred Invitation Registrar

Nancy serves as registrar for The Sacred Invitation community. Her focus is on shepherding students into their deeper journey experience, getting them registered, receiving tuition payments, and assisting with any needs along the way. Her degrees in Accounting and IT, coupled with being an Ordained Chaplain and active Spiritual Director has helped her cultivate a business mind within her ministry heart.

Reach Nancy at nancy@starrettefarmretreat.com or (336) 971-7275.

