until Christ be formed in you...

Galatians 4:19
The Center for Spiritual Formation is committed to the radical notion that we can be transformed by God into the likeness of our Savior for the sake of others.

When Christ is formed in us, we carry the presence of Jesus into our everyday, ordinary lives, loving and serving others as He did. This is the best evidence that the Gospel is true. But we cannot transform ourselves. No spiritual do-it-yourself projects will make us like Him. The Center for Spiritual Formation offers retreats to help people open to the presence of God and learn what rhythms and practices help each of us grow up into Christ.

In order to make a way for everyone to participate, The Center offers two options with different time commitments: a two-year cohort experience and individual half-day retreats. The cohort experience requires a monthly commitment over the course of two years, while the half-day retreats can be experienced individually without a long-term commitment.

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Two-Year Cohort Experience

Includes a commitment to eight quarterly retreats, monthly meetings with a spiritual companion group between each retreat, and reading one book per quarter. Each retreat begins with a light meal on Friday evening (6-9pm) and concludes on Saturday afternoon (9am-3pm, lunch included). The retreats are held at Church of the Open Door in Maple Grove, Minnesota and do not include an overnight stay.

Apply online for Cohort D (2017-2019) starting Mon, May 1
Cost: $400 ($80 non-refundable registration fee plus $40 per quarter, due Sunday prior to each retreat regardless of retreat attendance.)

Individual Half-Day Retreats

Participate in the Saturday morning sessions of the cohort experience as a stand-alone experience. Participants can register for each retreat individually without the two-year commitment.

Select Saturdays, 9am-12pm
Register online for each retreat as announced
Cost: $20 per retreat (lunch not included)
Retreat Themes

There are eight retreats in The Center’s formational series. Each retreat focuses on a spiritual practice and its relevance to our lives.

1. **Awakening to Life with God**  
   *Spiritual Practices as Invitations to Transformation*  
   We all deeply desire to connect with God and with others. Practicing faithful rhythms of living, in response to these deeper desires of the heart, awakens our life with God and promotes real transformation.

2. **Living at Rest**  
   *Sabbath, Silence and Solitude in a Hurried World*  
   We live in a frenetic world that depletes and exhausts us. Living in a balance of retreat and engagement with this world helps foster a life of abundance in God. We learn to live restfully by practicing the Presence of God.

3. **Breathing through Life**  
   *Prayers for Everyday Living*  
   We deepen our intimacy with God through a relational prayer life with God. The One who is nearer to us than our very breath is made real in our everyday, ordinary lives.

4. **Dwelling in God’s Story**  
   *Praying and Living the Scriptures*  
   Too often we read the Bible to master it. Read prayerfully and expectantly, however, the Word of God masters us. We encounter the God of Scripture as the One who restores shalom to our broken lives and this needy world.

5. **Getting Real**  
   *Knowing Self, Knowing God*  
   Who am I? Who is God? When we discover our true and false self patterns, the essence of who we really are is unleashed. We are free to live out of our truest self in God for the sake of others.

6. **Listening Well**  
   *Hearing God’s Voice in a Noisy World*  
   Discernment can be a challenge when so many competing voices vie for our attention, but the will of God is within reach. With practice, we learn to recognize God’s still, small voice and grow in delight at obeying God.

7. **Extending the Kingdom**  
   *Ordinary Living for the Sake of Others*  
   When we experience the good news of abundant life in Christ, we are compelled to partner with God in being and bearing witness to this good news in the world.

8. **Becoming Fully Alive in God**  
   *The Committed Spiritual Life as Ordinary & Extraordinary*  
   Transformation happens in our ordinary lives through an extraordinary God. Sustaining our connection with God, ourselves, and others by practicing a rule of life positions us to better pursue the struggle of becoming fully alive in God.
Is the two-year cohort experience a good fit for me?

Anyone who desires to deepen their life in God is welcome to participate in The Center. Not everyone, however, may be prepared for the commitments expected in the two-year cohort experience. These commitments include:

**Retreat Participation** - Each participant is expected to attend all eight quarterly retreats in their entirety from Friday evening until Saturday afternoon, unless precluded by an extenuating circumstance. People are encouraged to intentionally and regularly practice the spiritual disciplines taught at each retreat.

**Reading** - Each retreat is rooted in Scripture and enhanced by voices from our Christian heritage. The two-year cohort participants commit to reading one book between every retreat. A sampling of the modern Christian authors on our reading list includes Ruth Haley Barton, M. Robert Mulholland, Jr., Mark Buchanan, Richard Foster, David Benner, and Mark Labberton.

**Group Meetings** - The Center highly values being in community for personal spiritual development. To that end, participants are placed in spiritual companion groups that meet monthly between each quarterly retreat to listen and reflect on the work of God in one another’s lives.

We encourage everyone to prayerfully discern God’s call regarding the above commitments before applying. Questions to support this discernment process might include:

- What choices will I need to make in my current life in order to prioritize the spiritual practices, reading, and companion group attendance expected in the formational experience?

- How does this cohort experience align with the other things God has been saying and doing in my life these days?

- Does this seem like the next step in my spiritual journey?

Our rhythm of learning for each retreat is:

**Friday**
- 6:00 - 6:30pm: Communal Dinner
- 6:30 - 6:45pm: Evening Prayer
- 6:45 - 8:45pm: Teaching Reflection Response
- 8:45 - 9:00pm: Night Prayer

**Saturday**
- 9:00 - 9:15am: Morning Prayer
- 9:15 - 11:45am: Teaching Reflection Response
- 11:45am - Noon: Noonday Prayer
- Noon - 12:45pm: Communal or Silent Lunch
- 12:45 - 2:45pm: Teaching Reflection Response
- 2:45 - 3:00pm: Closing Prayer

- **Half-Day Retreat**
- **Community Experience**
FAQ’s

How does The Center fit into Open Door’s vision?
At Church of the Open Door, we are radically committed to the spiritual transformation of God’s people.

Who will be teaching?
Church of the Open Door is privileged to have excellent teachers on staff. Pastors Dave Johnson, Anne-Marie Finsaas, and Tom Johnson, as well as lay leaders Vicki Degner, Doug and Peggy Lang, will be teaching and facilitating these retreats.

How is this similar or different to other spiritual retreats?
The content of the retreats offered by The Center are very similar to other spiritual retreats. Because we are a church, however, The Center can place more emphasis on community by offering opportunities to practice and process our learnings at the retreat and in spiritual companion groups between retreats.

What is the process for applying to The Center?
The two-year cohort experience involves an online application process; please apply early as space in each cohort is limited. Those interested in the half-day retreats need only register online by the Sunday before the retreat.

How are spiritual companion groups in the two-year cohort experience formed?
When applying online for the cohort experience, you will be asked to indicate your preferences for those in your group (for example, whether or not you want everyone to be of the same gender). You can also apply with an existing small group or with one or more of your friends. Additionally, you will be able to indicate in the application form if there is a particular person with whom you’d rather not be in group (for instance, a client from a professional relationship or an ex-spouse). We will prayerfully take all these preferences into consideration as we form the spiritual companion groups.

Is childcare available for the retreats?
Unfortunately, we do not have the resources or capacity to offer childcare for these retreats at this time.

If I cannot register for this year’s community experience, when will another one begin?
Church of the Open Door is committed to the vision of The Center; a new cohort will begin within the following year and every year thereafter.

Can I still participate if I know I will miss one of the retreats?
Participants are asked to carefully discern their commitment to the cohort experience and mark their calendars for all eight retreats. Nevertheless, we recognize that someone may have to miss one retreat due to illness or a previous commitment. Missing one retreat does not preclude your participation in the experience.

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cultivating avenues for God to transform us
Being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:18