



Conference Guide



Welcome

Welcome to Hearing the Voice of God in the Midst of Life, the 2021 Annual Conference of the Spiritual Formation Society of Arizona.

Our vision for these two days is to create a space where you will be encouraged in your life of listening to the voice of God, and also experience opportunities to do just that! We will be offering you content but also encourage you to take the time set aside for reflection to stay with what you hear and are sensing from God. Even on breaks (you'll have several each days), use that time to abide with God and keep a slow pace for these days.

We even encourage you to “unplug” from email and phone as much as you possibly can! With an online format, it could be easy to have your eyes on the screen and a phone in your hand. Use this as a time of retreat and listening.

This Digital Conference Guide Book is designed to be downloaded and something to which you can refer over these two days as well as after. You'll find space to journal, reflect, take notes, etc. Because you will have access to recordings of all the workshops and sessions after the conference, this guide book can be a place where you keep all your notes and handy reference for overview of content and workshops.

Here is our prayer over these two days:

Lord, we humbly present ourselves to you and we entrust this time to you. Give us ears to hear what you desire for us to hear. May we be attentive to your heart. Would you protect this time that it would truly be a time of retreat. Thank you for how we are going to notice your love and presence in the days ahead. Amen.



Navigating The Conference Webpage

The Conference Page at www.sfsaz.org/conferencelive is your resource for everything you will need in these next two days. Password: hearingGod (not that the password is case sensitive)

You'll find:

- livestream links
- schedule (make sure to check timezone)
- workshop info and links
- the conference booklet
- a digital gift bag
 - Note the 40% off the IVP "booktable"
 - And, register for the book-bundle giveaway
- prayer room
- reading list

*you might want to "bookmark" Conference Page for easy access

If you need help during the conference – there is "Help" Button at the bottom of the Conference Page ... or send an email to help@sfsaz.org

Feeling to need to pray with someone? Check out our Prayer Room on the Conference Page. A prayer room (on Zoom) will be available at various times and our digital prayer room is always open.



Schedule

All times listed below are Mountain Standard Time (local Phoenix, AZ)
and Eastern Time MST(EST)

Friday, February 5

9:00/11:00 Livestream – Session 1

10:15/2:15 Reflection/Spiritual Exercise

10:45/12:45 Workshop #1

11:45/1:45 Break

12:15/2:15 Livestream Session 2

1:15/3:15 Break

1:25/3:25 Workshop #2

2:25/4:25 Dismiss

Saturday, February 6

9:00/11:00 Livestream – Session 3

10:15/12:15 Reflection/Spiritual
Exercise

10:45/12:45 Workshop #3

11:45/1:45 Break

12:15/2:15 Workshop #4

1:15/3:15 Break

1:25/3:25 Livestream – Session 4

2:25/4:25 Dismiss



Plenary Session Notes

Please find any notes or handouts referred to
in the plenary sessions in this section.

Plenary Session Notes

Session Title: “If Today You Hear His Voice, Don’t Harden Your Heart”
Presenter: Ted Wueste

Psalm 84:1-2
Psalm 81:11-13

Psalm 95:6-8

Hearing the Voice of God is assumed in the Scriptures.

How do we respond to “do not harden your hearts?”

Desire

Discernment

Detachment

Plenary Session Notes

Session Title: “The Listening Life: Listening in the Lord”

Presenter: Susan Porterfield Currie

Plea: Luke 8:4-18

“Therefore, consider carefully how you listen.” (v 18)

Posture: 1 Samuel 3:1-21

“The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, ‘Samuel! Samuel!’ Then Samuel said, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’” (v 10)

Ponder: Luke 24:13-35

“They asked each other, ‘Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?’” (v 32)

Presence: Romans 8:26-27

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God.”

Reflection/Spiritual Exercise

“Speak Lord, your servant is listening ...” Pray this simple prayer.

What are you noticing?

What does the Spirit seem to be stirring in your heart?

(take your time – go slow, there is no rush, rest in His presence as you listen and notice)

Plenary Session Notes

Session Title: “When God Seems Silent”

Presenter: Neal Siler

Reflection/Spiritual Exercise

Reflection/Spiritual Exercise

Desolation draws us away from our deepest longings and desires. The further we are drawn away from our deep desires, the more silent God seems.

How might God's silence be an opportunity for growth and finding light in our personal darkness?

How do you reconcile your "how long moment" with God's presence as sanctuary?

How does the image of "Ezekiel's Stream" or "Living Water" provide a sense of grounding when God seems silent?

Plenary Session Notes

Session Title: “The Voice of God in Suffering”

Presenter: Ted Wueste

For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

Two prisoners whose cells adjoin communicate with each other by knocking on the wall. The wall is the thing which separates them but is also their means of communication. It is the same with us and God. Every separation is a link. Simone Weil

Three elements of hearing God’s Voice in Suffering:

1. *The Prayer of Lament*

2. *Integrating Our Story into THE Story*

3. *Presence*

Welcome, welcome, welcome. I welcome everything that comes to me today because I know it's for my healing. I welcome all thoughts, feelings, emotions, persons, situations, and conditions. I let go of my desire for power and control. I let go of my desire for affection, esteem, approval and pleasure. I let go of my desire for survival and security. I let go of my desire to change any situation, condition, person or myself. I open to the love and presence of God and God's action within. Amen.

(a prayer attributed to Thomas Keating)

Plenary Session Notes

Session Title: “Remaining Present in a Noisy World”

Presenter: Neal Siler

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*A Step by Step Guide to the Three R's Spiritual Practice
From “Every Breathe We Take” by Terry Wardle*

What follows is a step by step guide for positioning a person to use the Three R's as a present moment spiritual practice. As presented, it does not designate the context or the amount of time to be given to the exercise. It can be used for personal devotional time, one on one spiritual direction, group experience or a corporate gathering. The guide has been used effectively as a brief spiritual practice, five to seven minutes, or a longer experience of contemplation. The chosen length should be determined by the context and time available.

- I encourage you to take a posture of receptivity that is comfortable and promotes stillness. I suggest that you sit in an upright position, feet firmly placed on the floor, hands resting on your thighs. Eliminate any all anticipated distractions. Allow yourself to sit quietly, consciously aware of stillness and silence around and within you.*
- Breathe in deeply through your nostrils using your abdomen. Hold the breathe gently, then exhale deeply through your mouth by a regulated blowing. Do this slowly, three or four times. With each breath become more conscious of the rhythm of your breathing. Choose to become an observer of your own pattern of breathing. Notice your body beginning to relax, inviting deeper levels of stillness and silence to enter your mind and body.*
- Distractions may come, attempting to draw you back into past/future concerns. Stay focused on the rhythm of your breathing, allowing these thoughts to simply pass through like clouds rolling across a clear blue sky. If you find that you have been enticed away from the stillness, simply return by concentrating again on your breathing. Allow yourself to return without judgment or frustration, using the pattern of deep breathing in and gently blowing through your mouth to anchor you in the present moment.*
- Invite the Holy Spirit to be present in your awareness. Combine your deep breathing with a simple invocation, “Come Holy Spirit.” Allow the breath and the prayer to join together as one. You may find it helpful to pray the word “Come” in your mind as you inhale, and “Holy Spirit” as you exhale. Stay present with awakened awareness, sensitive to the movement of the Holy Spirit in, upon, and through you.*

Plenary Session Notes

Session Title: “Remaining Present in a Noisy World”

Presenter: Neal Siler

- *Invite the Holy Spirit to sanctify your imagination, using your mind to create episodic images that deeply engage you in the present moment. Invite his presence and help as you move toward and through the first doorway of contemplation, “**Rest in My Presence.**”*
 - *Contemplate the invitation of Jesus, “Come to me ... and I will give you rest.” Let the words go deep into your soul.*
 - *Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a picture of Jesus inviting you to rest with him. See yourself move toward him in stillness and silence.*
 - *Listen to the invitation, “Rest in Me”. No more striving or performing. Let go of all anxious care. Our Father has taken care of everything. There is nothing to prove, nothing to do, you are home. Stay with me and rest.*
 - *Be present ... embrace awareness.*
 - *What images has the Holy Spirit brought to mind?*
 - *What have you heard, seen, touched, tasted, or smelled?*
 - *What feelings have arisen?*
 - *Notice the stillness and silence in your body.*
 - *Rest in awakened awareness of the presence of God with you in the sacramental moment.*
- *Are you ready? Let’s move deeper into the present moment, entering through the second doorway, “**Receive My Love**”.*
 - *Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a picture of God loving you, personally, intimately.*
 - *Contemplate these words from your Father. “You are my child . . . I love you with an everlasting love. Nothing will separate you from my eternal love. Nothing. Let me love you . . . lavishly.*
- *Be present to the love of God, in stillness and silence.*
 - *Be present ... embrace awareness.*
 - *What images has the Holy Spirit brought to mind?*
 - *What have you heard, seen, touched, tasted, or smelled?*
 - *What feelings have arisen?*

Plenary Session Notes

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- *Notice the stillness and silence in your body.*
- *Rest in awakened awareness of the presence of God with you in the sacramental moment.*
- *Are you ready? The Lord invites you to move to and through the third doorway, “**Respond to My Love.**” Continue to stay anchored in the rhythm of your breathing, and the constant invocation, “Come Holy Spirit.”*
 - *Invite the Holy Spirit to create a picture of you present with the Lord.*
 - *What feelings are rising within you? Tell Him, ... your Father wants to know everything about you.*
 - *How do you want to respond to God? Worship, adoration, thanksgiving? Is there something welling up inside that you want to say, or do? Respond to God. You are his child and He is listening.*
 - *Be present ... embrace awareness.*
 - *What images has the Holy Spirit brought to mind?*
 - *What have you heard, seen, touched, tasted, or smelled?*
 - *What feelings have arisen?*
 - *Notice the stillness and silence in your body.*
 - *Rest in awakened awareness of the presence of God with you in the sacramental moment.*
- *The time has come to conclude this exercise. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you hold every present moment blessing that you have experienced.*
- *Once again be conscious of your breathing, taking three or four deep breaths through your nostrils using your abdomen, exhaling gently through your mouth. As you do, combine this simple prayer, “Thank You, Lord Jesus.” You may find it helpful to say “Thank You” as you inhale, and “Lord Jesus” as you exhale.*
- *Amen!*

Plenary Session Notes

Session Title: “The Listening Life: Listening with the Lord Jesus”

Presenter: Susan Porterfield Currie

Synagogue:

Luke 2:41-52

Spirit:

Matthew 4:1

Matthew 4:12-14 (“anachoresis”)

Solitude:

Luke 4:38-44

Summary:

Reflection/Spiritual Exercise

Reflection/Examen

As you sit reflectively and prayerfully with the Lord, review these last few days with the Lord. Let the Spirit guide your heart and mind into what He might want you to notice.

What did the Spirit highlight for you as you walk through the conference with Him?

Pray and seek God's heart in this ...

What are the invitations that are coming out of these two days?

What might it look like to move more fully into a listening life?

What are some next steps for you?

Thank you for participating in this conference!

Check out our coming offerings to help you take care of your soul and nurture a listening life. From Soul Care experiences, Silent Prayer Retreats, Workshops, Podcasts, and more – learn more at sfsaz.org