

A Journey into God's Sanctuary

***Embracing God's Transformative Spirit
For a Flourishing and Fulfilling Life***

**Hickory, North Carolina
September 30-October 6, 2025**

If you are spiritually minded and seek deeper connection with God in nature and yourself, join us for a retreat where you'll leave with a renewed spirit, profound peace, and practical tools for leading a more purposeful, spiritually enriched life in harmony with God, his creation, and those around you.

Surrounded by trees on a winding road as you slowly enter the beautiful retreat center grounds, **a sense of tranquility and peace greets you with inspiring thoughts of meeting God** in this place of rest and rejuvenation.

In this serene northwest corner of Catawba County, North Carolina, lies a sanctuary of serenity and splendor, a place where the **whispers of the woods beckon you to pause, breathe, and rediscover the divine harmony within and around you.** It is truly a haven of peace cradled by 180 acres of *landscaped beauty and untamed natural wonder.*

Here, amidst the embrace of towering trees and the gentle rustle of leaves, you will find a multitude of **ways to re-energize your mind, body, and soul.** Modest trails wind gracefully through the woods, offering serene reflection points where you can sit in stillness, listen to the symphony of nature, and *feel the presence of God in the very air you breathe.*

For those with a spirit of adventure, the adjacent Baker Mountain Park extends an invitation to explore its more challenging trails, where each step brings you



closer to the heart of the wilderness and the essence of creation itself. As you hike these paths, **let the rugged beauty of the landscape invigorate your senses and deepen your connection with our Creator.**

So tell me, is this you?

- You long for a **deeper, more meaningful connection with God and with like-minded community.**
- You experience at times spiritual stagnation and aspire to a **more fulfilling and vibrant devotional life.**
- You find yourself facing health fears and poor habits, motivating you to pursue a **healthier lifestyle.**
- You believe in God's healing presence and are eager to discover **how to embrace this gift** in body, soul and spirit to achieve wholeness.
- You struggle to balance your spiritual life, family, and work, seeking **ways to be more fully present for your loved ones.**



When you come looking for me, you'll find me.
Yes, when you get serious about finding me
and want it more than anything else,
I'll make sure you won't be disappointed.

Jeremiah 29:13-14

Imagine yourself by the end of this transformative journey...

- **Cultivating a deeper, more meaningful connection with God and a supportive community** sharing your spiritual beliefs.
- **Welcoming a revitalized, prayer life** and discovering fresh tools for prayerfully and experientially, knowing God better through the study of scripture.
- Feeling **motivated to pursue a healthier lifestyle and a greater sense of well-being**, confronting health, fears, and poor habits with confidence.
- Joyfully **embracing God's healing presence in body, soul, and spirit**, as you journey toward an abundant, wholesome, and flourishing life.
- Discovering insightful and impactful **ways to be more fully present for your loved ones**, balancing your spiritual life, family, and work.

Join us on this retreat, where nature's embrace becomes a gateway to experiencing the profound presence of God. Let the beauty of Catawba County's natural order renew your spirit, refresh your soul, and rekindle the joy of your spiritual journey in life. Here, amidst the wonders of creation, find the peace, purpose, and presence you seek.

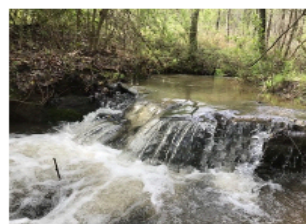
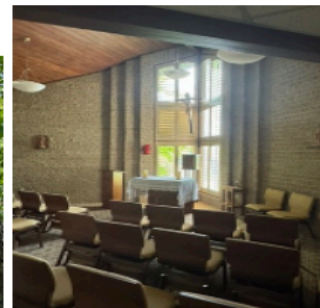
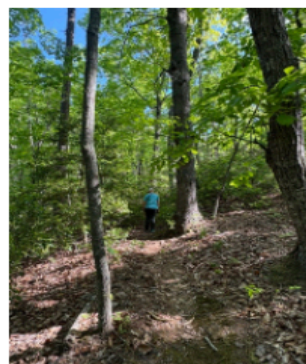
You'll be delighted and captivated by the retreat center's serene beauty, nestled among tranquil forest trails, offering an inspiring and inviting sense of peace.

Nature is not only all that is visible to the eye-it also includes the inner pictures of the soul. Spending time in nature helps us remember our place in the world, reconnect with the essence of life, and rekindle a sense of wonder and gratitude.

...

When I walk into the woods, I'm enveloped by a cathedral of trees. The forest is a sanctuary where I can connect with something larger than myself and find a sense of peace and renewal.

Parker J. Palmer



My Heart Says Yes...

[REGISTER ME NOW!](#)





Come savor the flavors where North meets South during your retreat with us. The dining service offers a delightful array of breakfast, lunch, and dinner options, served buffet style to ensure you can enjoy as much or as little as you desire. Each meal is crafted with care, featuring not only hearty main courses but also a signature salad or a fresh salad bar, allowing you to balance your plate with vibrant, nutritious choices.

The dining experience here is more than just a meal; it's a celebration of local flavors and culinary artistry. Our full-time chef takes great pride in curating a menu that reflects the rich heritage of northern and southern cuisine, with a commitment to using fresh, locally-sourced ingredients. Each dish is prepared with a touch of love and a dash of creativity, making every meal a memorable part of your retreat experience. And for those with specific dietary needs, rest assured that our chef is more than happy to accommodate, ensuring everyone can enjoy the feast.

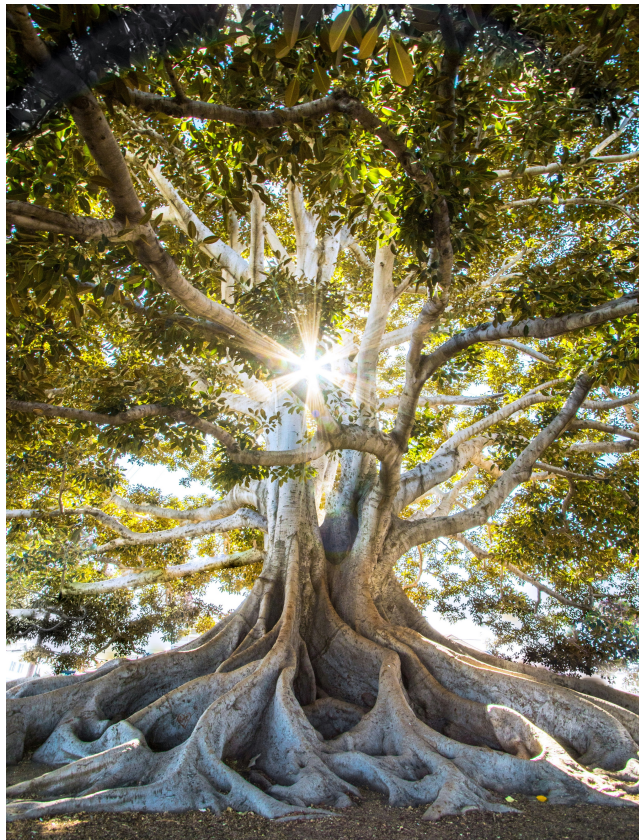
Imagine sipping a cup of freshly brewed coffee as you watch the sunrise over the tranquil forest trails, or enjoying a refreshing glass of iced tea as the afternoon sun filters through the trees. Our beverage selection, which includes coffee, tea, water, and juice, is thoughtfully chosen to complement your meals and enhance your dining experience. Every detail, from the first sip to the last bite, is designed to delight your senses and nourish your spirit.

Join us at the retreat center, where every meal becomes a feast for the senses and a celebration of community. Here, amidst the serenity of nature and the warmth of fellowship, you'll find that dining is not just about sustenance, but about connection, renewal, and the simple joy of savoring life's beautiful moments.



The Journey Begins: Arrival and Settling In

Upon your arrival on Tuesday afternoon, you'll have the opportunity to settle into your cozy accommodations and explore the enchanting retreat center and its serene surroundings. Take this time to connect with fellow retreatants, forming the first threads of a community bound by a shared quest for spiritual renewal. As the sun sets, we'll gather as a full group for a welcoming dinner, sharing our first meal together and beginning the journey of the week ahead.



Evening Orientation and Week's Overview

After dinner, we will have a brief orientation session to introduce you to the week's activities. Each morning session will commence with a chapel service, drawing us into the daily theme. These themes are designed to deepen your connection to Christ and creation, exploring topics such as:

Christ, the Logos, and Creation
 The Spiritual Significance of Trees in Scripture
 The Science of Nature Walking
 The Interplay Between Physical
 and Spiritual Senses
 Experiential Learning of Transformative
 Christian Prayer Practices

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

John 1:1-4

"Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better."

Albert Einstein

Yes, I want to begin this journey!

[REGISTER ME NOW!](#)



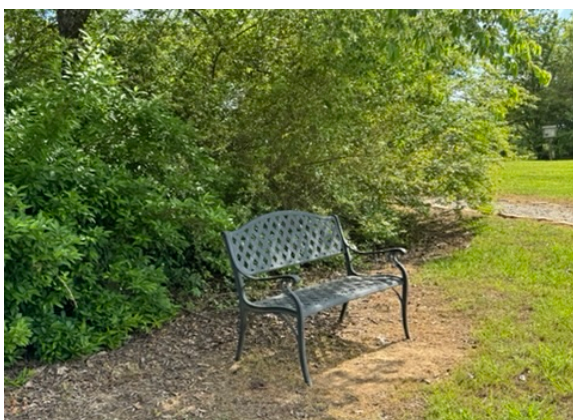
Mornings of Interactive Teaching and Nature Walks

Our days will begin with engaging teaching sessions, followed by forest walks that will immerse us in the beauty of God's creation. These walks will allow us to physically and spiritually connect with the natural world, bringing the morning's teachings to life.



Afternoons of Reflection and Spiritual Direction

Afternoons are reserved for private reflection, offering several hours to meditate and absorb the morning's experiences. This will be followed by both group and individual spiritual direction sessions, as well as inner healing prayer. Our trained spiritual directors and prayer practitioners will guide you through these sessions with care, providing a safe, non-judgmental, and loving environment that opens the door to healing and restoration of your body, soul, and spirit.



Afternoon/Evening Group Processing Sessions

As the day winds down, we will come together for group processing sessions, where we can share insights and reflections, deepening our collective experience. These sessions provide a space to process the day's learnings and experiences, fostering a sense of community and mutual support. Every moment is an opportunity and invitation to discover deeper truths and a more profound connection with God and His creation.



When two of you get together on anything at all on earth and make a prayer of it, my Father in heaven goes into action. And when two or three of you are together because of me, you can be sure that I'll be there.

Matthew 18:19-20, MSG

Yes, I'm ready for a special time of rest and spiritual renewal...

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Daily Specifics

Each daily theme is crafted to guide you on a transformative journey, helping you embrace your spiritual calling, discover new creative outlets, live joyfully in the present moment, resolve personal issues, and forge deep connections with others and with God.

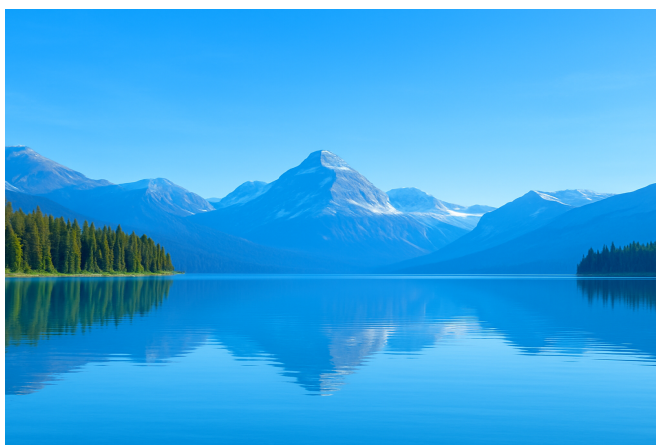
Christ, the Logos, and Creation



Exploring the profound connection between Jesus Christ as the Logos of all creation and how the natural world reveals even the invisible qualities of God's attributes, nature, and presence.

For ever since the world was created, people
have seen the earth and sky.
Through everything God made, they can
clearly see his invisible qualities
—his eternal power and divine nature...

Romans 1:20



The Son is the image of the invisible God,
the firstborn over all creation.
For in him all things were created:
things in heaven and on earth,
visible and invisible...all things have been created
through him and for him.
He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Colossians 1:15-17

I'm really wanting a deeper relationship with God...

[REGISTER ME NOW!](#)



The Spiritual Significance of Trees and Nature in Scripture



Exploring the symbolic and spiritual meanings of trees in the Bible reveals the mystery of God's sanctuary. This journey deepens understanding of how nature reflects His divine attributes. Through immersive teachings, participants will connect more deeply with God, recognizing His presence in the natural world. This enhances spiritual awareness, fosters inner peace, and offers practical insights for a fulfilling, balanced life grounded in God's created order. This experiential understanding begins with an understanding of the meaning of the Tree of Life.

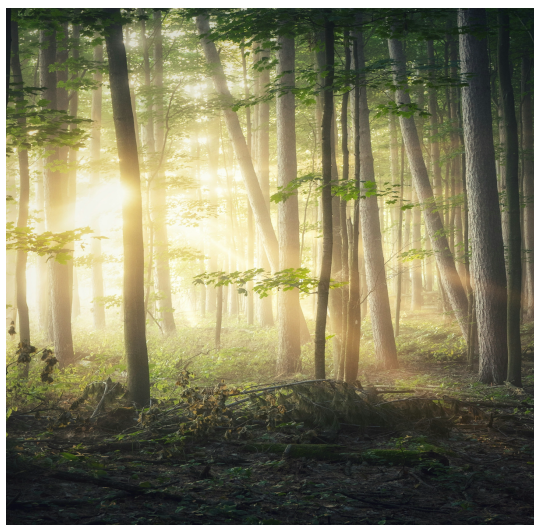
At key points in the biblical story, there's usually a tree somewhere in the mix playing an active role. As a matter of fact, next to human beings, the most often mentioned living object in Scripture is trees.

The Bible Project



... whose delight is in the law of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law day and
night. That person is like a tree planted by
streams of water, which yields its fruit in
season and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.

Psalm 1:2-3



Trees play an important role in the promised
eschatological blessings at the end of the age. They are
representatives of the whole of the renewed created
order, praising the Lord for his righteous judgments:

Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy ...
before the LORD, for he comes ... to judge the earth.

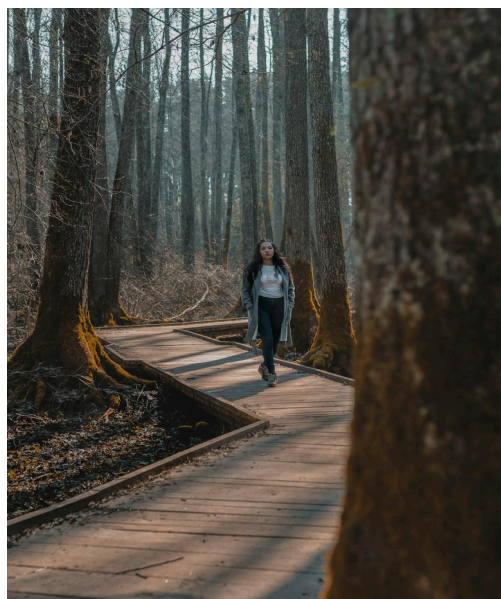
Psalm 96:12-13

The Science of Nature Walking



This retreat provides an opportunity to experience a kind of “nature therapy,” that helps you to connect physically, emotionally and spiritually with your true self. You can learn to embrace holistic self-care by focusing on your body as a temple of the Holy Spirit and gain deep insights into the movement of the Spirit within your body, soul, and mind through group and individual spiritual direction sessions. This journey will deepen your connection with God, enhance your spiritual awareness in all aspects of life, foster inner peace, and offer practical insights for the abundant life that Jesus promises (John 10:10).

Spending time walking in a forested area offers profound and scientifically based benefits to the body, mind, and soul. Physically, it reduces stress levels, lowers blood pressure, and boosts the immune system through exposure to phytoncides, natural compounds emitted by trees. Mentally, it enhances mood, reduces anxiety, and improves cognitive function by providing a tranquil environment that fosters mindfulness and reduces mental fatigue.



Spiritual Direction, the jewel in the crown of soul-care relationships, has been an important part of formal relationships of Christian nurture since the earliest days of the church.

Rather than being for a specialized few, it is highly relevant to every Christian who takes the spiritual journey seriously.

David Benner

"He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end."

Ecclesiastes 3:11



The Healing Interplay Between Physical and Spiritual Senses



During this retreat, as you become more aware of the deep connection between your physical senses and your spiritual senses, you will be able to immerse yourself into a world of healing and wholeness that you may not have previously been aware of in your life. You will have the opportunity to:

- Experience new dimensions of understanding, deepening your insight into the world as reflected in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ.
- Begin the healing journey from past and present traumas through personalized healing prayer sessions, allowing you to move forward from the retreat experience with clarity and peace in your soul as to your place in the world.
- Engage in open, honest discussions within the context of a loving and supportive community, discovering God's active presence together in our polarized world. This empowering experience will help you live fearlessly and make meaningful changes in your life and the lives of others.

Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out;
you formed me in my mother's womb.
I thank you, High God—you're breathtaking!
Body and soul, I am marvelously made!
I worship in adoration—what a creation!

Psalm 139: 13-14



Regardless of how forgotten or hidden, old wounds shape the way people think, feel and respond to life. When they are brought to Jesus in community, the images, senses, feelings, actions, and meanings of the negative past are faced, and processed, released, and then overpowered by his healing presence.

Terry Wardle

Experiencing Transformative Christian Spiritual Formation Practices



The retreat offers experiential teaching in spiritual practices that lead to a deepening of intimate connection with God and increased spiritual awareness, all of which serves to build resilience and fortify your faith, helping you navigate life's challenges with greater confidence and trust in God.

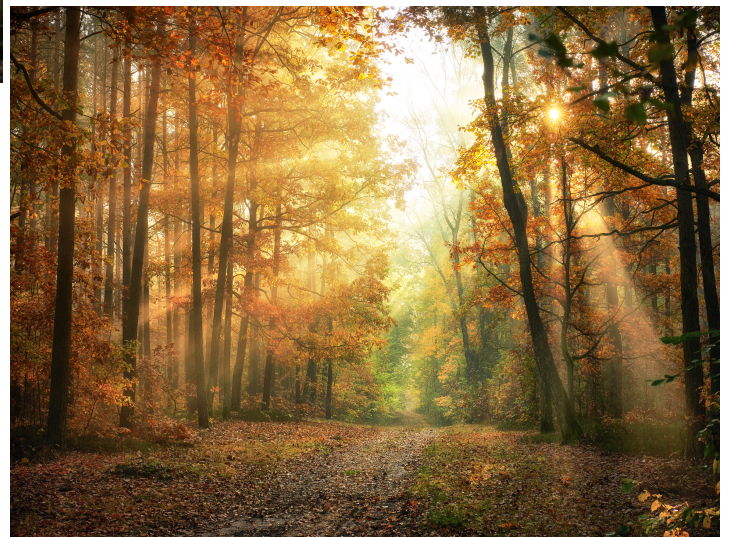


The pathway to unleashing the transformative power of Jesus to heal our spiritual lives is found in the joining of emotional health and contemplative spirituality.

Peter Scazzero

“We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature—trees, flowers, grass—grows in silence; see the stars, the moon and the sun, how they move in silence ... We need silence to be able to touch souls.”

Mother Teresa

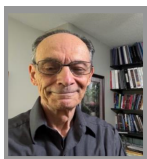


Kingdom praying and its efficacy is entirely a matter of the innermost heart's being totally open and honest before God. It is a matter of what we are saying with our whole being, moving with resolute intent and clarity of mind into the flow of God's action.

Dallas Willard

Retreat Leaders

Larry Hinkle

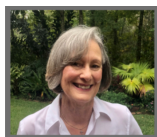


Hi, I'm Larry — a spiritual director, teacher, life discernment coach, and retreat leader passionate about helping people experience God's presence in real, transformative ways. After many years of pastoral service, I discovered that true formation and spiritual leadership doesn't come from just doing more—but from learning to be still, to listen, and to live from the deep center where God meets us.

That's why I started Odyssey in Christ — to create sacred spaces where you can slow down, heal, discern, and reconnect with who you are in Christ. I bring together decades of pastoral wisdom, formal training in counseling, spiritual direction, and neuroscience-informed coaching to help people walk in freedom and love.

Whether you're navigating burnout, discerning your next chapter, or simply longing for more of God in your life, I'd be honored to journey with you.

Carmen Fleming



Hi, I'm Carmen — a spiritual director, retreat leader, and fellow pilgrim on the journey with God. After decades in pastoral ministry alongside my husband, including three years as a social worker in Puerto Rico, I found that true change begins not with busyness, but with stillness, attentiveness, and an openness to God's healing presence.

With a master's degree in Transformative Spirituality, advanced certification in Formational Prayer, and 12 years of experience as a spiritual director, I now help create sacred spaces where others can encounter God's love in real, life-changing ways.

At every retreat, my greatest joy is hearing the sacred stories of how God meets people right where they are — with tenderness, healing, and hope. Wherever life has taken you, I invite you to pause here. Let's walk together into God's presence, where healing and renewal await.

Gracie Johnson



Hello, I am Gracie. As a trained spiritual director, formational prayer facilitator, and servant-steward retreat leader, my greatest passion is helping others experience true transformation through the real and life-changing presence of God.

My own journey — shaped by years of ministry and a profound encounter with divine love — taught me that serving without soul care leads to emptiness. But serving from a place of renewal brings deep joy, freedom, and lasting purpose.

At this retreat, I'll share my personal story of transformation — not as someone who has arrived, but as a fellow traveler who has been met by God's mercy along the way. Together, we'll explore how the Spirit invites us to deeper communion, healing, and authenticity. I invite you to join me in this sacred space, where you can slow down, listen deeply, and step courageously into the life your heart has been longing for.

What's Been Prepared for You — and What You'll Need to Prepare

Prepared For You

- 7 days / 6 nights lodging at a serene, forest-encircled retreat center in Hickory, North Carolina
- All meals provided: Daily buffet-style breakfast, lunch, and dinner using fresh, locally sourced ingredients — including vegetarian options and dietary accommodations
- Opening and closing ceremonies, including group worship, reflection, and celebration
- Daily morning chapel services with teaching themes such as Christ and Creation, Spiritual Significance of the natural order, nature walking, contemplative prayer practices, and more
- Individual and group spiritual direction sessions with trained spiritual directors
- Inner healing prayer sessions, offered in a safe, loving, non-judgmental and supportive environment
- Afternoon reflection and integration time for journaling, silence, and rest
- Evening group processing and discussion circles
- Access to retreat materials, including scripture reflections, prayer prompts, and journaling guides
- Optional embodiment practices, including sensory awareness and nature-based meditation
- A spiritually nourishing community of like-minded retreatants
- Retreat goodie bag with resources and opportunities for continued growth post-retreat

You'll Need to Prepare

- Airfare or transportation to and from the retreat center in Hickory, NC
- Airport shuttle services (however, specialized transportation requests can be provided)
- Personal travel insurance (strongly recommended)
- Medical expenses, hospitalization, or emergency evacuation
- Gratuities for retreat staff services
- Personal items, gifts, souvenirs, or laundry services
- Optional add-on excursions or one-on-one services not explicitly listed above



✨ Ready to Say “Yes” to Something Sacred?

Step into this one-of-a-kind journey where your soul will be renewed, your spirit refreshed, and your heart awakened to the living presence of God in creation. **Reserve your place today** and prepare to be transformed in a sanctuary designed for rest, reflection, and deep connection.

[Register Me Now!](#)



Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion?
Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life.
I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me
and work with me—watch how I do it.
Learn the unforced rhythms of grace.
I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you.
Keep company with me and
you'll learn to live freely and lightly.

Matthew 11:28-30, MSG