

Darlene Hull

CONTEMPLATIVE RETREATS & WORKSHOPS · THE HAND PSALTER · CALGARY

Something to take home in your hands.



Most retreat weekends are a speaker's story and what she learned from it, and the good ones are wonderful. But women often go home moved rather than changed — there's nothing in their hands come Monday.

The Hand Psalter is a tool rather than a talk. A way back into prayer through the body, needing no book, no app, and no quiet room. Only your two hands: one is the garden, the other the gardener.

Jan Mombaer built it in 1494, for monks who prayed all one hundred and fifty psalms aloud every week and mostly just mumbled them forth. We all know what that's like. He called his manual *The Rose Garden of Spiritual Exercises* — though the hand he described was an instrument, a small psalter to be played. It worked, and then it vanished, because it was simply too complicated to learn.

Darlene took the Rose Garden at its word. In her version the hand is an actual garden — a gate, a well, and five plots of ground to tend. Mombaer worked the whole thing in one hand, which is awkward; she spread it across two, gave the left thumb a different job, and broke the teaching into steps a person can actually hold in memory.

WHAT WOMEN TAKE HOME

- **One complete practice** they can use that same night, needing nothing but their own two hands.
- **A twenty-second prayer** for the Tuesday afternoon that has gone sideways.
- **Their own before-and-after**, in their own handwriting. Three questions at the start — about body, heart, and their sense of God — answered again at each stage. Most women are startled by what the paper shows them by the end.
- **The book, if she wants it.** A QR code at the close lets every woman download *Holding Prayer in the Palm of Your Hand* free.

WHY IT WORKS

Mombaer had no language for the vagus nerve, interoception, or relational circuits — he built the practice from lived wisdom five centuries before neuroscience caught up. Darlene teaches both halves: the ancient practice, and the modern reason it settles a nervous system. That lands equally for women wary of anything resembling technique and for women who want to know why it works.

PRACTICAL

Based in Calgary — available across Alberta and further afield; travel by arrangement.

Off-site retreats: accommodation at your venue, with a room of my own. Nothing elaborate — but leading a weekend needs somewhere quiet to reset between sessions.

Fees on request — and there is room to talk about what works for your budget.

The first time I sat with the Hand Psalter, I began to weep. Tears rolled down my cheeks as I had a sense I was standing in the Holy of Holies with God's sweet presence filling the room.

Lois Johnston, D.S.W., B.A.
Retired Child Clinical Therapist

Darlene brings breadth of knowledge and a keen sense of the needs of the learner, with pacing that invites processing at just the right tempo.

Kathy Pyrc
Retired educator, Masters in Curriculum and Instruction · Order of Imago Christi

FORMATS

Weekend retreat Friday evening through Sunday morning — four sessions, the full teaching. Fewer if that suits your weekend better.

Full day The core practice, complete. The shortest the whole teaching fits into.

Four-part series Ninety minutes a session, online — the whole teaching, unhurried, over four weeks.

ABOUT DARLENE

She has been on a stage since she was three. By her twenties she was Music Director for Youth for Christ Germany — training musicians and worship leaders, running workshops in five countries, teaching in English and German. She trained with Dave Bilbrough while helping run one of his workshops, stepping in as his translator mid-seminar when the hired interpreter couldn't manage, and was invited by Graham Kendrick to shadow him at a weekend retreat. In Calgary she led worship at Westview Baptist and spent four years at RockPointe Church, two of them as Assistant Director of Worship.

Then a crisis ended her music ministry overnight. She stayed in church for six months afterwards, unable to sit through a service without weeping, and then left altogether for five years. What brought her back wasn't more effort or better discipline. It was the discovery of contemplative practice — new ground entirely, after a lifetime in church.

The Order of Imago Christi trained her as a spiritual formation coach and an Ignatian Listener, and she helps teach their Discovery programme. She is a vowed member of the Order of the Mustard Seed, for whom she has led two novitiate cohorts. Both are Protestant orders. She teaches from plain Apostles' Creed ground, and has worked with congregations from strict Brethren to full-tilt charismatic. She writes weekly as PraiseWalker — more than three hundred published pieces — and leads three forty-day online seasons a year, having completed six.

Hear it before you decide. Fifteen minutes, and both hands free. The practice starts in the first minute, so you'll know inside two whether this is right for your women.

praisewalker.com/audio/hand-psalter-intro.mp3

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