

Spiritual directors help point the way



The Rev Annie McCabe, who leads our spiritual directors network, explains how they help us to cultivate our relationship with God

ONE of the best kept secrets in the diocese is spiritual direction. What is it? A way to grow in your personal relationship with God.

Spiritual direction gives you space to reflect with someone outside your immediate situation on your own life and experience of God. This may include questions around doubt, failure, confusion and loss, as well as hope, faith, spiritual growth and maturity. It offers you the opportunity to cultivate and deepen your relationship with God, in a safe, non-judgemental and encouraging environment.

Maybe you have been going to church for years or maybe just started. Either way, you could give it a try. After all, being a disciple of Jesus means keeping your L plates on. We are all learners. Here's some of the questions you may have:

Q: Isn't spiritual direction just for clergy? A: No it is open to everyone who wants to grow in their faith whether you are just starting or have been at it for years.

Q: I wouldn't know what to say. My faith is quite private. A: Don't worry, spiritual directors are confidential and excellent listeners

Q: If it is direction, does that mean I will be told what to do? A: No, spiritual directors are really accompaniers. It's a bit like the

Emmaus story (Luke 24: 13-25) where Jesus journeys alongside two disciples. Spiritual directors also walk alongside us on our faith journey.

Spiritual directors also work alongside us on our faith journey

It might be helpful to recount one person's recent experience of spiritual direction: they were feeling confused - in fact quite discombobulated - about where they were on their spiritual journey.

This person would try praying or simply talking to God but felt no connection; this just exacerbated their experience of being alone in a void with feelings of inadequacy. They felt as though they could cry out: "Father, why have you forsaken me!" but knew that could be countered with "it must be I who has forsaken Him" - but why? how?

This person knew of spiritual direction, so contacted the diocese for information. In reading the list of people offering their support, they found someone whose description of their approach raised some hope. In the first meeting, and all meetings since, they felt supported and accepted in their confusion. They felt listened to and heard and

thus able to express their doubts, caution, sadness and grief, all without judgement.

They had found a place to openly and honestly explore where they were and felt validated in the process. Along the way, the spiritual director also gently suggested two books, each of which was well timed. The person found their connection with God again and came 'home'! Now that connection is the strongest ever.

Importantly, the person understood why they had lost contact and, most wonderfully, feels the fullness of who God made them to be in this life and is joyful and excited in anticipation of what God has planned as they continue on their spiritual path.

Our diocese's spirituality team oversees a network of trained spiritual directors across the diocese, who are available to meet with you on a one-to-one basis. People usually meet every one or two months, for about an hour, mostly in person but sometimes online. Some spiritual directors will charge a fee for this ministry and that is made clear at the start of the relationship.

Whatever your church, whatever age you are, whatever your experience of faith, give it a try. Details: www.portsmouth.anglican.org/spiritual-direction