

Engage

Training course for spiritual directors



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A two year course to train participants to act as Christian spiritual directors.

September 2018 - July 2020

Six ten-week terms, Tuesday evenings 7pm sharp - 9.30

Cathedral House, St Thomas' Street, Portsmouth PO1 2HA

Max. 20 participants

What is Christian spiritual direction?

Spiritual direction or accompaniment is **a formal commitment between two people** who do not meet regularly in other contexts (e.g. Sunday worship), in which **the director helps the directee to understand and deepen their relationship with God in a safe and confidential space.** It is a supportive relationship but not a therapeutic relationship such as counselling. It is more akin to the role of a personal trainer than a friend.

So not every conversation about spiritual matters is spiritual direction.

Like a counsellor, a spiritual director will hold back on their own experience and focus on supporting the directee, who can expect certain standards of confidentiality and competence.

This is supported by a commitment to supervision and ongoing training on the part of the spiritual director. Part of the work of a director is to know when to refer their directee for professional therapeutic help.

Spiritual direction is a work of love, listening to the great mystery in people's lives, a work of discernment rather than of fixing problems.

Who is the course for?

Christians of all traditions, both lay and ordained, who are beginning to feel a call to this ministry within the church. It is hoped to have a good balance of men/women, lay/ordained, and all shades of church tradition amongst the course applications.

Applicants need to be secure in their own identity as a Christian. This is not to pigeonhole people into narrow boxes, or to say that you must never struggle with doctrine or practice. But if the director is to take on the responsibility of accompanying someone else's spiritual formation, and to hold a space where a directee can be free to explore God with integrity and openness, then it is essential that the director is deeply rooted in their own faith and practice.

Spiritual directors also need to have a sense of the breadth of traditions of Christian spirituality; applicants must be able to show how they are fed by one or more of these traditions on their own journey. Some core areas of spirituality will be presented on the course through participant seminars.

Applicants will already find that people come to them to talk about prayer, God, faith, the spiritual life... They need to be able to articulate a sense of calling to accompany others on their spiritual

journeys, and to accept responsibility for this as a public ministry within the church.

Applicants need to demonstrate self-awareness as it relates to their own inner process (knowing the importance of balance between being and doing), to their interactions with others, and to relating to people with whom they disagree.

They need to be willing to commit to the professional discipline of supervision and make themselves vulnerable within the confidentiality of the course group.

They must be committed to attending the whole course.

They should show that if they are experiencing major personal issues, they can nevertheless handle the relationship with their directee with appropriate professionalism.

They should be aware of the temptation to use the direction relationship to service their own need for affirmation, and guard against it.

Entry requirements

It will be a requirement to have been seeing a spiritual director for a **minimum of two years** (min. eight meetings).

Participants will also be required to have taken part in a **residential Ignatian individually guided retreat of at least two nights** before beginning the course, and within the last five years.

Your spiritual director will be asked to supply a reference commenting on your suitability for this ministry. All applicants will be called for interview before a place is offered.

We welcome applications from lay people and clergy.



What does the course cover?

- Worship and teaching input from the core team and guest speakers
- basic psychology (e.g. boundaries, transference, life transitions)
- more specifically spiritual issues (e.g. discernment, guilt)
- listening practice in threes and twos
- Professional issues (e.g. accountability, supervision)
- Participants will also commit to regular work with a personal spiritual journal, continuing reflection and some reading.
- Participants will be invited to prepare presentations on selected areas of spirituality from Term 2 onwards.

An overview of course content is on the following page. This is subject to revision, but will give a rough guide.

What does it cost?

£120 per term.

Applicants who worship in churches belonging to the Diocese of Portsmouth will receive a 50% reduction.

Course content (provisional)

Term 1

Reflecting on life journey and own experience of spiritual direction

Journalling, reflection assignments

Introduction to triads (listening practice groups)

Personality type

Introduction to discernment

Desert Fathers and Mothers (team presentation)

The difference between spiritual direction and counselling

Term 2

Benedictine spirituality (participant presentation)

Transference, counter-transference, projection

Celtic spirituality (participant)

Resistance and defence mechanisms

Franciscan spirituality (participant)

The Shadow

Ignatian spirituality (participant)

Case study work on discernment

Term 3

Dealing with being stuck in prayer

Parallel process and red-flag areas

Guilt, confession, healing prayer

Contemplative prayer (from the point of view of the director)

Dark night of the soul and depression

Prayer and relaxation exercises in the direction session

Accompanying a person of different tradition

Life transitions, stages of faith (from the point of view of the director)

Term 4

Communication and personality

Grief and loss

Teresa of Avila (participant presentation)

Accompanying people with more serious difficulties

John of the Cross (participant)

Julian of Norwich (participant)

Deepening discernment

How to structure a spiritual direction session

Introduction to supervision

Moving into one-to-one work

Term 5

The first session with a new directee

Boundaries, contract, review

Safeguarding, lone working

Case studies on discernment

The role of teaching in direction

Extensive one-to-one practice with supervision

Term 6

Practicalities of beginning direction

Accompanying on a Week of Accompanied Prayer

Revision, case studies

Extensive one-to-one practice with supervision.