

Ecumenical Training Programme in Spiritual Direction

The Training Programme in Spiritual Direction takes place over one academic year. Our Programme is designed to enlighten the mind and heart of those called to the joy of accompanying others in their spiritual journeys. The course is also designed to be a rich multi-layered experience, which is practical, academic, experiential and a training programme for anyone seeking to deepen their own spiritual journey and develop their talents and giftedness in accompaniment.

Spiritual direction is about walking with others, with the focus on discerning the invitations of God in their lives. Spiritual direction is about accompanying others with the clear understanding that it is God's Spirit who truly directs. It is about allowing ourselves to be compassionate and instruments of God's peace as we accompany others on their spiritual journeys.

Our Programme builds on the personal and collective wisdom and teachings of many spiritual guides and traditions. It is interactive, creative, informative and challenging. It is designed to be a living experience in the art of discernment and spiritual direction. Its multi-layered modes of instruction and training are designed to allow the participants to integrate the knowledge and skills gained in the course. An important factor in the Programme is the time for personal reflection and integration.



The principal topics covered in the programme:

The nature and purpose of Spiritual Direction also called Accompaniment

The relationship of spiritual direction to Christian discipleship, key skills, qualities and attitudes for an effective spiritual director, spiritual direction and other therapeutic relationships, current national and international guidelines on spiritual direction.

Supporting people through conflict and struggle

Spiritual direction in a time of loss or change, when prayer no longer seems to 'work', supporting those outside formal religious structures, understanding resistance.

Holistic spirituality and psychology

Models of emotional and spiritual development (theories of Fowler and Erikson), personality types, Enneagram and spiritual direction, power of illusion: the false and true self, growing in self-awareness.

Resources for spiritual direction

Image of God, use of Scripture, poetry, art and other media within spiritual direction, tools for listening to the Spirit: Examen, Lectio Divina and journaling.

Prayer and Discernment

The shape of the spiritual journey, developing a contemplative awareness to daily life, supporting the prayer experience of others, discernment within life choices, listening to the Spirit in dreams and the imagination.

Managing a spiritual direction relationship

Clarifying the nature of spiritual direction, boundaries within spiritual direction, reviewing the relationship, understanding transference and creative use of supervision.

Insights from the wider spiritual tradition

Understanding inspiration and difference, the Carmelite, Franciscan and Ignatian models, images of the spiritual path, Word of God, relationality – God, humanity and creation

Spiritual direction practice

Spiritual Direction within residential individually guided retreats, weeks of guided prayer and helping people befriend silence. Imaginative use of Spiritual Accompaniment in modern society.

Spiritual Direction through practice

Attentive listening exercises, spiritual direction triads, case studies, attentiveness to one's own spiritual journey and development

For the most part, the morning session consist of input on the theme of the day with time for discussion and sharing. The afternoon sessions usually involve practical work related to spiritual direction, for example: spiritual direction practice in threes [triads], developing skills in listening and discernment, or exploring different ways of prayer.

Other features of the programme:

- Termly individual meetings with a course tutor
- A requirement to meet with your own spiritual director throughout the course
- Monthly short reflection papers
- Personal prayer and study
- Portfolio of material for Spiritual Direction

Learning outcomes

- to have a clear understanding of the dynamics of the spiritual life
- to be aware of one's own spiritual development and relationship with God
- to be able to see the dynamics of the life of the Spirit in the lives of those one is accompanying and accompany them in their journeying with God
- to have a clear understanding of the dynamics of human and personal development and the part they play in the spiritual life
- to be qualified and experienced as a spiritual director
- be aware of the need for continuous development and learning

Basis of assessment of a student's progress:

- observation of group work, especially in triads
- one-to-one meetings with course tutors
- written reflection exercises

On successful completion of the course you will be presented with a Spiritual Director Certificate. In the rare case of anyone who is felt not to have developed in the ministry of Spiritual Direction a Certificate of Attendance is given. Other students are not aware of anyone receives which certificate.

Our prayer for you, as you inform yourselves about our Spiritual Direction Training Programme, is that the present moment becomes one of genuine encounter with your desire for God. We invite you to consider our Programme as a response to your search for training as spiritual directors. We believe that this training programme will deeply enrich your personal spiritual journey and help you develop and nurture the skills and the spirit of a competent spiritual director.

We are grateful to offer this Programme as we seek to be God's instruments. We welcome you to a life-giving experience as we search and discover God's desires for us. We pray for God's accompaniment as you discern and inform yourselves about our Programme.

This course is run by the Carmelite community of England and Wales.