

Frequently Asked Questions

Individual Spiritual Direction and Group Spiritual Direction

Why is Spiritual Direction helpful?

Spiritual direction is helpful because it enables the directee to focus on and to articulate her or his experience of God in the myriad and mysterious ways in which God is present.

The ways we name God's presence in our lives are diverse. The observations we bring to spiritual direction may show up in our prayer lives or in the longings we articulate but sometimes don't initially observe as prayer. Our observations show up in response to sacred writings, poetry, and Scripture. They show up in our relationships with people. They show up in our experience of the natural beauty of creation. They show up in our failures and our limitations. They show up in all the wonders and challenges of the ordinary events of daily life. We notice them in our dreams, journals, and other practices. They evolve with our current stages of life.

To explore these moments (and our responses and feelings connected to them), we can encounter the mystery of God's loving call at a deeper level. Exploring these moments in the presence of others helps us pay attention and remember.

Who offers Spiritual Direction? And what are their qualifications?

Spiritual direction is a ministry offered by someone who: (1) is committed to her or his own ongoing and developing relationship with God, (2) is called to this ministry by others seeking spiritual guidance, (3) has been trained in a variety of ways inclusive of spirituality, theology, and psychology, and (4) is certified to accompany others in their search for the Holy One.

At the Franciscan Spiritual Center we add to this list: (5) someone who is serving in an accountable community with resources for continued education, confidential supervision, and confidential consultation opportunities, and (6) has been trained in a Franciscan foundational perspective in addition to other perspectives.

When is Spiritual Direction appropriate?

Spiritual direction is appropriate for anyone with a personal commitment to prayer, especially (1) when one desires to deepen an already existing relationship with God, (2) when one is experiencing a significant transition or loss, (3) when one's prayer life seems stagnant or stuck, (4) when one is discerning critical life choices, or (5) when one's vague restlessness leads to a search for something more.

In exploring these experiences and the feelings connected with them, the directee may again encounter the mystery of God and God's loving call at even deeper levels.

How often will we meet?

Generally the rhythm for meeting is once per month. This is by design. It is a contemplative practice and over time, patterns, observations, and prayer may evolve. It is also limited in scope (again by design) in order to emphasize the focus and primary relationship at the heart of spiritual direction. The practice is aimed at your relationship with the Divine. As such, much of the directee's noticing is done in between meetings.

Does spiritual direction cost anything?

It does. The Franciscan Center pays its directors and covers their overhead. We currently offer a sliding scale of \$60 - \$100 per session for individual direction and \$40 for group spiritual direction.

Individual Spiritual Direction services are paid for at the time of service (either online or in person).

Group Spiritual Direction services generally require a minimum four month commitment to a group, so Group Spiritual Direction services are paid in advance (generally online).

How do I find a spiritual director?

You may read about our directors and find their contact information on the webpage entitled, "Our Spiritual Directors." Feel free to reach out to any one of them via email. Similarly, you may contact our offices at info@francisspctr.com or (503) 794-8542.

You may also ask to schedule a Consultation Meeting at no cost. This is best scheduled directly with the spiritual director. A Consultation Meeting can be a good way for you to get a sense of the spiritual director and gauge your readiness to begin this contemplative practice.

Please note, too, we often have students in our supervised training program who you may choose to meet with during their training mentorship. If cost remains a barrier for you, this is often a good starting place (as may be Group Spiritual Direction).

Is it better to meet in person or online?

The decision to meet in person or online (usually via Zoom or video chat) is entirely yours and should be dependent on your preferences, location, and needs. Currently all of our spiritual directors are located in the Portland, Oregon area.

All of our spiritual directors meet with people in-person and online. They are trained to do so and are able to offer the same kind of confidentiality and focus with either method.

Are our conversations confidential?

Except under limited statutory rules (identified below), what you share in spiritual direction is kept confidential by your spiritual director. This is by design to allow you the freedom to fully explore your relationship with God.

In Oregon, spiritual directors are included in the legal framework that protects the confidentiality of clergy communications. We also follow the ethical and professional guidelines of Spiritual Directors International (SDI).

Because we submit to the best practice of requiring all of our spiritual directors to be in ongoing peer supervision, we follow the professional guidelines for how we protect the confidentiality of your conversations in supervision settings.

As spiritual directors, we are mandated reporters for some limited scenarios including harm to self (e.g., threat of suicide), harm to a child (e.g., child abuse), and in some situations harm to a incapacitated or legally vulnerable adult.

What is Group Spiritual Direction?

Group Spiritual Direction (like the process of individual one-on-one spiritual direction) provides a type of regular companionship for the purpose of fostering an individual's intimate relationship with God. Both the format and the facilitation of these groups seek to support people in paying attention to God's presence.

The dynamic at work in Group Spiritual Direction (GSD) is slightly different than individual one-on-one direction. It is done in community. The focus on an individual's relationship with God remains constant, but the group process allows for the building of intimate human connections too. Each group is facilitated by a trained spiritual director who maintains the parameters for sharing and confidentiality. The spiritual director also models and prompts the kind of listening, which supports the spiritual direction process. One objective of Group Spiritual Direction is for members to learn to listen to one another on a deep level.

Sometimes people choose Group Spiritual Direction as an entry point because it is more affordable. But Group Spiritual Direction offers other opportunities and advantages. In listening to others with gentleness and intention, we can become gentler and more attentive to ourselves as well. In offering this to another, we become better spiritual directors to ourselves.

Who will be in my group I join in a Group Spiritual Direction contemplative practice?

Groups are organized, by design, to bring together people who are not already in relationship with one another. Spiritual Direction Groups are not like other groups. Group Spiritual Direction is NOT Bible study, therapy, discussion, social, or a place to seek or give advice. The groups are designed and facilitated to be safe and confidential gatherings where we can practice and process our experiences of the Divine.

What if I want to create a group from people I already know?

You may wish to bring together similarly hearted people into a Group Spiritual Direction practice. You may wish to bring Group Spiritual Direction practices to an existing small group from your church. This is possible and can be rich. Bringing in a trained facilitator can offer an existing group new tools to go deeper with one another. It also can be challenging given the context or history of relationships.

We welcome you to pursue these ideas by first having a conversation with Ann Steigerwald who manages our Group Spiritual Direction ministry. Ann may be reached at our offices (503) 794-8542 or ann@francisspctr.com.

How often does a group meet in Group Spiritual Direction?

We meet regularly. We commit to four months at a time. Most groups do continue. Most groups will have five people but may, occasionally, drop to four participants.

Most groups will meet on Zoom but occasionally we will have a group that meets in person.

What does Group Spiritual Direction cost? And how do I sign up?

The current fee for Group Spiritual Direction is \$160 for a four-month series.

Because we are bringing together groups of people and asking them to commit to a minimum of four months together, we register people for groups normally beginning in September and again in late January.

Online registration is done on our website. Additionally, you may receive a notice of upcoming groups if you subscribe to our newsletter list. And you may contact Ann Steigerwald if you wish to be placed on a waiting list; (503) 794-8542 or ann@francisspctr.com.