

STUDENT SYLLABUS



SSD

School of
Spiritual Direction
Year 1



SustainableFaith
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Our Curriculum

Welcome to **Sustainable Faith's School of Spiritual Direction**, a 2-year formation track leading toward a certificate in this important and still largely neglected form of pastoral care.

In Year 1 you'll receive superb content by way of the books, videos and the contributions of your teacher. You'll also develop excellent listening and observational skills that will serve you and others for a lifetime. But most importantly, you'll be formed in ways that are unimaginable at the beginning of the journey. What happens to you will be the greatest gift of this time.

The cohort model we've developed is a rich experience, providing you with deep community, a safe place to process and explore, to grow in the knowledge of God and self, to be known well by others, to be encouraged and challenged, and to flourish as a child of God. It may even feel like the church you've always wanted to be part of.

We're grateful you've chosen to take your training through us and look forward to this exciting journey with you.



Module 1

Candlelight: Illuminating the Art of Spiritual Direction

– Susan S. Phillips

Most books talk about spiritual direction, but few take you inside the actual session in the way Susan Phillips does. In this intimate and descriptive book, you get to be the fly on the wall, hearing the give and take of conversations, listening to the interior voice of the director, watching the growth of the director-directee relationship and witnessing the spiritual maturation of the nine directees she presents.

Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship and Direction

– David Benner

Benner's book is a solid, accessible and "Protestant-friendly" introduction to spiritual direction and friendship.

Module 2

Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction

– Margaret Guenther

Margaret Guenther is like a desert Ammah, and her classic work is one of the most widely required readings in spiritual direction training. Her wisdom, earthiness, humor, stories and great practicality all engender trust.

Anatomy of the Soul: Surprising Connections Between Neuroscience and Spiritual Practices That Can Transform Your Life and Relationships

– Curt Thompson, M.D.

Thompson's book will convince you like few others of 1) the power of our stories, our self-narrative; 2) the healing power of being heard / of feeling "felt";

3) the capacity to be deeply changed, to take on new behaviors; 4) the role of emotions; and 5) the pervasiveness of shame.

Module 3

The Enneagram:

– (teacher's choice)

Books on the Enneagram are too numerous to mention here, but we favor those that present the Enneagram as a spiritual tool for conversion (growing into the image and likeness of Jesus) over those that present it as a psychological or personality profile ... or as a quasi-spiritual tool unanchored from any sense of a personal God.

The Gift of Being Yourself: The Sacred Call to Self-Discovery

– David Benner

Benner presents Christian identity and self-discovery as a part of spiritual growth. Beginning with the premise that there is no deep knowledge of God without deep knowledge of self, and using false self / true self language (what biblical writers called "the old man" and "the new man") Benner encourages us to find our uniqueness in Christ, which naturally leads to our God-given destiny and vocation.

Module 4

Seeking God Together: An Introduction to Group Spiritual Direction

– Alice Fryling

Fryling provides a clear introduction specifically for group spiritual direction, where individuals can experience what it means to be heard and loved by others in order to listen more attentively to God in their daily lives. She offers practical, step-by-step guidance for those who would like to start, lead or participate in group spiritual direction. Her book equips us for the different aspects of the group experience, including learning to listen to God, using Scripture in a group, navigating different personalities, setting group expectations and asking life-giving questions.

What's Your Decision?: How to Make Choices with Confidence and Clarity: An Ignatian Approach to Decision Making

– Father Michael J. Sparough, SJ and Jim Manney

In *What's Your Decision?* the authors introduce readers to a time-tested, Ignatian approach to effective decision-making. The book addresses common questions such as “What’s important and what’s not when it comes to making decisions?”, “Can I ever trust my gut?” and “What do I really want?” The goal is to help us make a God-decision in order to make a good decision. Inviting God, who cares deeply about what we do, into the decision-making process, provides freedom to make the best choice.

Module 5

The Practice of Spiritual Direction

– William A. Barry, SJ and William Connolly

Many people regard this book, which appeared in 1982 and reintroduced spiritual direction to the modern world, as the best book available on the topic. Although it's less personal than, say, Guenther's *Holy Listening* or Phillips's *Candlelight*, it's unparalleled in terms of scope and depth, giving us insights we can return to again and again. We purposefully waited until the 5th module to introduce this book, believing that students will be in a much better position developmentally to benefit from its depth.

The Critical Journey: Stages in the Life of Faith

– Janet Hagberg & Robert Guelich

The Critical Journey introduces our students to stages of development in faith, describing in detail the six fundamental stages: the recognition of God, the life of discipleship, the productive life, the journey inward, the journey outward, and the life of love. Additionally the authors unpack the experience of hitting “The Wall,” a high-stakes moment (usually in midlife) where our own will comes face-to-face with God's will, where a new and more satisfying trajectory can be set if we're willing to relinquish most of what we have clung to faithfully. We use this book to help us locate ourselves and consider what fruitful spiritual direction looks like when it is “stage conscious.”

Receive Spiritual Direction

(8-9 sessions minimum). You meet monthly with your spiritual director during your 1st year of formation.

Offer Spiritual Direction

(10 sessions minimum). Meet with 2 directees per month, starting as soon as possible after the Module 1 Intensive.

Complete the Core Reading

(10 books / 2 per module). Listed in the syllabus.

Receive Supervision

(4 sessions minimum). You'll submit 4 audio recordings from your sessions with your directees. We'll use these to provide you with supervision. You'll also have the opportunity for group supervision in the last 2 modules.

Complete Summary Reflections

(Four). Upload a 2-page maximum *Summary Reflection* prior to Modules 2-5. Your teacher will say more about this, but typically you'll reflect on the following: 1) your experience of receiving direction (or supervision); 2) your experience of offering direction; 3) how the core reading is impacting you; 4) pertinent life circumstances; 5) questions regarding spiritual direction that are emerging for you.

Attend All Module Intensives

(Five). The face-to-face modules are critical. In the event of sickness or emergencies, form a plan with your teacher for making up missed work. You can do some through additional supervision and 1-on-1 time with another teacher in our organization. (There may be an extra cost for this, especially if you meet online with another one of our expert facilitators to cover material you've missed.)

Timely Payment

If you didn't pay the full balance up front but chose instead to spread out your tuition payments, please stay on top of it. It's a matter of personal integrity to make timely (i.e., monthly) payments. Keep in mind that *if you fail to pay for a month or more, then your teacher doesn't get paid.*

MODULE 1 Intro to Spiritual Direction 1

Theological Focus

Spiritual direction as a form of pastoral care and subset of spiritual formation: theological assumptions underpinning spiritual direction

Formational Focus

Humility, patience, hope, prayer, silence, love

Skill Development

Listening, asking questions, making observations, noticing interior movements

Practices / Exercises

Story Lab, Lectio Divina; Liturgical Prayer, Theological Assumptions

Reading Debrief

Candlelight, Phillips
Sacred Companions, Benner

MODULE 2 Intro to Spiritual Direction 2

Theological Focus

Love, Acceptance and Forgiveness over Shame

Formational Focus

Humility, patience, hope, prayer, silence, love

Skill Development

Continued development of listening, observations, questions, interior movements

Practices / Exercises

Story Lab, Prayer of Examen, Location Exercise, Triad work

Reading Debrief

Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction, Margaret Guenther
Anatomy of the Soul, Curt Thompson, M.D.

MODULE 3 Self-Awareness / Enneagram

Theological Focus

The Glory of God Within Us (via lens of the Enneagram)
Seeing the Enneagram Triads in Scripture

Formational Focus

Growth in Self-Awareness

Skill Development

Understanding & Using the Enneagram

Practices / Exercises

Centering Prayer, Visual Journaling, Triads and/or Group Supervision

Reading Debrief

Enneagram book of teacher's choosing
The Gift of Being Yourself, Benner

MODULE 4 Discernment / Group Direction

Theological Focus

Discernment

Formational Focus

Discern more comprehensively
Expand modes of discernment

Skill Development

Learn how to set up and lead Group Spiritual Direction & Clearness Committee
Better direction through supervision

Practices / Exercises

Desolation / Consolation Exercise (Psalms 42-43)
Jesuit Discernment Exercise
Group Spiritual Direction
Clearness Committee
Group Supervision via CRF / Dialog Form

Reading Debrief

Seeking God Together, Fryling
What's Your Decision?, Sparough & Manney

MODULE 5 Stages of Faith

Theological Focus

The Image & Likeness of God (Orthodox understanding: from "original glory" to glory restored)

Formational Focus

Reflection on Christian Maturity and Harvest Exercise

Skill Development

The practice of direction in various faith stages
Better direction through supervision

Practices / Exercises

Lectio Divina, Reflection on Christian Maturity
Promo piece: SD to others
Naming Strengths and Weaknesses as Directors
Naming "Best Practices"
Group Supervision using CRF / Dialog Forms, Harvest Exercise

Reading Debrief

The Practice of Spiritual Direction, Barry & Connolly
The Critical Journey, Hagberg & Guelich

Module 1

Intro to Spiritual Direction, Part 1

Theological Focus

Spiritual direction as a form of pastoral care and subset of spiritual formation: theological assumptions underpinning spiritual direction

Formational Focus

Humility, patience, hope, prayer, silence, love

Skill Development

Listening, asking questions, making observations, noticing interior movements

Practices / Exercises

Story Lab
Lectio Divina
Liturgical Prayer
Theological Assumptions

Reading Debrief

Candlelight, Phillips
Sacred Companions, Benner

Objectives:

- Frame the ministry of spiritual direction in the larger context of spiritual formation.
- Experience the importance of the story.
- Learn to listen with attention, patience and love.
- Develop questions & observations suitable for spiritual direction.
- Notice our own interior movements, both productive and counter-productive.
- Notice our leanings / biases (e.g., inordinate desire to help, teach, avoid conflict, etc.).
- Distinguish between spiritual direction, counseling, mentoring, coaching, etc.
- Name the qualities of an effective spiritual director.
- Discuss and enumerate theological assumptions underpinning spiritual direction.
- See how humility, trust, silence, reflective pause, and prayer contribute to good SD.
- Experience a session of lectio divina.
- Watch a live SD session (modeled by teacher).
- Consider meeting space (aesthetics, furniture placement, door) and hospitality.

In this first module story has a preeminent place. It is sacred ground and the foundation for the ministry of spiritual direction. It can only be so, for how we see, understand and speak of our lives is always and necessarily tied to our experience of and conversation with God. In this module and the next, we use the stories that are shared to deepen our listening, refine our questions, sharpen our observations, pay attention to interior movements, and see more clearly the various dynamics of spiritual direction.

Module 2

Intro to Spiritual Direction, Part 2

Theological Focus

Love, Acceptance and Forgiveness over Shame

Formational Focus

Humility, patience, hope, prayer, silence, love

Skill Development

Continued development of listening, observations, questions, interior movements

Practices / Exercises

Story Lab
Prayer of Examen
Location Exercise
Triad work

Reading Debrief

Holy Listening: The Art of Spiritual Direction, Margaret Guenther
Anatomy of the Soul, Curt Thompson, M.D.

Objectives:

- Acquire additional formational tools by experiencing the Prayer of Examen and the Spiritual Location Exercise.
- Deepen our “triadic ear” (listening to God, directee, self) via storytelling.
- Debrief together Holy Listening; look at role of hospitality, teaching, self-care in SD.
- Create list of major gifts from Holy Listening.
- Discuss neuroplasticity, entanglement, emotions, shame (using *Anatomy of the Soul*).
- Create list of memorable parts of *Anatomy of the Soul*.
- Discuss what goes into forming good spiritual direction questions.
- Time permitting, watch Brené Brown’s video on “Vulnerability” (and “Shame”).
- Begin Triad work.
- First experience of supervision / become acquainted with the CRF & Dialogue Form.

In Module 2 we continue to share our stories, using them as springboards to learn about the various dynamics at play in spiritual direction. You also experience the Ignatian (Prayer of) Examen and the Spiritual Location Exercise, two forms of prayer that can be mainstays for your own formation as well as a help for your directees. Another key development in Module 2 is the in-house practice of offering 20-min spiritual direction sessions in triads as a way of gaining experience and getting valuable feedback. Over time our triads eventually transition into something called group supervision, to which you also gain first exposure in this module.

Module 3 Self-Awareness & The Enneagram

Theological Focus

The Glory of God Within Us (via lens of the Enneagram)
Seeing the Enneagram Triads in Scripture

Formational Focus

Growth in Self-Awareness

Skill Development

Understanding & Using the Enneagram

Practices / Exercises

Centering Prayer
Visual Journaling
Triads and/or Group Supervision

Reading Debrief

Enneagram book of teacher's choosing
The Gift of Being Yourself, Benner

Objectives:

- Link growth in self-awareness with growth in knowing God (receiving and giving love).
- Acquire a biblical framework for understanding the Enneagram triads.
- Learn the Enneatypes / Identify one's own Enneatype.
- Learn the passions (vices), fixations and virtues of the Enneatypes.
- Learn the particular "face of God" in each Enneatype.
- Learn Wing Theory / Identify one's dominant wing.
- Learn Arrows (Lines) of Desolation & Consolation / Identify one's own stress patterns.
- Gain first exposure to Instinctual Variants (Subtypes).
- Discuss how the Enneagram can function in spiritual direction.
- Consider appropriate spiritual disciplines for various Enneatypes.
- Acquire further resources for learning about the Enneagram (books, testing, etc.).

This is by far our most content-heavy module. We emphasize the following in teaching the Enneagram: 1) it's one of many tools for self-understanding, capturing part of reality and the human condition, not all; 2) the triads have a biblical foundation, seen most clearly in the Temptation of Jesus; 3) proper use of the Enneagram should grow compassion for self and others; 4) it's best used for ourselves, not to diagnose and treat others; 5) we use it in spiritual direction to help confirm what the Spirit is already doing in the directee; 6) we don't use it overtly in spiritual direction unless we're well-versed in it and our directee asks to explore it as a means of growing in self-understanding.

Module 4

Discernment & Group Direction

Theological Focus

Discernment

Formational Focus

Discern more comprehensively / Expand modes of discernment

Skill Development

Learn how to set up and lead Group Spiritual Direction & Clearness Committee
Better direction through supervision

Practices / Exercises

Desolation / Consolation Exercise (Ps 42-43)
Discernment Exercise
Group Spiritual Direction
Clearness Committee

Reading Debrief

Seeking God Together, Fryling
What's Your Decision?, Sparough & Manney

Objectives:

- Experience 2 forms of group discernment direction: Fryling's model and the Clearness Committee.
- Grow in our understanding and experience of group dynamics in spiritual direction.
- Learn elements that contribute to healthy discernment.
- Gain a clear picture of what consolation & desolation are from an Ignatian perspective.
- Gain a clear picture of what detachment & holy indifference are from an Ignatian perspective; identify our own disordered attachments.
- Experience solitude and silence as precursors to discernment.
- Set up an individual plan for a half-day of solitude & silence.
- Practice supervision (via either Verbatim or CRF).

Module 4 is heavy on the topic of discernment. Although discernment per se will hardly be unfamiliar to you, this module will likely provide you with your first guided experience of Ignatian-style discernment, introducing you to a clear process and to less familiar and less practiced ways of listening to God and self. In order to aid discernment, we also spend time on the concepts of consolation-desolation, ordered and disordered attachments, and holy indifference. Additionally, you experience two distinct forms of group discernment: group spiritual direction and the clearness committee.

Module 5 Stages of Faith

Theological Focus

Created in the Image of God; Growing in the Likeness of God
(Orthodox understanding: from “original glory” to glory restored)

Formational Focus

Noticing the good work God has accomplished
(via Reflection on Christian Maturity and Harvest Exercise)

Skill Development

Refining the practice of direction in various faith stages
Better direction through supervision

Practices / Exercises

Lectio Divina, Reflection on Christian Maturity
Promo piece: explaining spiritual direction to others
Naming Strengths and Weaknesses as Directors
Naming “Best Practices” in spiritual direction
Group Supervision using CRF / Dialogue Forms
Harvest Exercise

Reading Debrief

The Practice of Spiritual Direction, Barry & Connolly
The Critical Journey, Hagberg & Guelich

Objectives:

- Sharpen the practice of spiritual direction via final work in supervision
- Develop & share a short explanation of spiritual direction to the uninitiated
- Identify one’s current strengths & weaknesses as a spiritual director
- Review good practices in spiritual direction
- Learn the stages of faith development as named in *The Critical Journey*
- Reflect on and name features of Christian maturity
- Become acquainted with opportunities for further training & support
- Reflect, via Harvest Exercise, on the movements of God in one’s life & ministry over the past year
- Celebrate! Bless & encourage one another before leaving!

Explicating the faith journey in terms of stages is an eye-opening experience, often leading to an engaging discussion on the arrested development of the Western church. But what we want more is for you to become “stage-sensitive” in offering direction. Beyond this, Module 5 is designed largely to help you: 1) review / restate what’s important in spiritual direction; 2) recognize and celebrate what God has done over Year 1; 3) think about your next steps; and 4) receive a final blessing!