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refresh

JOURNAL OF
CONTEMPLATIVE
SPIRITUALITY

Spiritual Direction

25
Years
SPECIAL
EDITION

WELCOMING
THE STRANGER
David Crawley

ICONS OF
SPIRITUAL DIRECTION
Adrienne Thompson

TENDING MY
INNER GARDEN
Tay Marie Yorston



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Spiritual direction
is, in reality, nothing more than
a way of leading us to see
and obey the real Director -
the Holy Spirit hidden in
the depths of our soul.
Thomas Merton



Opening Blessing

By Refresh Editor
Kathryn Overall-Cass

In this 25-year special edition of *Refresh*, we shine a light on spiritual direction - exploring this contemplative practice through voices from Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond. We hope it will be a gift to both seasoned practitioners and those just discovering this aspect of our Christian lineage.

Spiritual direction is not easy to explain. Nevertheless, definitions and descriptions offer a doorway into this relational practice - and once in the room, you can explore and experience it for yourself.

We set the scene on the adjoining page with a definition from Trappist monk, Thomas Merton. The word that always catches my attention is *hidden*. It subverts my sense of responsibility and control in my spiritual journey and makes me curious about God's initiatives within me. What are these depths where the Holy Spirit resides, and how might we become aware of them? Could spiritual direction support us in the adventure of opening to the unknown depths of ourselves? To God?

As I ponder Merton's wisdom, I'm reminded of Paula D'Arcy's insight that 'God comes to us disguised as our life'.

This suggests that the sacred is woven through our ordinary circumstances and experiences - not contained in some rarefied compartment accessed on Sundays or in prayer times. This makes all of life grist for the mill of spiritual growth - full of invitation and possibilities.

Having a trusted person to help you listen to your life and notice where God is at work is of priceless value. Spiritual direction offers such a gift. The contributors in this issue offer us doorways into their own rooms - sharing the stories, wisdom and growth that have come about through the grace of this ministry of listening. May you be blessed as you read and explore for yourself. And perhaps you might like to pass this issue on or share the digital edition (available at sgm.org.nz) with someone who may be glad you did.

Ready to explore?

Find a spiritual director:

sgm.org.nz/find-a-spiritual-director

Train as a spiritual director:

sgm.org.nz/spiritual-directors-formation-programme

KATHRYN OVERALL-CASS (*Raukawa*) is Kaitiaki of Communications for Spiritual Growth Ministries and Lead Editor of *Refresh*. On sabbatical from offering spiritual direction, her spiritual practice currently is parenting a toddler, which offers joy and daily opportunities for growth!



PHOTO BY TRACY STAMATAKOS © SPIRITUAL GROWTH MINISTRIES

What is Spiritual Direction?

By Fran Francis - National Co-ordinator,
SGM Spiritual Directors Formation Programme

Impossibly, I need you to be an eye and an ear, a hand outstretched, a mouth for the Gospel of God, a sponge, a sounding board, a mirror, a Bible. In short, I am asking you to be an icon of the resurrection...'. So said Rev. Philip Seddon, to a gathering of spiritual directors in Salisbury in 2010.¹

His plea followed this lovely expression alerting directors to what really matters to a directee; 'A need for space, time, quiet, comfort, privacy, assurance of my acceptance by God and, deeper down, what I know I need and seek is grace – God's grace.' As a directee myself, this multi-faceted description reflects my

own needs and hopes in the human relationship I share with my director, and as a director it reminds me of the uniqueness and holiness of my place in my directees' lives. I'm not their fixer, advisor, moral police officer, teacher, coach, mentor, friend or guru. I'm their *spiritual director*. A clear vision of what that means is essential for both of us.

Seddon's description evokes the lively model of 'incarnational' spiritual direction, at the heart of which is real relationship, between directee and director, and with God. Theologian, C. Baxter Kruger, says 'Real relationships are about truly encountering the other person. Hearing what they care about,

not just what you want them to care about, where they actually are in their journey. This is what Jesus is about in the incarnation. He has become what we are, to meet us in our journey.'²

The three-way relationship of God, directee and director, is capital R, *Real*. Eugene Peterson, expressed it beautifully when he said, 'Spiritual direction is the task of helping a person take seriously what is treated dismissively by the publicity-infatuated and crisis-sated mind, and then to receive this 'mixed, random material of life' ... as the raw material for high holiness.'³ Someone paraphrased it as, 'Spiritual direction takes seriously what the rest of the world treats dismissively.'

So, what do directors take seriously that other conversations overlook? The experience of God – whatever that happens to be. This could be indicated in a passing comment, or a metaphor. We take seriously the unsettling (or consoling) dream, the random encounter, the felt sense in the body, the person's experience of prayer just to name a few. Above all, we take seriously the *goodness* of God. We don't impose it, or bypass suffering, but it's the basis for our 'non-anxious presence'⁴ and it enables the flow of God's grace.

Spiritual direction isn't a theological discussion but it's deeply theological; it's not therapy, but it can be very therapeutic. We talk about ordinary things because ordinary life is the locus of the spiritual. It is essential to the conversation otherwise it becomes too heavenly minded to be any earthly good. A simple bread and butter spiritual direction session gives a person the freedom to share honestly.

The content may be obviously spiritual but often relates to work, family, or a personal issue. Freedom for the spiritual director is reflected in their mandate to ask questions and offer resources which help the person reflect on what they are noticing, how it intersects with their spiritual life and understanding, to explore God's place in it, to notice any graces, invitations, or challenges. Above all, spiritual direction is *experiential*. Good spiritual direction allows the person to meet with God then and there. To be tended, to imagine, to grieve, to speak privately, to voice their scary question, to rage, to swear or weep for joy and gratitude. Or simply to rest in Love.

Spiritual direction isn't a theological discussion but it's deeply theological; it's not therapy, but it can be very therapeutic.

There are many definitions of spiritual direction. 'Listening others into life' is good, it is, after all, a ministry of listening. Participants in the SGM Spiritual Directors Formation Programme are enjoying the following fulsome description from Benedictine director, Cynthia Bailey Manns, whose warm brown face exudes love from my PowerPoint presentation!

'As a spiritual director I sit with others...following St Benedict's Rule of "listening with the heart". This type of holy listening requires me to be present to the true spiritual director, God. Trusting God is there to gently cradle us with an open heart in love, compassion, and understanding. Spiritual growth challenges directees and me to step into the mystery of



Sacred Presence with a willingness to journey on a path without a clear roadmap.”⁵

As evoked in this description, spiritual direction is contemplative. The spiritual director, like a midwife at a birth, assists the emergence of what Barry and Connolly named, the ‘contemplative attitude.’⁶ This attitude fosters awareness of the ‘holy in the ordinary’⁷ and is beautifully tended by sensitive spiritual direction.

How can we know we are in the presence of a sensitive spiritual director? We will likely experience the promises extended in this covenant for spiritual directors:

I promise to approach our sessions together with deep reverence and humility – praying and asking that we feel God’s presence while together.

I promise to pay close attention to whatever you want to share, and I will observe where, in you, I notice the Spirit may be living, moving, and drawing you closer.

I promise our sessions will center on you and how you discover your own inner wisdom. I will not give advice,

nor will I try to fix or change anything about you.

I promise to lay aside judgements, opinions, biases, and assumptions. You are the best judge of your life and your relationship with the Divine. I honour that.

I promise to hold your story in confidence, so that you can be sure it won’t come back to you through a third person.

I promise to pray for you between sessions. And if you are so inclined to do the same for me, I will be grateful.

Thank you for the privilege of being your spiritual director.⁸

1 Philip Seddon, ‘Spiritual Direction’, Salisbury Diocesan Spiritual Directors, 2010

2 C. Baxter Kruger, ‘Real Relationships’ (video), youtu.be/GvwyTmMWicw

3 Eugene Peterson, *Working the Angles*, p 150

4 Edwin Friedman, *Generation to Generation*

5 Cynthia Bailey Manns, *Embodied Spirits*, p 58

6 William A Barry and William J Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, p 46

7 Macrina Wiederkehr, *A Tree Full of Angels: Seeing the Holy in the Ordinary*

8 ‘Spiritual Direction Covenant’ adapted from Todd Clark, Front Porch Abbey

Of Anchors and Weaving

By Judith Wigglesworth

Spiritual direction is a place called home
Come as you are, it calls

It’s a place where life wipes its feet on the
welcome mat of holiness
strips off its overcoat with crumpled
pockets of stuff
and sinks with a sigh
I’ve arrived

It’s an anchor
A place of salty tears and kindness
of knots and tangles
and tender holding

It’s a place of Oh.
Where shadows hold truth
A place of Aha
True!

It’s a place where the Weaver
weaves patterns of hope
and I discover a speck or a truckload of
Divine goodness
that was there all along

That Christ May Be Formed in You

Spiritual formation and the local church

By Donald Scott

In 2014 I was on sabbatical from my church leadership role, snorkelling on a Pacific coral reef. As colourful fish swam by I tried to touch them, willing them to come closer. Then, I had what I can only describe as a transformative 'God encounter'. I felt an inner voice whispering, *'Be still, and I will bring the fish to you'*. With nothing to lose I did exactly that. Instantly, the fish surrounded me, curiously turning towards me, so close it was unnerving!

This sabbatical encounter seemed to be a gift from God, inviting me to slow down, to learn to live and minister from a place of rest. Upon my return home, the congregation I led was somewhat surprised that my core message was 'Be still' ('and know that I am God' - Psalm 46:10). 'Let's slow down our frantic activity', I said, 'Maybe 'the fish' will come to us!'

This was in stark contrast to my unceasing busyness and over-responsibility, symptoms I have come to recognise as manifestations of an inner core of insecurity and the need to prove myself. How freeing to relax into the goodness and finished work of Christ, and learn to serve from that place of rest.

This experience marked the beginning of me exploring contemplative Christian spirituality - 'a way of being that is attentive to

the presence, action and invitations of God in the midst of everyday life.'¹

I had been in church leadership for many years, but until this point I had been somewhat suspicious of the contemplative. Now, it became a framework that could hold my deepening awareness of God. A contemplative posture developed, not in opposition to my charismatic context and experience, but complementing them, providing prayer rhythms that deepened my longing to know Christ.

I became more comfortable with silence, stillness and even solitude, antidotes to the constant busyness and pressure of ministry expectations. I realised that any church with the enthusiastic intent of reaching this world for Jesus must be careful to not just reflect the same world we are seeking to reach. Society needs more than fresh activity; it needs rest from a culture of performance and busyness. Only an internal peace can genuinely minister to the deep needs of society.

Ongoing discernment led to me training as a spiritual director, participating in SGM's Spiritual Directors Formation Programme. I can only describe this as a profound formational journey. As a pastor I had always wrestled with the issue of making disciples. But with new eyes I discovered that within discipleship

lies this rich invitation to formation. I observe that sometimes contemplative practices are regarded as something 'over there' and discipleship is the primary focus for church leaders. Could we perceive a common purpose in both? Both have at their heart Paul's admonition in Galatians 4:19 that 'Christ may be formed in you.' Spiritual formation and discipleship go hand in hand.

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I have come to see contemplative spirituality in general, and spiritual direction specifically, as a great gift to the church, not in any sense competing for people's attention or patronage, but rather participating in the common goal of seeing the image of God formed in people and ultimately communities.

A common definition of spiritual direction, but surely also a core focus of a church's mandate, is 'help given by one Christian to another which enables that person to pay attention to God's personal communication to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, to grow in intimacy with this God, and to live out the consequences of the relationship.'²

This is surely a rich path towards transformation. Ultimately, how does trans-formation happen? I discovered a key in this scripture: 'But we all,

with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.' (2 Corinthians 3:18, NKJV) Wow, transformation happens as we contemplate the very glory and image of God. Jesuit theologian, Walter Burghardt describes contemplation as taking 'a long, loving look at the real.'³ As we open ourselves to being seen, we also begin to perceive God's gaze of love focused on us! In practising this posture, 'we learn to rest in Love and let it take root within us.'⁴

There are no 'rules' for how we take a long loving gaze, but for me centering prayer, Scripture meditation, walking in creation and even bird-watching are all practices that open my heart to the Divine. The main 'rule': be open and show up!

Despite her imperfections (which include my own), I still believe in the Church — God's hands, heart and feet amid a world longing for peace, hope and love. I believe in the ministry of spiritual direction, as well as the wider influence of contemplative spirituality that might serve the Church and beyond. Handed down through the long lineage of our faith, these gifts offer rich pathways that complement the church's core role of formation and discipleship. For the sake of the world. ■

¹ sgm.org.nz/contemplative-spirituality

² William Barry and William Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*

³ ignationspirituality.com/a-long-loving-look-at-the-real

⁴ sgm.org.nz/contemplative-spirituality

Tending My Inner Garden in Spiritual Direction

By Tay-Marie Yorston

If I were to ask ten different people what spiritual direction is, I would likely get nine blank stares and possibly a reference to desert fathers and candles. It's one of the hardest things I have had to explain, yet it has brought the most transformative change to my faith. It isn't therapy or counselling, and it isn't quite mentorship. It's more like having a trusted friend who prayerfully listens to your story and helps you explore your own direction and spiritual experiences with God in the here and now of life.

In recent years, one metaphor has especially shaped how I understand spiritual direction. It is like tending my inner garden with Father God as the Master Gardener, with a wise companion alongside me who helps me pay attention to His work. I'm reminded of Jesus' teaching in John 15:1-2: 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.'

As a spiritual director myself, it's important that I tend to my own inner

life with God if I am to be a trustworthy companion for others. I've come to imagine my heart and interior life - my thoughts, desires, attitudes, and deepest fears - as a sprawling, living garden. Some seasons, my garden is bursting with life; other times, it feels barren or in need of weeding.

Like a physical garden, my inner garden has many spaces. There is an area for repotting seedlings, patches of flowers, a lawn with fruit trees and a necessary area for composting. But it's not all picturesque. The work of weeding, pruning, watering, spraying, and even chasing pesky birds away from the fruit, all takes time and real effort. Often, tucked right next to the fruitfulness, there are spots some might call messy, but I see them as 'works in progress'. I am sure you have those areas in your garden, too.

As I walk through my inner garden with God, I am learning to discern as I watch, wait, and listen for that still, small voice or divine nudge. Sometimes an answer or question surfaces as a picture or a flow of thoughts that I know isn't my own. Other times it's a feeling of comforting peace or being held

secure amid change or confusion. I watch to see where my Gardener is working.

Barry and Connolly emphasise that I am responsible for my own growth¹, while Pickering adds that inner change should eventually show up in how I treat the wider community - leaving God's 'imprint' on the world.² Because I have blind spots, I faithfully engage in spiritual direction myself. I see my director as one of God's helpers - someone who steps into the garden

As a spiritual director myself, it's important that I tend to my own inner life with God if I am to be a trustworthy companion for others.

with me to look at it through God's eyes. They don't come in to 'fix' my mess, but to help me see where the Master Gardener is already at work.

Spiritual direction is also about the joy of the harvest. All the shaping must produce something! There are things to celebrate: new growth, new opportunities, embracing a journey, developing greater trust, or the hard-won peace that comes from finally letting go of something (or someone) that was weighing us down.

This year, I was overjoyed by a grapevine in my yard. For five years, it was a mere twig; I thought it had died. This spring, it suddenly sprawled

across a seven-metre fence. I was so enamoured with the lush foliage that I didn't want to touch it, until I realized that there were not many grapes on the vine. After a quick Google search on pruning, I started cutting away the very branches I had been admiring, revealing huge, beautiful bunches of grapes that finally had the sunlight they needed to ripen.

This is what spiritual direction is like. Sometimes we get so used to producing 'foliage' with our busy lives - even the parts that look good - that we miss the actual fruit God is growing in us. My spiritual director helps me do that pruning work with God. Together, we look at where I might be over-extended or holding onto things that look impressive but block the light. In these reflective moments, we discover the 'bunches of grapes' - that deep inner growth matured in the secret places of the heart.

Ultimately, the attention we give to tending our inner garden alongside God and others will eventually sharpen our awareness of God's presence in daily living. We begin to see the Divine hand in the small, ordinary details of life - a constant reminder that the Master Gardener is always at work in the here and now, inviting us into a place of stillness and deeper intimacy. ■

¹ William A. Barry and William J. Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*.

² Sue Pickering, *Spiritual Direction: A Practical Introduction*, p. 4.



Spiritual Direction

- What's in a Name?

By Kathryn Overall-Cass

Here's a statement to puzzle over: spiritual direction is purposefully non-directive. What? This gap between what we call it and how we do it helps explain why it is often difficult to answer the simple question, 'what is spiritual direction?'

I often begin by saying, 'despite how it sounds, it's not directive.' I'm especially conscious of this when speaking with people who have been encouraged, often subtly, to outsource discernment to a church leader and given few practices to learn to hear the voice of God *for themselves*.

Your spiritual director is not an authority figure in your life. That is not to say they are not profoundly important or have no wisdom to share. The nuance is that this is not a high-control relationship, but a high-trust one. Your spiritual director trusts that God is at work in your life and helps you notice that. You trust that your spiritual director is not a judge, but an ally, helping you attune to God's presence and invitations.

So how did we come to spiritual direction as a name? In the early centuries of Christianity, those seeking to follow Christ more deeply would turn to the desert mothers and fathers for guidance. Spiritual direction was relational rather than institutional. As the practice became more formalised within monastic and Church structures, the language at times took on more authoritative

tones. The contemporary renaissance in spiritual direction has taken the practice beyond monastic and vowed religious contexts and into the wider world, with a renewed emphasis on accompaniment.

So why not get rid of the name altogether? Some do, calling themselves spiritual companions or similar. Others prefer to remain connected to the lineage, while remaining sensitive to the evolving edge of the practice in our time. No matter what we call it, we seek to be trustworthy companions.

It's worth noting a paradox here: while directors are consciously non-directive, they are not passive partners. Will they share personal experience from time to time? Yes. Share resources or practices that might be new to you? Yes. Mirror back to you something they are noticing that you are not? Yes.

We welcome that because, in one sense, we *are* seeking a guide for the spiritual journey; someone familiar with terrain that is new to us and able to companion us wisely through our own experiences. We just want them to do it from a place of surrender, attuned to the Spirit who leads us into life. If we both keep our attention on the true director, we will be in safe hands. ■

Metaphors and Images of Spiritual Direction

By Andrew Dunn

While there are many helpful definitions of spiritual direction, the following images and metaphors help to clarify this artform and its value:

- **Soul friend – Anam Cara.** This Celtic term is a beautiful and gentle image of this delicate work in the spiritual life.
- **Holy listening** suggests the sacredness of this work and the profundity of the depth of listening it offers. We can indeed 'listen a person into life'.¹
- **A friend on the road** who says, 'Look there, look here – what do you see?'
- **Physicians of the soul** is the Puritans' 17th-century term for this work. It suggests being well formed in the ways of the spiritual life (as a doctor is in medicine) and of the inner workings of the soul, the whole person growing in God and godliness.
- **A spiritual companion** who is able to break the bread of life together with us – *com* = with, *panis* = bread.
- **A spiritual midwife** who helps to bring to birth in us the discoveries the Lord wants us to find. See St Paul's comment re suffering birth pangs 'until Christ be formed in you' (Galatians 4:19). This birthing image suggests the skills of waiting, timing and gentle ushering into life of whatever it is that is growing in us.
- **The unbuilder.** There is a marvellous image of spiritual direction in the *Parable of the Carpenter and the Unbuilder*² where the carpenter who is invited to a meal with the king is waylaid en route by building more and more secure and safe houses to stay in on the journey. The king sends an 'unbuilder' to find him and help him to let go the increasingly safe places he has made to protect himself. That image describes well an aspect of the task of the spiritual director. Someone like that is invaluable for us as they always point on to grace and the graciousness of God.
- One writer on spiritual direction, when I bought his book at a lecture in Auckland, inscribed it thus: "To Andrew for the hatching of the heart!" That's a beauty, too, and gets to the nub of this activity – **for the hatching of the heart!** ■

¹ Douglas Steere, *Weavings* IX/3, 25.

² David Griebner, *The Carpenter and the Unbuilder: Stories for the Spiritual Quest*

Icons of Spiritual Direction

By Adrienne Thompson

'What do you do?'

'I'm a spiritual director and supervisor.'

Blank silence. 'What's a spiritual director?'

My answer depends on the questioner, the time, the context and my mood. But now and then, if I sense genuine curiosity in my interlocutor I might reply, not with a definition but an image. A story. Spiritual direction is like being a campfire in the wilderness where travellers drop by for company and meaningful conversation; a companion on the journey, listening, noticing the landmarks and signposts, maybe sometimes helping to read the map, never driving the car; a midwife accompanying a woman through pregnancy and birth, wise and patient,

knowing and trusting this process; a soul friend.

Sometimes I recall these stories for myself – to reignite imagination and wonder in my own practice. Sometimes I invite my supervisees to revisit their own image of what they are doing as spiritual directors, see if it still fits. Several of the images I return to most often come from the Bible, that great forest of stories where I have wandered since I first learned to listen.

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
my cup overflows.*

*Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.¹*

Margaret Guenther's lovely book *Holy Listening* beautifully explores the image of spiritual direction as hospitality. It resonates with me because it's how I was brought up. My mother, and both my grandmothers were well known for their generous welcome. Mum would bring strangers home for a meal, sometimes for a bed. She showed me how to set a table, how to put flowers in the spare room, how to honour guests.

I have often experienced extraordinary hospitality as a stranger. I'm remembering one time in a small,

remote village of Bihar how our group of travellers sat around a bonfire and the villagers knelt down to wash our dusty feet and smooth on coconut oil.

Welcomed onto a marae I've experienced the formality of being a guest, learning the tikanga of the pōwhiri. I've also experienced the delight of being told I'm one of the family now – pick up a tea towel, roll out my bedding. I've settled to sleep under the watchful eyes of ancestors whose descendants made space for me in this āhuru mōwai, this sheltered haven.

Spiritual direction embodies that spacious welcome. Many of my directees literally come to my home; these days I also meet people online. Either way God is the host, but I get to personify God's welcome, prepare the table and invite the guest to be at home.

A second image comes from the story of the road to Emmaus. Two people walking together, sharing together, joined by another who listens too, asks them questions and reveals himself to them.

Today I had an email from a former directee. With huge gratitude I found myself deeply remembering the many years we walked together. There were tears and questions, there were celebrations and struggles, there were mundane, everyday reflections, there was deep discernment. Looking back, I can say to myself 'didn't our hearts burn as we talked together on the road? And wasn't Jesus there with us, all the way, recognised and named, or disguised as life?'²

The image of spiritual direction that has been most powerful in recent years comes from the stories of two

women, Mary and Elizabeth. Mary's story of hearing, fearing, questioning and consenting has been a journey I've found myself on more than once over the years. At some point I noticed what happened next. She went – hurried – to visit her cousin Elizabeth. We're not told precisely why, but we are told what happened.

Elizabeth, herself six months pregnant, heard Mary's greeting. I love her response, her shout of recognition. "He nui te reo o tōna karanga!"³ The child within her leapt for joy. With divine insight, with every cell of her body, she knew the mother of her Lord.

And something happened to Mary. Was it the affirmation of this older woman, this dear soul friend, herself on her own God-journey, that freed Mary to speak her Magnificat? That profound inner yes to God took on a voice and became a song that resounds through the ages. ►



CONTEMPORARY GREEK ORTHODOX ICON OF THE VISITATION BY NEOPHYTOS

MARIOTTO ALBERTINELLI, THE VISITATION (1503), WIKIMEDIA COMMONS, PUBLIC DOMAIN



As a spiritual director I claim Elizabeth's story. Every directee comes to me already pregnant with God. Like Mary they may be perplexed and wondering: what does this God-interruption mean? They may be asking questions: how can this be? Or they may be consenting with a trusting heart. Whatever, something has brought them to seek spiritual direction, and just like Elizabeth I am awestruck. Who am I that the mother of my Lord should visit me? Every directee is a holy visitor. God, alive and at work within me, salutes God, alive and at work within my guest.

I don't get to hear every directee burst into praise. More often there is a slow, unspectacular conversation. Perhaps there were many such for Mary and Elizabeth, spending those three months together in Elizabeth's home. Perhaps they discussed morning sickness and sore breasts. Perhaps they talked about Joseph and the family back in Nazareth. Perhaps they delightedly imagined their two little boys playing together. Perhaps they recalled stories of women – like Ruth, Hannah, Deborah, Bathsheba – who God used to save Israel. Unseen, the tiny embryo engendered by the Holy Spirit was growing in Mary's belly.

When I went to Italy in 2023 my mother gave me some money to buy myself a treasure. In a shop window in Rome I saw an Icon of the Visitation and knew I had found it. The shopkeeper told me it was the first time they'd had this particular icon, and it was the only copy they had in the shop. I wasn't surprised, I knew it had my name on it. It's with me now, glowing in Aotearoa light.

Almost as precious is the memory of another rendering of this scene – a

truly monumental painting in the Uffizi gallery in Florence. In this one Mary and Elizabeth clasp hands, look directly at each other, faces almost touching.⁴ With reverence and awe I recognise the posture of a hongi. Just as on a marae in Aotearoa, two people lean together, share breath in profound community.

These are my images of spiritual direction, the stories I lean into as I ponder my vocation. When I supervise beginner spiritual directors in SGM's Spiritual Directors Formation Programme, I encourage them to notice their own images. Immersed as we must be in all the important learning of this craft – remembering the useful questions, holding back our advice, listening for religious experience – the image helps us to be anchored in the sense of what we are actually there for. To welcome the guest. To walk alongside. To bear witness to the divine life already growing.

There's one more. Just another framed postcard, an unpretentious little copy of the Egyptian Coptic icon of Christ and Abbot Menas.⁵ I place it with my clock behind the chair where my directee sits. As I listen, I often glance up at the picture of Jesus with his arm around the shoulders of his friend. I let it remind me. Whatever my directee is saying or doing, however badly or well I am listening, Jesus is there, his arm around us. This is God's work. All is well. ■

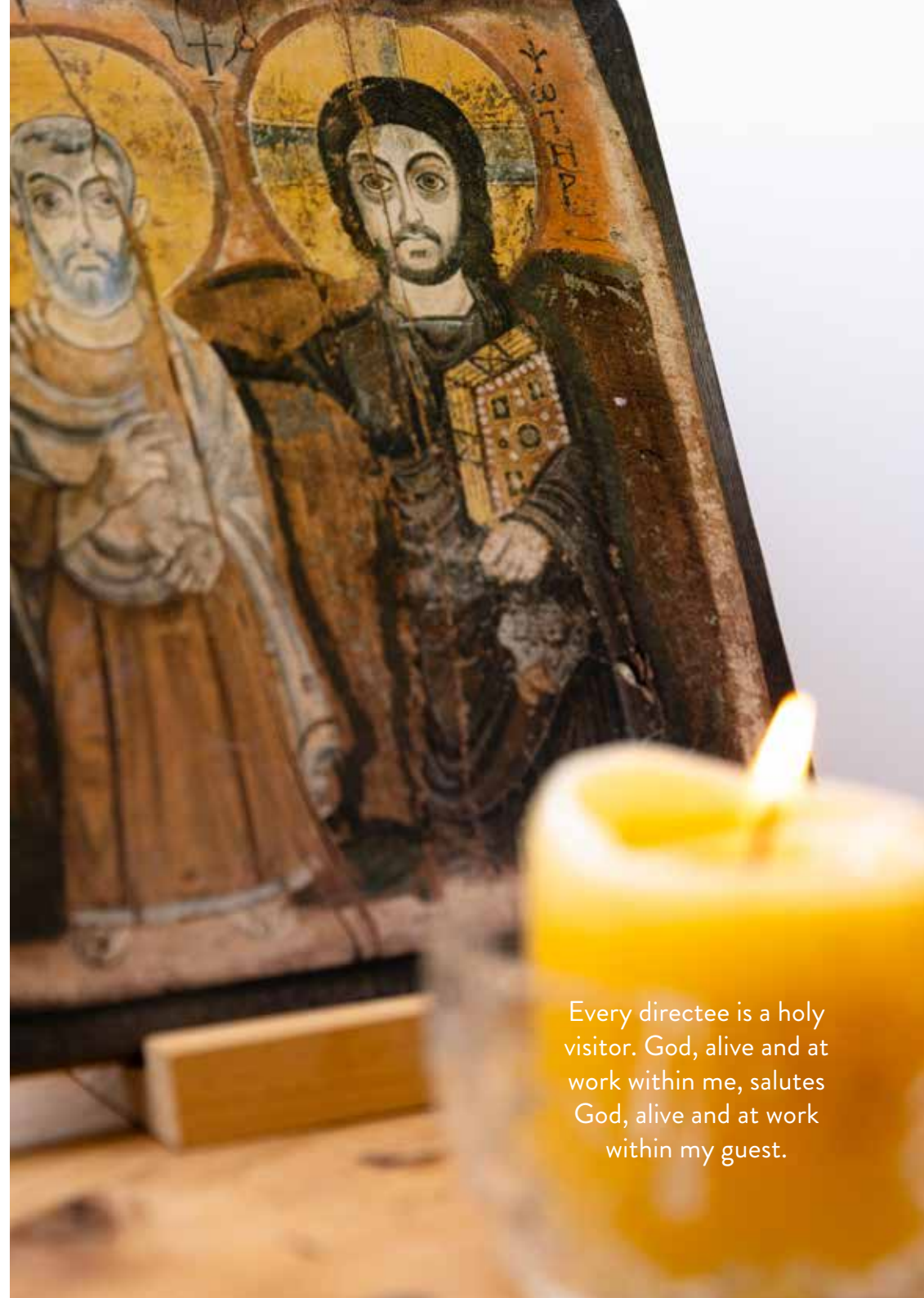
¹ Psalm 23:5–6, NRSVACE.

² Paula D'Arcy, quoted in Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs*: "God comes to us disguised as our life."

³ Luke 1:42.

⁴ Mariotto Albertinelli, *The Visitation* (1503), Uffizi Gallery, Florence.

⁵ Coptic icon of Christ and Abbot Menas, Louvre Museum, Paris.



Every directee is a holy visitor. God, alive and at work within me, salutes God, alive and at work within my guest.

Who Does the Work in Spiritual Direction?

By Diane Gilliam-Weeks

I went to see my first spiritual director in 1996 – the practice was an immediate fit. In 2001, I trained with 'The Seed' under Fr Mark Chamberlain and later became deeply invested in the taonga that is SGM's Spiritual Directors Formation Programme as a member of the board.

Our professional community, the New Zealand Association of Christian Spiritual Directors (ACSD), holds me accountable for this work by ensuring I have my own regular spiritual direction and - separately - professional supervision, as well as ongoing professional development. We owe this to those who trust us at their most vulnerable.

The first time anyone comes to me for spiritual direction, I pray out loud that we'll both be open to God's nudges in the hour we have together. I ask about their understanding of what we'll be doing, and why they've come. I share that it's my job to continually bring us back to what God has been - and is - doing in their life.

My next question is always, 'Okay, tell me about your very first memory of being with God, or your earliest understanding of who God is.' I don't want a biography at this point or a church pedigree. I want them to go deep and re-experience a relationship - or the stumbling blocks that prevented it. If there's time, we'll talk about who God is for them now, and how they spend time with God. They

may have well-developed spiritual disciplines or none at all. I might suggest one or two if they're unsure. This is usually enough to fill an hour.

I've come to trust that God is doing most of the work in spiritual direction. I often encourage my clients to spend five or more minutes in silence in dialogue with God, to listen - to ask questions. I trust God will be for them what they need God to be - a father, a brother, a mother, a butterfly or a tree.

I share that it's my job to continually bring us back to what God has been - and is - doing in their life.

Sometimes I use my training in Interactive Drawing Therapy to help my clients go deep with God faster than dialogue allows. We use big crayons and big paper - it's not about art; it's about images, words and feelings. Again, I trust it's God doing the work in this process.

Journeying with someone over time, I get to observe the impact of God's leading on the arc of their life. It's an incredible privilege. Over time we'll talk about the challenges of work, family, guilt and forgiveness, grief and celebration. All the while asking what God is doing. ■



Companion on the Journey

By Jo Anastasiadis

You came with questions
A puzzle of life, jagged edged;
Irregular; ill-fitting.
You hoped for answers, direction, a new perspective;
Understanding clearly laid out
With simple steps giving forward momentum.
You would even have settled for a single step,
A telling of the next.
Yet all I could offer was this truth:
I am not here to provide you with the answers.
I am here to help you find the God of the answers.
And even when you find God
You may discover that the answers
Are not forthcoming;
And that is ok.
It is enough to know
That God knows the answers,
And that you know God.

TĀKAKA, GOLDEN BAY. ©JO ANASTASIADIS



Spiritual Direction With Tāne-Mahuta

by Avril Manley

My journey with God over many years has taken me into the territory of personal identity; exploring the richness of both my Ngāpuhi and European roots. My sense of a spiritual homecoming and being enveloped by the love of God has been restored through both Māori and Pākehā resources. However, growing up in a Western-culture-dominated form of Christianity, it was an early experience of spiritual direction that made me aware that my 'taha Māori' (Māori side) needed to be able to express itself in its own terms.

You could say I stumbled into formal spiritual direction. Various members of the church I was attending in Auckland were coming to me for 'kanohi-ki-kanohi' (face-to-face) visits to discuss issues that were troubling them. One day, a friend mentioned that she was training to be a spiritual director. Immediately, I knew that was what I needed to do.

This was the late 1990s era of SGM's Spiritual Directors Formation Programme, during the time of Margaret and Andrew Dunn, Ross Miller, and Sr Mary Concannon et al. Convinced the Lord was nudging me to do the course, I applied, only to discover that I had missed the deadline for the next intake. However, Ross Miller and (I think) Sheila Pritchard agreed to interview me and allowed me to join the current cohort if I immediately started spiritual

direction sessions. That made sense, so I found a list of spiritual directors in our area. Which one should I choose?

I needed to explain here that for some time I had been disturbed by a past incident that gave me mamae (pain) and pōuri (grief). Despite confessing to the Lord and asking for forgiveness many times, the incident kept returning to niggle my conscience. One day, I realised I needed to be humble and obedient to the instruction: 'Confess your sins to one another and pray for each other so that you may be healed.' (James 5:16) It was clear I needed someone outside my church congregation, and I decided I would like to talk to a woman. A light bulb went on. I needed a nun; they understood confession!

A Catholic friend identified three nuns on the spiritual directors' list, but she didn't know anything about them, so, with prayer and a bit of Eeny meeny miny moe, I made my choice and booked my very first spiritual direction session.

After a very softly spoken Pākehā lady in mufti answered the door and ushered me into a quiet room, I quickly explained that there were two items on my list: First, a confession I wished to make and then, spiritual direction. She smiled, and the session started. As I told her about my dilemma, she listened quietly, and when I had finished, she asked, 'Would you like me to pray for you?' 'Yes, please', I replied. ►

I don't remember in detail what my spiritual director prayed because, with my eyes closed, on the video screen of my mind an image of what looked like an American dollar bill with wings on each end appeared. As she prayed, the wings gently flapped until the image disappeared from the screen and has never returned. I have to work very hard to recall the incident that was once so troubling, and I can assure you it was not a light matter and had nothing to do with money!

It was time to begin my first spiritual direction session, which began with: 'What is your image of God?' Inwardly, I recoiled: 'Image? A statue, as they have in the Catholic churches? A photo, engraving, picture?' I was nonplussed as I had grown up in a Protestant denomination that staunchly taught: 'Thou shalt have no images of the Lord thy God' (Exodus 20:4). In panic, I shot a desperate prayer: 'O Lord, please help! What does she mean by image?'

Immediately, to my surprise, an image of Tāne-Mahuta (God of the Forest) rose before me - beautiful, awesome Tāne-Mahuta. I grew up in Northland amongst my Ngāpuhi people. Tāne-Mahuta, that mighty ancient kauri tree of Waipoua Forest, is of great spiritual significance to Ngāpuhi, so with a sense of awe, I replied: 'An image of Tāne-Mahuta has just come to me'. My director smiled: 'And what do you notice about Tāne-Mahuta?' 'Well, he's huge, and it seems like he's been there forever'. 'Anything else?' 'He must have massive roots', I was warming to the subject, 'to have withstood all the storms and hurricanes for over a thousand years'. 'And anything else?' I gazed thoughtfully at my mental

image before replying: 'Over many years, birds and all sorts of creatures must have found refuge and shelter in his foliage'.

'And where are you in relation to Tāne-Mahuta?' That question hit the bullseye. For some time I had been feeling rather distant from God, which had perplexed me, so I knew exactly where I stood in relation to my Tāne-Mahuta. As visitors enter the winding forest path, at one point the bush clears to reveal Tāne-Mahuta in the distance, and that was where I was standing, looking longingly. When the session ended, I felt lighter in spirit but sensed I had not yet completed my pilgrimage.

Immediately, to my surprise, an image of Tāne-Mahuta (God of the Forest) rose before me—beautiful, awesome Tāne-Mahuta.

Coincidentally, I had booked a weekend course led by a kuia and kaumātua entitled: Māori Christian Spirituality that happened soon after. We learned how Māori can navigate life experiences, drawing on both Tikanga Māori (Māori customs) and Christian principles. The course coalesced wonderfully with my Māori and Pākehā self in a way I had not experienced before, so that I felt uplifted in spirit and yet grounded in my Māori Christian self.

On the last day, our tutor asked us to give a presentation. With some foreboding, I picked up paper and a few art materials and sought a quiet spot outside the classroom. I felt



hopeless as nothing was shaping up in my mind. Once again, in desperation, I prayed: 'O Lord, I can't do it. Please help me.' Immediately, to my surprise, the image of Tāne-Mahuta rose up. I was astounded. 'Why are you here?' I questioned. Images and understandings began to flow through my mind.

I picked up some crayons and drew a picture of Tāne-Mahuta who I knew had huge roots above ground that hump up like great smooth knees. I drew myself as having clambered up over those knees and, with my arms fully extended around Tāne-Mahuta's trunk, I was hugging him. I had moved. I was no longer seeking him longingly from a distance - I had come home.

As I reflect on the significance of these encounters, it prompts me to share my story in hope that other bicultural persons might be encouraged to take up the challenge

of training as a spiritual director, or to explore their taha Māori in their own spiritual direction relationship.

My Pākehā spiritual director gave me the gift of acceptance in working with my image of Tāne-Mahuta. She had the skill to use that image to clarify my current relationship with God, and as she did so, something reaffirming settled deep within me - like a divine consolation: 'You're OK. I am with you. This taonga (treasure) is a love gift from my Spirit to your spirit'.

My director held an affirming space for me in our mahi wairua (spiritual work) together and that ultimately led to an open, liberating acknowledgement and acceptance of my wairua Māori. When that happened, an exquisite richness arose from a greater depth of nourishment for the soul that enhanced my relationship with Creator God.

PHOTO BY TRACY STAMATAKOS © SPIRITUAL GROWTH MINISTRIES

A Long, Loving Look at the Real

Spiritual direction, clergy and the gifts of honest conversation

By Jane Wilkinson

For 25 years, I've been offering spiritual direction conversations, with a particular interest in supporting pastors – those good and fallible people who make heartfelt commitments to their families and faith communities. I care about seeing them last the distance well, or discern with peace and clarity, whether their ministry season is changing or ending. It's a privilege to sit alongside another when life gets messy and they lose their way. Likewise, it's truly wonderful to be there when they find it again.

Accompanying pastors is probably at the heart of my call to ministry. I've worked in church pastoral roles and chaplaincy, and I'm married to a pastor. We've experienced personal and ministry crises, restoration, fruitfulness, complexity, and joy; the rollercoaster of a vocational life.

Self-reflection and looking interiorly is crucial for the pastors I accompany. Honest conversation is a door into the realm of discernment. There is much to explore about the values and beliefs that underpin a person's choices and behaviours. And it's equally crucial for me as their spiritual director. As I reflect on my practice, several knowings about who I am in this work help me stay the course as I support others to do the same.

REAL

I've always loved Walter Burghardt's definition of contemplation as 'a long, loving look at the real'. Truth be told, there are times when a fleeting glance at the real is my *modus operandi* because the real is not always comfortable. But *the real* needs to be at the heart of my spirituality and practice. This asks me to be honest with myself and the responsibilities of spiritual direction.

Obviously, this includes attending to my own spiritual life by paying attention to God in the ways we all know – prayer, worship, care of others and our world. But beyond that is the invitation to be brutally honest around my *congruence* (or lack of it) as I come to this work.

It's about asking the question: *does my outer life* (words, actions, practices) *and inner life* (thoughts, responses, things I do to soothe and 'self-care') align? When gaps are revealed, I bring them to supervision, to spiritual direction, to God.

WOVEN

Part of being real is weaving together all the bits of my layered, sometimes messy and complicated life story, so I can sit alongside another with

humanity and compassion. As Kiwi band SIX60 proclaim, 'ko au e tū atu nei – all of that is me'.

As I was completing my spiritual direction training, a monumental event happened, resulting in an implosion of ministry and family life. It coincided with my last supervision session for the programme. I remember hustling through Andrew Dunn's door, saying, 'You've probably heard what has happened. I really hope you will sign me off'. He kindly (and prophetically) said, 'Jane, it might not feel like it now, but what you are going through actually qualifies you in this work'. I was in my late 30s; it was a powerful transition moment into adulthood and compassion.

Knowing 'messy' first-hand helps me welcome the 'messy' that clergy bring into the room, knowing that God is the ultimate weaver of all the strands – the beautiful and the not-so-beautiful. One of the most wonderful parts of this ministry is being in the room with another person who remembers what and whom they believe in, and knows it again, or in a new way.

ECLECTIC

My home-décor style is an eclectic mix of rustic, vintage, ethnic, and contemporary – mostly pre-loved. I approach spiritual direction in a similar way! I'm not a purist (or a minimalist) in this work. Sometimes conversations hold spiritual direction, supervision, pastoral care, health care, pop psychology and a bit of chit-chat all in one session. I know that some will be uncomfortable with this, but I've come to trust that all the different parts of the conversation help us see that God is in the room.

Eclectic, however, doesn't mean flippant. I am deeply aware that I am on holy ground with my directees, and, as such, I have a responsibility to handle the holy with care and respect. As well, I love how the sacred is in the everyday and the ordinary – where, for the most part, we live our lives.

In the early years, I wondered if it was wrong to feel so blessed through my directees' experiences of God. I now think that's how it's meant to be. I can't help but be delighted or amazed as people share with me. This work is a mutual sharing in what *God is doing*. In this sense, there is common ground in these spiritual friendships. And there is love. I'm so grateful to still be in the room for these conversations after all these years.

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Welcoming the Stranger

Engaging otherness in spiritual direction

By David Crawley

Recently I re-read Anne Hadfield's 2003 history of Spiritual Growth Ministries (SGM), *Uncharted Tracks*.¹ Following a section on the Emmaus Journey programme, offered by SGM at Teschemakers in the 1990s, Anne includes a poem and a drawing by a 1993 attendee, Jill McLeod. The drawing is of various 'denominational ducks.' R.C. Duck wears a bishop's mitre, Baptist Duck is mostly underwater, while Charismatic Duck exuberantly flaps its wings – you get the idea!

This stirred a memory of a talk by Joyce Huggett, more than 30 years ago, which I'm guessing prompted the drawing. Joyce pictured denominational ducks, all swimming separately in their partitioned areas. The water steadily rose, eventually overflowing the partitions, and the ducks began mingling with one another. This captured her observation that Christians from all kinds of backgrounds were being brought together by an upwelling of interest in contemplative spirituality.

About this time, I entered spiritual direction training. From then until now, my experience has aligned with Joyce's parable. While the world, including some churches, has become increasingly polarised, I have seldom witnessed people engaged in the work of spiritual direction withdrawing into factions.

The spiritual direction community in Aotearoa New Zealand is overtly

committed to respecting difference. In the ACSD Code of Ethics, spiritual directors are required to respect their directees' moral, religious and spiritual values – 'refraining from imposing their own values on the directee.'² In interviewing applicants to the SGM Spiritual Directors Formation Programme, we ask how it will be for them to train alongside, and sometimes direct or be directed by, participants whose backgrounds or beliefs may be quite different to their own. We want the formation context to be a hospitable and brave space, rather than merely a safe space in which difference is avoided.

Almost without exception, our participants embrace this challenge. This is more than a 'have to.' Our participants find connection as they are drawn into a deepening of life and love through the one Spirit. Each is being wooed, in their own unique way, by the same divine mystery. This shared experience transcends the myriad issues which drive others into polarised positions.

That's not to say that working across difference is easy!³ There are times when a directee's words, theological ideas or espoused values provoke inner turbulence in their director. Occasionally a director discerns that they will struggle to understand, support, or be wholeheartedly present for, a directee. Then, the best recourse may be to point the person to directors better positioned to journey ►



We want the formation context to be a hospitable and brave space, rather than merely a safe space in which difference is avoided.

PHOTO BY TRACY STAMATAKOS © SPIRITUAL GROWTH MINISTRIES

with them. That scenario aside, what might help us stay in the brave space, despite the inner turbulence? Good supervision is one key answer to that question. In addition, I have found the following orientations helpful.

Remembering that transformation is God's work, not mine. Hooray!

As directors, we trust that God is at work in the life of each directee.

That's freeing! It is not our role to fix or change them, but to be attentive to what God is doing, and cooperate as best we can. Whether my turbulence is a reaction to a form of spirituality I have set aside as unhelpful, or

a fear that my directee is moving beyond what I consider to be orthodox Christian faith, I can entrust them, and my anxiety, to God.

Choosing holy curiosity over defensiveness or judgment

People may recognise this as a practice encouraged by Parker Palmer. He describes the 'ancient fight or flight syndrome,' which kicks in when we are 'startled by otherness.'⁴ In place of this defensive *reaction*, we can learn to *respond* with what he calls 'soft eyes,' eyes 'wide with wonder.' For me, this translates into cultivating holy curiosity in the presence of otherness. Not critical analysis or interrogation, but prayerful wondering.

Sometimes the wondering is about my own reactions and discomfort! But I'm also thinking about approaching a directee's words, beliefs or values – which initially I may have found jarring – with prayerful, compassionate curiosity. What is at stake for them

in holding this stance? What are their hopes? Their fears? What might this say about their image of God? Their experience of life? What is love inviting here?

Offering hospitality: 'welcoming the stranger'.

The first chapter of Margaret Guenther's *Holy Listening* is devoted to hospitality – 'Welcoming the Stranger'

– and is full of practical wisdom. Writing about spiritual direction supervision, Karen Erlichman observes that people who 'live at the intersection of multiple identities' (e.g. ethnicity, gender identity, sexual

orientation, faith tradition) often 'feel pressure to choose which part of themselves to share and which parts to keep hidden.'⁵ How do we offer a space, literally and metaphorically, in which people feel free to turn up 'without fear of judgment, criticism, or shame'?⁶

Hospitality is more than inclusion. It extends to welcoming embrace and caring, attentive presence. It also has a social justice edge, as Christine Pohl points out: 'When people are socially invisible, their needs and concerns are not acknowledged and no one even notices the injustices they suffer. Hospitality can begin a journey toward visibility and respect.'⁷ This perspective is embedded in tikanga Māori, as *manaakitanga* captures the call to mana-enhancing practices of hospitality.⁸

Three approaches to hospitality, understood within the Christian tradition, inform my posture, and, imperfectly, my practice.

i. *Welcoming Christ in the other.* Matthew's Gospel takes the biblical call to unconditional kindness to strangers to another level in its message that the vulnerable, marginalised one who comes to us is Jesus himself: 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me' (Matthew 25:35). If we begin with the premise that it is Jesus who meets us in the other, then we will be 'more sensitive to what the guest is bringing to us, what God might be saying or doing through her or him.'⁹ In this one thought, I am transported from judgment or condescension to a stance of respect, humility, and receptivity.

ii. *Willingness to receive through the other.* The 4th century Christian preacher John Chrysostom encouraged hospitality that is sensitive to the dignity of the other, 'to show by words and actions, that we do not think we are conferring a favour, but receiving one.'¹⁰ This is not false humility. Hosts often find their own lives enriched by their guests. Regularly, I am challenged, educated and inspired by my directees. In a real sense, they are the host, and I am the guest, invited into sacred places within their lives and experiences.

iii. *Openness to being changed by the other.* Susan Rakoczy therefore suggests that differences 'are not to be feared but to be embraced as sources of rich knowledge and entry into new dimensions of human experience.'¹¹ Welcoming and making space for my directee's presence and voice, while valuing my own, requires a particular kind of humility and vulnerability. The uniqueness of this other will

potentially challenge and change my assumptions, values, sense of identity and image of God. The blessing I receive may be having my blind spots or prejudices challenged!

It is not always easy to maintain these postures, especially with a directee whose difference – for reasons as much to do with me as with them – makes me feel uncomfortable. Yet, to return to the parable of the denominational ducks, whatever our differences, we are both swimming in the one unceasing overflow of divine grace and love. Experience teaches me that my best hope of remaining lovingly present and available to my directees, just as *they* are, is to keep soaking in the love that embraces me, just as *I* am. I am, we are, the beloved. ■

¹ Anne Hadfield, *Uncharted Tracks*, 2003

² acsd.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Covenant-new-layout.pdf

³ Susan Rakoczy, *Responding to Difference*, 2009

⁴ Parker J. Palmer, *The Courage to Teach*, 2017, p. 116

⁵ Karen Erlichman, *Spiritual Direction Supervision*, 2021, p. 33

⁶ Erlichman, p. 35

⁷ Christine D. Pohl, *Making Room*, 1999, p. 62

⁸ on.mas.co.nz/issues/march-2021/manaakitanga-more-than-just-hospitality

⁹ Pohl, p. 68

¹⁰ Pohl, p. 69

¹¹ Rakoczy, p. 92



What the Light Shines Through

By Jo van den Bogaert

*Where your wounds
become doorways.
Where your scars
become sacred maps.
...*

*Where you are
What the light
shines through.¹*

I had spent the morning art-journaling with the poem 'What the Light Shines Through' by Jan Richardson. When my directee arrived I felt prompted to read her this excerpt and let it sit with her. She launched into how she had re-read her diary entries from a year ago and was encouraged by seeing where she was then and now. I leaned forward, intrigued to hear what she had discovered.

A year ago, she couldn't enter a church building – and felt guilty about that. 'Next week,' she continued, 'I'm speaking to a group of pastors in a church building and telling my testimony.' There were so many questions brewing inside, but all I said as I leaned back was, 'Wow, and how does that feel?'

I was blown away by her courage after a year of hearing about the wounds and scars of spiritual abuse that would put most people off any pursuit of faith. But through all the musts and judgements and images of false gods, she had always felt that there was a God inside her that was warm, loving and cheering for her. She never gave up on finding this God and in this safe space she gradually developed enough

trust to tell her story and discern which voices were God and which were not.

I often feel that I am a witness to transformation that my directees bravely sign up for. I ask a few curious questions and they amaze me with their threads and where they lead. I tug gently and they unravel or journey down these incredible tangles found at the back of a great tapestry. At the end of the session, I turn the tapestry around to show them what I've been looking at (or hearing) and they are stunned by the beauty of who they are becoming and who God the creator is.

My directee came back to the poem. 'I now see my scars and wounds as part of my journey', she said. 'I couldn't be who I am without them and they're helping me to be that doorway of light which is something I could never have said a year ago. And you've been the light for me too, the one that's shown me the next step, so thank you so much.' I didn't hesitate to say it was my pleasure, but 'thankfully', I said with a sense of relief, 'I'm just what the light shines through.'

¹ "What the Light Shines Through" (excerpt) © Jan Richardson from *The Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief*. Used by permission. janrichardson.com



Companionship for Your Soul

Reflections on spiritual direction and counselling

By Angelika Halstead

Throughout the many changes and challenges we face in life, spiritual direction and soul care can offer grounding and companionship. Our human journey takes us through many different seasons. We move through one or many careers, relationships, challenges, and accomplishments. Our path goes through childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and eventually leads to death. As we travel through these changes, the practice of spiritual direction can be like an anchor for our soul. It offers sacred space to pause, reflect, and ponder the deeper questions of life:

Who am I? Who is God? What is the meaning of life? What am I here for?

In the chaotic and yet beautiful world we live in, spiritual direction invites us to cultivate a quiet place within ourselves where we listen to our deepest questions and longings. It responds to our soul's ache for meaningful encounters and offers companionship for our unfolding stories.

I am both a spiritual director and a counsellor. In my first session with a new directee I am usually asked what spiritual direction is and how it differs from counselling. This is

not an easy question to answer because there are many overlaps and each counselling approach has its specific goal and process. Let me explore some of these similarities through the lens of Internal Family Systems (IFS)¹.

In my view, IFS is a very spiritual approach to counselling. It introduces the concept of the SELF which is the most authentic part of our being. According to IFS, we are all made up of many different parts which at times are in conflict with each other and can be motivated by anxiety, survival mechanisms, and adaptations. However, when we feel securely attached to ourself,

God, others, and the world around us, the different parts of our wondrous being work together in harmony under the leadership of the SELF.

The goal of IFS is to be hospitable to and heal all wounded parts. Fostering harmony between the different parts by empowering the SELF to lead (with its eight characteristics: Calmness, Clarity, Curiosity, Compassion, Creativity, Courage, Confidence, and Connectedness) is the second therapeutic goal².

In spiritual direction, the SELF can be compared to our soul, the place where we commune with God, a home

within us at the centre of our being. Merton³ describes this home as a place that is 'untouched by sin and by illusion, a point of pure truth, a point or spark which belongs entirely to God.' We begin our lives with our own, unique, divine DNA, this inner destiny, or absolute core, that knows who we are. Some people call it the Divine Indwelling, or the Holy Spirit within us. Throughout our life this *imago Dei* begs to be allowed to show itself more fully.

Home for Merton equates to the True Self while a Zen master might call it 'the face we had before we were born'⁴. The language spoken here is love, and in our original 'unwoundedness', we are open to receiving and giving love and living in a state of full connection.

Immersed in love, we become free of fear and over time our whole being gets transformed into what we behold.

Sadly, as we get older, we learn to think of ourselves as separate from God. We often experience the world as an unsafe place and thus learn the language of fear and consequently spend many years building this separate, egoic, or small self. We get attached to its labels and habits and carefully position ego boundaries around it to protect this social construct and creation of our mind. Interestingly, spiritual teachers like Jesus, the Buddha, the 'Teresas' (Ávila, Lisieux, and Calcutta), as well as the mystical poets Hafiz, Kabir, and Rumi, all talk about the need to 'lose ourselves in order to find ourselves' (Mark 8:35, NKJV). They encourage

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us to let go of our small self with its rigid ego boundaries and open ourselves up to the Divine and the language and culture of love. Immersed in love, we become free of fear and over time our whole being gets transformed into what we behold. Here we are at home and know that love is the ultimate reality.

Whilst there are similarities between certain counselling models and spiritual direction, there are also many differences in regard to the foundations they rest on, their goals, view of the fundamental problems, and methods⁵.

The ultimate goal of spiritual direction is to foster sacred encounters and personal transformation.

Generally, the goal of counselling is to solve the presenting problem. Furthermore, a counsellor often tries to help a client adjust to their circumstances, work through trauma, make peace with their past, remove psychological disturbance of emotions and personality, modify behaviour, and experience a greater sense of love, worth, and purpose.

Spiritual direction, on the other hand, is more theocentric and focuses on listening for God's ways, desires, and invitations. Benner also mentions the transformation of the human person into the fullness of the image and likeness of God, building virtues of faith, hope, love, humility, and learning to know God as goals a spiritual director keeps in mind for their sessions.

The care I try to offer in spiritual direction is for a person's whole self. As a spiritual director I seek to safeguard my directee's uniqueness and nurture the growth of their spiritual life. The ultimate goal of spiritual direction is to foster sacred encounters and personal transformation. Becoming a great lover of life, God, nature, and others, increasing healing and wholeness, and living more and more out of one's deepest, truest and most authentic self are further goals pursued in spiritual direction.

The psychologist Carl Jung encourages us to learn our theories (and ideas about counselling or spiritual direction) as well as we can, but to put them aside when we touch the miracle of the living soul⁶. This to me is the most beautiful aspect of both counselling and spiritual direction - these sacred moments where we get a glimpse of the miracle of another person's living soul, the very place where God delights to dwell. These are the moments I live for.

¹ Richard C. Schwartz, *No Bad Parts: Healing Trauma and Restoring Wholeness with the Internal Family Systems Model*

² Richard C. Schwartz, *Internal Family Systems Therapy*, 50-53

³ Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander*, p 158

⁴ Richard Rohr, *Everything Belongs: The Gift of Contemplative Prayer*, p 77

⁵ David Benner, *Spiritual Direction and the care of souls*.

⁶ Carl Jung (1928) *Contributions to Analytical Psychology*. Translated by H. G. Baynes and C. F. Baynes, 361



Sitting in the Rubble

Spiritual direction and infertility

By Jenna Edgar

In my late twenties I found myself facing infertility, which would go on to last a decade and include pregnancy loss along the way. I had always felt like I would have my own children and had a sense that it was simply meant to be, so as the years continued it became increasingly difficult to understand why something I felt so sure of wasn't happening.

'If God is a healer, which I believe is the truth, why have I not experienced healing?' This painfully honest question swirled around within me for the first few years, subconsciously at first before coming to the forefront and settling in. The physical and emotional realities of infertility were obviously difficult, but I don't think anything could have prepared me for the deeper layer of pain that

snuck into my spirit, bringing with it questions about my faith and my God.

Did I not have enough faith that my womb would be healed? Was I doing something wrong and being punished by God? Was there some sort of lesson I was supposed to be learning but taking too long in the process? Why didn't God want me to have children? These questions bombarded me constantly, despite my best efforts to push them further down.

I came across the practice of spiritual direction in my early 30s. As I met with my new spiritual director each month, I had no trouble unpacking and sitting with the various noticings and wonderings I had around my faith. As an external processor, it was freeing to have the

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space to work through what I felt God had been highlighting to me over the previous month and I looked forward to our time together.

But in the back of my mind, I felt cautious about really delving into the inner confusion that had arisen in my infertility journey. I was self-conscious that it might seem as though my faith was struggling, or that I was doubting God in some way. I didn't want to sound like infertility was all I had to talk about. Each session was incredibly helpful with the relevant focus at the time, but it took patience, presence and a continuous felt sense of no judgement from my director before I was able to trust the space fully to bring the deeper things of my heart.

As I did this - testing the waters at first before jumping right in - I found that the same trustworthy qualities remained. There were no answers to my difficult questions, but there was acknowledgement of my wondering. There were no comforting pleasantries, but I was comforted by his presence, by his willingness to take my experiences seriously and hold them with me. As I shared honestly,

There were no answers to my difficult questions, but there was acknowledgement of my wondering.

sometimes in sadness, sometimes in confusion, often in anger and frustration, I found that rather than feeling judged or that I had overshared, I was encouraged to keep going, to dig deeper and allow these previously unspoken statements to come out and see what happened when they did.

In the process of our conversations, my director reflected to me there were phrases I used on repeat about getting things 'right'. This turned out to be something deeply ingrained in me and it impacted the way I interpreted my experience with infertility. My spirit knew I wasn't childless because of something I had got wrong, but my head was taking a long time to catch up to the truth of this! By being attentive to where the emphasis was in what I said, my director could lovingly mirror back to me this pattern. By becoming aware of this, I was able to catch my 'right or wrongness' more and more in the moment, letting go of control over my experience and learning to trust God in a deeper way. It has been a precious gift to have a space where we could laugh when my desire to be right popped back up - without shame or judgement, but with gratitude that it was actually an invitation to lay control down again (and again!).

In the thick of my infertility story, I observed a local building being demolished. This lone tall building - fifteen stories high - was on a main intersection that I drove past often. There were months of preparation before the top floors began to be dismantled by small diggers - one by one, piece by piece, slowly coming apart. Initially, the demolition was so subtle that it would take a week or more before I noticed that another floor was gone. When the demolition process had reduced the building to the final few stories, the bigger diggers and crushers arrived and brought it to the ground all in one go, crumbling the concrete like sand.

The day I saw the rubble sitting in the empty plot, a big mess

representing what once was, it hit me that the process felt like a physical representation of my life - my dreams for the future I thought I would have with children, and also constructs about what I believed or expected in my faith journey. What I thought I knew about God and my faith had been slowly dismantling, barely noticeable at first but chipping away. However, I had reached a point where the big diggers had appeared and smashed what had remained, seemingly overnight. I was suddenly left surrounded by the rubble of my dreams and beliefs, dazed and shocked.

I referred to this image repeatedly in our sessions, and I will be forever grateful to my spiritual director for sitting with me in the rubble. I never felt rushed to begin the clean-up phase, or to consider what might be able to happen with the empty section next. My experience was in fact the opposite. We sat together in the mess, willingly slowing down the natural instinct to avoid the discomfort of the broken pieces and to rebuild something new as soon as possible.

One of the greatest gifts I have received is that my spiritual director did not try to answer any of my questions with logic, hope or well-intended responses, which I believe is what makes the space of spiritual direction so sacred. There really wasn't, and to an extent still isn't, an answer that will fully satisfy, but I have come to find a deep peace in knowing this and have learnt to hold my experience and what is ahead lightly. It is not always easy and the road ahead is still unknown, but I am constantly learning to be present and to embrace the moment that is now. I

I will be forever grateful to my spiritual director for sitting with me in the rubble.



don't have the words to express how grateful I am for the freedom that comes with this!

Through spiritual direction I discovered a safe, grace-filled space to bring both faith and doubt. Being met with kindness and spiritual care each month has deeply impacted me. It is my privilege to now accompany others on their own journey in this meaningful work, to sit with them in whatever circumstances they have found themselves in and look for the Divine together.

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Spiritual Direction in the Ignatian Tradition

By Kevin Gallagher

When considering the question, 'What is spiritual direction in the Ignatian tradition?', I am aware of a long lineage, extensive scholarship, and a mystery surrounding the question that resists being rigidly defined. I begin by briefly looking at the source of this tradition of spiritual accompaniment.

A little more than five hundred years ago a rather short, wounded, Spanish ex-soldier known as Inigo Lopez Loyola began writing down his experiences of prayer and his deepening relationship with God. He was then living in a small town called Manresa, Spain, in a cave with stunning views of the famous jagged mountain of Montserrat.

Some of the locals referred to him as 'old man sack' as he struggled to find satisfactory spiritual accompaniment for his somewhat tortured experiences. He expressed a dissatisfaction with everyone whom he sought for spiritual direction pleading to God in prayer that he would 'follow a puppy if it would help him find what he sought'¹. It was here in Manresa

that Inigo experienced a profound enlightenment.

One day while occupied in prayer and seated facing the river Cardoner, 'the eyes of his understanding began to be opened and everything seemed new to him.'² Inspired by insights from this enlightenment he began to '... put down in writing in his book 'Spiritual Exercises' his experiences'³ to help others discover what he had experienced. Soon he realised that the grace of this experience is offered not just to a chosen few, but '... to anyone to whom an offer of spiritual help might seem acceptable'.⁴ This experience and the guiding principles he understood from it led him in time to offer the Spiritual Exercises widely and establish the Society of Jesus - known today as the Jesuits.

The Exercises offer an early form of holistic spirituality and a well-tested foundation for what we understand today as spiritual direction in the Ignatian Tradition. When adapted for our current context, they offer an abundance of wisdom for directors accompanying others on their spiritual

quest. In the introductory observations, Ignatius offers an excellent manual for the role of the spiritual director. Valuable guidance can be distilled from this ancient text such as:

- *Direction is above all; listening*
- *God is our Creator and the Spiritual Director*
- *The spiritual director holds the balance, not leaning one way or another*
- *The director leaves 'the Creator to deal directly with the creature'⁵*
- *The director must adapt direction to the directee they are accompanying*
- *The director assists the directee to focus their whole body-person on God in prayer*
- *The director notices and values 'interior experience' expressed by directees*
- *The director assists the directee to notice God already present in their everyday life*
- *Spiritual direction assists directees to grow in spiritual freedom*
- *There is a way to offer suggestions for prayer to a directee⁶*

This list is introductory, as there are many other pearls within the text that continue to inform today's spiritual directors. A classic text widely used in the formation of spiritual directors is *The Practice of Spiritual Direction* by William Barry S.J. and William Connolly S.J. The book draws deeply on the introductory observations in the Exercises of St Ignatius that shaped the formation of these Jesuit authors.

The Exercises also offer directors a comprehensive and well-trodden path toward union with God. Spiritual directors understand that practicing

this sacred ministry is in itself a contemplative *prayer* practice. Spiritual accompaniment cannot be offered without the director themselves attending to their own interior relationship with God. The contemplative stance of the spiritual director emerging from this relationship is crucial in spiritual direction practice.

Formation of spiritual directors in the Ignatian way - such as that offered by *Te Wairua Mahi* in Aotearoa, New Zealand - begins with making the journey of the Spiritual Exercises, either in the long retreat (30 days) or in the daily life version of these practices. You cannot share what you do not have. The Ignatian perspective is that ministry and service are not merely tasks to be undertaken, but the overflow of a personal, lived experience of God's grace.

The Exercises are often described as a school of prayer. In the text, and from the outset, Ignatius stresses that prayer is a means to union with God. He offers many prayer methods to fruitfully move toward this end. Every way '*todo modo*' (Spanish) is encouraged, such as: consideration, meditation, contemplation, applying the senses, colloquy (friend to friend conversation), and Examen. All are practiced to 'draw fruit'⁷ as Ignatius termed it - referring to the initiative of God within the directee, bringing about transformation.⁸ In reviewing prayer, Ignatius implies changing one's practice or exercise to draw more fruit next time.

Some Ignatian scholars today present the Spiritual Exercises as a *Mystagogy* (*mystós-agía*) - meaning literally, 'initiation into the Mysteries'⁹. ►

MONTSERRAT, SPAIN - VIEW FROM LA COVA SANT IGNASI MANRESA © KEVIN GALLAGHER



There is a mystery of who and what God is, a mystery of who and what we are, and a mystery about what the world is. The Exercises offer a way into this mystery — a process where the more one enters into it the more it grows. I suggest that there is also a mystery surrounding spiritual direction, because best practice begins with *not knowing*.

For Ignatius, the many ways of prayer in the Spiritual Exercises were simply 'means.' The 'end' is union with God, to keep God always before one's eyes.

Much of the Exercises were drawn from sources available to him in the 16th century to assist 'overcoming oneself and to order one's life without reaching a decision through some disordered affection.'¹⁰

In the 1520s, the Benedictine abbey of Santa Maria de Montserrat had undergone major reforms under the abbot Garcia de Cisneros (1455–1510), who offered prayer exercises through the three 'ways' of the spiritual life: Purgative, Illuminative, and Unitive¹¹. Ignatius sought spiritual direction from the monks there, some of whom lived in caves. In time, these three ways became woven into the Spiritual Exercises.

In essence, I suggest the role of the spiritual director is about a simplicity of being present. The Exercises themselves lead to this surrendered simplicity. The very last and contemplative unitive phase of the Exercises is simply '*Give me your love and your grace, this is sufficient for me*'¹² followed by the third method of prayer¹³; '*breathing in, breathing out, simple attention, one word, utter surrendered simplicity.*'

Interested in formation for spiritual directors in the Ignatian tradition? Learn more about Te Wairua Mahi at ignatianspirituality.nz.

¹ St Ignatius, *Autobiography*, 23

² St Ignatius, *Autobiography*, 30

³ Rahner and Imhof, *Ignatius of Loyola*, 1978, p 52

⁴ Rahner and Imhof, p 13

⁵ *Spiritual Exercises*, 15

⁶ Paraphrased from the *Spiritual Exercises*

⁷ *Spiritual Exercises*, 106

⁸ Michael Ivens, *Understanding the Spiritual Exercises*, p 93

⁹ Javier Melloni S.J., *The Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola in the Western Tradition*, Ch 4, p 49

¹⁰ *Spiritual Exercises*, 21

¹¹ Garcia de Cisneros, *Compendio Breve de Ejercicios Espirituales*. Ignatius was influenced by this text. See; Javier Melloni S.J., as above, Ch 2, p 9

¹² *Spiritual Exercises*, 234

¹³ *Spiritual Exercises*, 258

FRANCISCO DE ZURBARÁN AND WORKSHOP; PUBLIC DOMAIN, VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Deeper into Love – Finding God in Grief

By Chin Chen Esther

Grief ushered me into mystery - into questions I could not answer and into the humbling acceptance of my own humanity. Here is my story of how

spiritual direction has supported my deepening life in God through loss.

When my father passed away suddenly due to a stroke, his death

FOREST WATERCOLOUR BY
CHIN CHEN ESTHER

threw me to my knees, and my 'closed myth' consciousness - a fixed way of interpreting God, truth, and reality - was broken open. Death is such a profound human experience. A sorrowful mystery.

In the weeks after his death, I did not want to go to church. Something felt unreal and terribly wrong. What well-meaning people tried to say to comfort me only deepened the hurt. Instead, I found myself longing to enter the forest without knowing why. I used to hike there one weekend a month. After his death, I returned often, finding a refuge for my grief.

Within the quiet of my spiritual director's room, I laid bare my soul about my father's death. She listened tenderly, as though her silence itself was a sanctuary, holding my grief with reverence. 'We connect with God with our emotions,' she reminded me softly. For a moment, I thought I saw tears in her eyes as well. Was she sharing in my pain? The space around us grew thin; though my heart still ached, I felt I was held in a sacred space where my grief felt validated.

She invited me to reflect on what happened when I went into the forest. Through tears, I spoke softly: 'I felt welcome and accepted.' Her voice gentle and steady, she asked how my body felt when I was there. 'When I was in the forest, I was happy. I think this is what being home with God feels like - feeling welcomed and being accepted in my guilt, regrets, shame, and pain,' I whispered and choked on the words as tears came.

'Would you like to take a moment to imagine yourself back in the forest?' she asked gently, opening the possibility of re-experiencing

God. So I did. I imagined myself walking into the forest, reliving that sense of welcome and acceptance before my spiritual director. Tears were streaming down my cheeks. It felt raw to let my defences down. I found myself vulnerable, yet strangely free. After my father's passing, I rarely allowed myself to cry in public, yet in this safe space, tears have become a bodily expression of openness and surrender to God. My tears become a prayer, an expression of the grief hidden in my heart.

Wondering aloud who I needed God to be for me in this season of my life, she listened as I replied: 'A welcoming space ... non-judging ... accepting ... like the forest.' She then posed the question, 'Hmmm, what are some ways that we often speak of nature?' 'Mother Earth...Mother Nature,' I responded, and softly she whispered, 'maternal and nurturing part of God.'

God, a nurturing mother? I remembered that Julian of Norwich once wrote of Jesus as True Mother.² Yet describing God with this metaphor feels foreign to me. Even as I doubt, at the depths of my heart, there is a yearning to be seen, known, and to be tenderly nurtured by God.

With quiet assurance, she asked if I could see God in my pain. 'Yes,' I said without hesitation, surprised by my own response. 'Can grief and loss be a pivotal point for you to connect with yourself and with God?' she invited me to consider.

'Where is my father now?' I asked softly, my voice dropping with the weight of a question I had longed to bring before God. Ashamed even to ask it, I continued: 'Why did God let this happen?' 'Let the questions

remain as questions,' she said gently. Can I live with my human questions?

'I had a dream just last night. I dreamt of chewing something hard and then swallowing it,' I recounted. Silence fell between us, and we remained there together. In that silence, I suddenly knew what the 'hard thing' was - it was the human questions I had been asking.

I am glad that she did not offer quick fixes. Instead, she gently created a spaciousness, marked by humble curiosity, allowing my soul to feel safe enough to unfold, in the presence of El Roi, the God who sees me and loves me completely. She asked questions born of wonder, rather than a search for information. Her questions drew me toward God, inviting me into deeper intimacy.

'Look within you, sometimes the answers are within you,' her voice was gentle and steady. With her encouragement, I closed my eyes and placed myself at the empty tomb. In the silence, I listened. 'Where is he now?' I asked. 'He is in a good place now because God is good,' a voice within me responded. Is this the voice of Love?

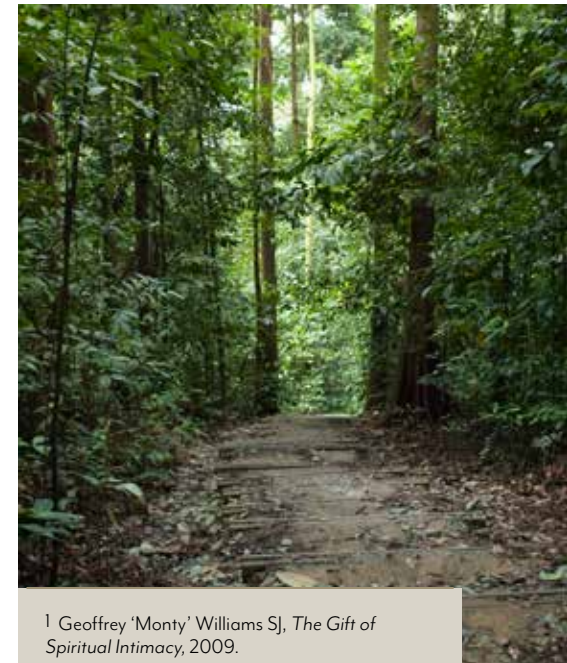
Startled by the response, I entrusted her with what I heard. My own voice grew quiet - the experience was something deeply intimate for me. Tears came once more.

I walked away from the session with a deep sense of being seen and known by God. That sense became stronger each time I could re-experience that sense of being

welcomed and accepted, with the help of my spiritual director.

I truly believe that at the heart of spiritual direction is a call to be a living sanctuary for others, where souls feel profoundly seen and known by God. It is an invitation to glimpse each directee through God's eyes. It is about participating in God's loving gaze and listening to their stories with spiritual attunement and spaciousness, inviting them to enter more deeply into Love. That is what my spiritual director offered me in my time of loss and it made all the difference.

She asked questions born of wonder, rather than a search for information. Her questions drew me toward God, inviting me into deeper intimacy.



¹ Geoffrey 'Monty' Williams SJ, *The Gift of Spiritual Intimacy*, 2009.

² Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love*, 1998.

Spiritual Direction

A godsend for an uneasy pastor

By Vic Francis

Pastors need spiritual direction. It's just that most of us don't know it. As a spiritual director and a supervisor with more than three decades of pastoring behind me, I regularly talk to pastors about the relative merits of the two practices. And I always assert that if you only have the time or money for one, choose spiritual direction over supervision. Which often elicits a raised eyebrow, maybe an awkward laugh.

Yes, I say to the pastor, you can get many aspects of supervision from other sources – books, seminars, conferences, peer relationships and the like. There are many conversations in a pastor's world about how things are going, how your church is doing, how you can minister better, what God is saying to you, or your church or ministry. But no one except a spiritual director will invite you into a genuine, caring, spacious, vulnerable, confidential, transparent conversation about how life really is between you and God.

Pastors need spiritual direction. Richard Black, of Thriving Churches HQ, says church leaders 'continue to report mental health challenges at a higher level than the general public' and that 'the role of the pastor is negatively impacting the emotional intelligence of those in the role'.¹

My observation is that pastors are often lonely, even though they're surrounded by people; at times

struggle to genuinely connect with God, even when they're supposed to have all the answers; and worry about their family and finances and futures as much as everyone else.

The pastoral call is a heavy one at times. Pastors live with echoes of Gregory the Great, in his powerful 6th-century tome *Pastoral Care*, which was often presented to bishops on ordination: '[A pastor should be] pure in thought, exemplary in conduct, discreet in keeping silence, profitable in speech, in sympathy a near neighbour to everyone, in contemplation exalted above all others, a humble companion to those who lead good lives, erect for his zeal for righteousness against the vices of sinners.'²

The pastoral call is a heavy one at times.

No wonder being a pastor is a tough job! As well as feeling this historic weight, pastors are in the role 24-7 regardless of the hours for which they get paid and carry a strong sense of call which drives an urgency to get things done. They tend to be people of conviction, in a hurry, wanting answers and feeling pressures from themselves, their congregations and their denominations to get it right, to succeed, to change the world.

I once took to my spiritual director (and my supervisor) the key moments

of my last month pastoring. I had presided at the funeral of a 15-year-old boy with all its agony, confusion and 'why God' components, and shared with our congregation a sense of entering my final season of pastoring, with all its impacts on them and of course on myself. That's not to mention a stillbirth, two live births, a financial shortfall, staff challenges and the myriad other issues that confront you as a pastor in any given monthly cycle. Thank God for my spiritual director!

That said, I can understand why pastors find it hard to warm to spiritual direction sometimes. It can be quite elusive, even threatening. What is the point of it exactly? And so, we have some ready pushback lines – I don't like candles, it's too passive, I haven't got time. We may also have some unconscious male-female bias, in that most pastors are (still) men and most spiritual directors are (still) women. (This is ironic considering historically spiritual direction was the domain of the clergy, who of course were men).

As someone involved in pastoring pastors, I urge you to try it – I mean, which of us couldn't do with an hour a month far from the madding crowd where we can welcome an intentional, relational discovery of God in the safe hands of a skilled spiritual director?

And for those who get the chance to be the spiritual director for a pastor, don't be intimidated! Pastors may seem strong and opinionated, but as their spiritual director back your own calling and the skills you bring to the table. In my experience, though, there are a few things you might like to keep in mind:

Encourage them to talk. Pastors don't get many chances to talk honestly and openly about their life and their relationship with God. Your listening ear could be life-changing.

Encourage them to feel. Pastors can tend to focus on facts and faith, only allowing for feelings as an afterthought. Your gentle invitation for them to feel may unlock deep healing and connection in a way nothing else does.

Encourage them to explore. Pastors can be creatures of habit, stuck in a rut of their own theology, sources and authors, and a spiritual director's resourcefulness by offering a book with a different perspective, or a new prayer practice, or engaging their creative right brain can open fruitful new horizons.

In my experience, pastors and church leaders by and large are wonderful, sacrificial men and women pursuing a sense of God's call. And spiritual direction can support their genuine desire to be more secure, safer leaders who last the distance.

At the end of the day, a healthy pastor is more likely to lead a healthy church. And a healthy church is more likely to produce healthy parishioners. People like you and me.

Pastors need spiritual direction. It's up to all of us to help them know it. ■

¹ Richard Black, *Unjamming the Rudder*, 2025, p. 4.

² worldhistory.org/article/917/gregory-the-great--his-pastoral-care/

A Companionship

By Miriam Jessie Fisher

our friendship is long
years we have travelled
Emmaus Rd companions

she has asked
intuitive
incisive
impossible questions

waited, patient
as the great springs of my inner world are released
the tidal surge
 (extroverts get spiritual direction too)
seldom has silence stretched long
 (though she is at home with silence, it is her
 welcomed companion)
I search my heart aloud, many-wordily
I am not precise
considered
concise

I search urgently like one
looking for ballet shoes
or the crack in a broken water pipe
or one trying to keep pace with a plum tree
disgorging overripe fruit

I am not contained

she builds,
 each time we meet
a container for my searching
stays attentive
as pieces are flung, fast and frenzied in her direction

she notices particular treasures

little phrases
unguarded hopes
things I missed

like the ribbon of the shoe
the way water catches the light as it gushes
the smell of heavy plums

she is teaching me, tenderly
 (I am a slow learner)
to attend, in the flinging-flooding-falling
to the beauty of this mess

her silence, a gracious holy offering
has enlarged me
strengthened the container of our journey
made room for the inward things that seem uncontainable

she has let me search - loud and long
in the searching
I have found
not
 the shoes
 the crack
 a way to keep fruit on the tree
instead, an optician, she has adjusted my vision
so I see
 holiness in missing things
 holiness in water and overripe fruit
 holiness in
 attending
 offering
 noticing

I have, tentatively, begun to understand
holiness is not a performance

holiness is seeing, beholding, attending
to the other one,
 the stranger
who walks that long and loss-filled Emmaus Rd
with us
and transforms it with words and broken bread

From Both Chairs

Sharing sacred space in spiritual companioning

By Linda Burson Swift

To both offer and receive spiritual direction over the years has been a privilege and a soul-shaping gift. I fell into this practice by surprise, and it continues to intrigue and encourage me. My first spiritual director was 78 when I met her; me sitting on her feather-cushioned yellow couch, she watching and listening to me with deep interest. I was instantly held captive by her warm gaze and focused attention. This kind of manaakitanga was new to me.

John O'Donahue talks of the inner walls of a home being 'threaded with the texture of one's soul, a subtle weave of presences.'¹ Over the years, I felt wrapped in the safety of her physical space – like I was entering into a beautifully decorated cavern. Here, the soundproofed walls could hold my stories and the outside world could not enter.

'When I'm your age, I want to do what you do,' I told her. She laughed and replied, 'why would you wait?' I knew instantly that I wanted to be able to, at least in some small part, offer the gift of presence and unconditional love that she had given me. No fixed agenda or dogma, rather a calm, compassionate and caring presence that might include words, or not. I felt the invitation to pursue my training as a spiritual director and she became one of my wise guides and mentors along the way, both in her life and in her passing.

When she passed, I had an image of a little dinghy being pushed out into the ocean. I felt, for a while, stranded and unhinged, flailing around in the deep, desperately wanting to be anchored. Thankfully, I was rescued by another wise soul, who remains my spiritual companion, my anam cara until this day. I'm so grateful for these two wahine toa who have been anchors throughout my journey.

It's not easy to describe the spiritual direction relationship, when I'm the one sitting in the director's chair. I don't have a couch, rather most of my work is done online (thanks to COVID). My office chair holds me while I offer my full attention to another via a screen as they welcome me into their inner world. Along the way, I have discovered the metaphors of midwife, anchor, anam cara, seer, wise guide, and anchoress, each one birthed from the experience of conversation and connection.

These days I prefer to call myself a spiritual companion. I don't presume to know how to 'direct' anyone, but as I settle in and alongside someone for a brief encounter where deep listening, keen observing, wise discernment and silence are the touchstones of the relationship, something sacred is touched. It is not so much new, as the revealing of an ancient wisdom and way of knowing that has always been there, just waiting to wake up. The obvious is mostly hidden under layers of cultural,

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I'm so grateful for these two wahine toa who have been anchors throughout my journey.

and often sadly, religious conditioning. A companion's role is to notice that and invite a brave peeling back to reveal what has been present all along.

Perhaps we are sleepwalkers, and 'we sleep, but our heart is awake.'
(Song of Songs 5:3)

The breadth of my understanding of what it means to be spiritual has allowed for an expansion to include all of life's experiences, where the soul's longing to emerge and flourish has found many places to land. This then is the gift of offering spiritual companioning to another; shared experiences of evolving in

understandings of the Divine and allowing space for curious exploration and embracing all that might appear along the way. There are no rules or script, just an honest storyline that resembles the grit and reality of the life currently lived.

What a privilege it is to have the experience of sitting in both chairs. To be privy to another's sacred space, as well as having a safe space to explore my own have been gifts that have nourished and shaped my life deeply. I am eternally grateful.

¹ John O'Donahue, *Beauty: The Invisible Embrace*

Diary Excerpts of a Spiritual Directee

(During a Difficult Season)

By Carolyn Officer

7 August I saw my spiritual director today and before we even started, I knew that this was going to be challenging. I was on the edge, literally and metaphorically. It didn't take much for me to crumble, just lighting the candle brought tears to the surface. I opened up because she offers me a safe space. She encouraged me to draw how I felt. So, I drew myself as a little green boat, surrounded by giant angry waves.

She suggested I name them - so I did - pain, isolation, loneliness, despair. Then we talked about each one and what it meant for me. I cried buckets - sobbing until I was out of tears. This was me. This was my current reality, without hope, without life, without God, or so I thought.

My director asked me to choose a symbol for God and draw Him in my picture. I chose a yellow star, because sailors use stars to navigate by. She then guided me in having a conversation with God, using the star as a tool. It became more than a dialogue - I felt God reaching out to embrace me in His arms. I also realised that He was there all along, even though I couldn't see or feel Him. She asked me to write a title for my picture - I called it 'I am held in love' as I had drawn yellow gold beams reaching down from the star and surrounding my little green boat.

God's everlasting arms, always holding me in love, always caring. This is probably the most extreme experience I've had of feeling the absence of the presence of God and being able to come back from the brink into His open arms.

This session left me feeling emotionally drained, but I went home with hope in my heart. 'I am held in love' became my breath prayer, repeated again and again. That day was a turning point for me. I began to look up and crawl my way towards light, life, hope, all the while embraced and surrounded by God's everlasting arms.

My circumstances had not changed. I still had physical pain. I was limited in what I could do. But I no longer felt hopeless and that things would never change. Incrementally, they have.

What you've just read is one window into a much larger journey. The complete diary journey is available on the SGM Blog: sgm.org.nz/blog/diary-directee



Spiritual Direction

By Trish McBride

When I'm receiving -
I go where I can be me
Wholly me
Holy ground
Years-long golden thread
With wiser ones
Where moments of awareness
Can be recalled explored enriched
Where wisdom from
The Beyond-Within
Can throw more light
On the path behind
The now
The path ahead
You are in and through it all

When I'm giving -
There's the long slow listen
Once You called me 'lodestone'
Then I didn't understand
But now can see the process
Of sharing in the re-setting
Of each one's compass
As being held
Wholly and holy in Your hands
Holding the 'not knowing'
Darkness and light
Pain dreams intuitions growth ecstasy
With the sure knowing
That You respond
To searching souls

And through all that
The passed-on wisdom -
You can take people no deeper
Than you've been yourself

Deep Listening at the Friary

By Vincent Maire and the
St Francis Retreat Centre Spiritual Direction Team

In 2022, as New Zealand emerged from the COVID pandemic, a small group of SGM-trained spiritual directors came together to re-establish the spiritual direction ministry at Auckland's Franciscan Friary. Opened in 1939, St Francis Retreat Centre has long been a haven from the busyness of life.

The new team was assigned the responsibility of facilitating the monthly Time Out Days and 24-Hour Quietude retreats held every quarter. Attendance grew significantly, especially for the Time Out Days. During these days people can participate in a 25-minute one-on-one chat with a member of the ministry team. While these sessions are referred to as spiritual direction, it is not ongoing contracted spiritual direction in the classic sense. Rather, team members have found that people view these sessions as a safe place to unload the burdens of their lives to someone who is compassionate, neutral, and listens from the heart.

The issues brought to these sessions cover the broad arc of human suffering

and longing. Every story is different yet common themes occur. Take loneliness - our hyper-connected world and hyperactive lives inhibit forming close bonds. To be taken seriously, to not be judged, to feel heard; these are missing from many lives. Talking to a member of the spiritual direction team is, for some people, the only way they have of attending to these feelings of aloneness and of being abandoned by the world and even by God.

Family stress, especially for those living with and caring for someone with complex mental-health issues,



ST FRANCIS RETREAT CENTRE, USED WITH PERMISSION

is a common theme. The often-erratic behaviour of the loved-one heightens anxiety for the retreatant who long ago accepted their cross, but nevertheless, welcome not being judged when they share how they truly feel about a person who the gospels say they should love. People unload about children who will not go to church, adult children who gave up church decades ago, difficult spouses, siblings who will not talk to them, and so the list goes.

For some it is their search for the 'right' church community. We hear about past encounters with faith groups, what was good and not so good about them. Often, when probing further, they disclose a growing attraction for a more contemplative style of prayer and worship. For these people, the spiritual direction team

For nearly 90 years St Francis Retreat Centre has been a haven of prayer-filled peace.

has produced *A Simple Guide to Contemplative Prayer*. We talk about stages of faith, suggest authors, groups, apps, websites, and hope their search bears fruit, as invariably it will.

Navigating the uncertain waters of a life transition is another theme shared at the Friary. People lament the direction of their lives that led them to jobs they dislike, bosses and colleagues they loathe, wondering if their true calling in life will ever appear. We may reflect on our own life transition experiences, we might talk about life's seasons, we may suggest a referral to professional services, we offer hope; above all, we listen.

Listening, it seems, is taken very seriously in Scotland. The Scottish Listening Service¹ is an NHS service staffed by trained volunteers who listen, but do not counsel or offer advice. The service is delivered at no cost from GP practices. The Friary spiritual direction team is offering a similar service by providing trained people who take time to be 'a simple bridge to help one person from here to there.'² Listening, when done with presence and compassion, in a room adorned with Christian icons and symbols, on a day that starts with prayer and reflection, is welcomed by those seeking succour.

Twenty-five minutes may not seem long yet the 'directees' move very quickly to the deep stuff as the work is done under the ambit of God's economy. We are greatly aided by the Friary itself. For nearly 90 years St Francis Retreat Centre has been a haven of prayer-filled peace. Here is a place that is home to more than the human other: the trees, birds, gardens, pathways, and quiet places for personal prayer and reflection. The friars, staff, chapel, library, the wonderful food; each in their way accentuate the sacredness of this place that has long been ecumenical; Protestant, Catholic, clergy, lay, non-religious; seekers all.

An oasis in the centre of a busy city that more and more people are discovering. Everyone is welcome, everyone is heard.

¹ rightdecisions.scot.nhs.uk/nhs-tayside-refguide/support-services/community-listening-service

² Joy Cowley, 'The Bridge', *Aotearoa Psalms: Prayers of a New People*.

SGM News

Shining a light on spiritual direction

By Bruce Maden - SGM Workgroup Convenor

It seems to me that the contemplative movement is experiencing something of a renaissance. More people are seeking deeper spiritual formation and opportunities to journey with others. Some who have previously been uncertain about contemplative spirituality are discovering both its gifts and its deep roots within our Christian heritage, as Donald Scott's story in this issue illustrates.

For over 40 years, Spiritual Growth Ministries (SGM) has been strengthening and supporting the contemplative stream. We see this year's launch of *Pathways to Presence* — a six-week spiritual formation journey grounded in the landscapes and voices of Aotearoa — and this special edition of *Refresh* as two expressions of that ongoing calling.

Spiritual direction is one of the great treasures of the contemplative tradition and is alive and well in our land. Yet, by its very nature, it often remains hidden from view. We believe now is the right time to shine a light on this ministry and invite more people to discover its gifts.

Annual Appeal 2026

SGM has taken a step of faith in investing in this special edition of *Refresh*, expanding the page count and printing an additional 1,000 copies. Our hope is that it will become a widely shared resource, introducing more people to spiritual direction

while enriching and renewing seasoned practitioners. If you share this vision, we invite you to partner with us.

1. Give financially

Your gift will help cover the additional costs of this special edition while also supporting SGM's wider work of nurturing contemplative spirituality.

Donate to our Contemplative Horizons Fund:

Spiritual Growth Ministries Trust
03-0166-0198782-00

Reference: Appeal

2. Help us share this special edition of Refresh more widely

Who in your circles might benefit from this special edition? Perhaps a church, retreat centre, theological college, ministry network, or community organisation. We are happy to send bundles of *Refresh* for wider distribution. A contribution towards postage costs is appreciated where possible, but we will send copies wherever there is genuine interest. Contact Jenna on admin@sgm.org.nz to request copies.



BRUCE MADEN
lives in Palmerston North. He and his wife Elizabeth have been deeply committed to solidarity with disadvantaged

communities and being an incarnational presence within them. He also provides leadership mentoring, tutoring, spiritual direction and supervision.

Becoming a Spiritual Director

SGM's Spiritual Directors Formation Programme

The capacity to listen deeply to another person's experience of God is both a gift and a learned skill. Since 1988, Spiritual Growth Ministries has been forming spiritual directors throughout Aotearoa New Zealand and beyond.

Our two-year, part-time **Spiritual Directors Formation Programme** combines spiritual formation, skills development, supervised practice, and a supportive learning community. Participants come from a wide range of Christian backgrounds and life experiences, and go on to offer spiritual direction in a variety of contexts.

This is more than professional training. It is a journey of spiritual formation that shapes how we listen to God, ourselves, and others.

Are you being drawn to this ministry?

Perhaps some of these statements resonate:

- You are interested in helping others grow in their relationship with God.
- People naturally open up to you about their spiritual lives.
- You sense God inviting you to explore this ministry.
- You are drawn to contemplative prayer and practices.

Over two years, participants engage in:

- Learning modules exploring spiritual direction, prayer, discernment, and spiritual growth.
- Regular spiritual direction and reflective practice.
- Supervised experience offering spiritual direction.
- Workshops, residential gatherings and learning alongside others from around the country.

FIND OUT MORE AND APPLY:

sgm.org.nz/spiritual-directors-formation-programme

THE FOUNDATION PATHWAY

Not yet ready for the full programme? The one-year Foundation Pathway offers a personalised programme of preparation and discernment – your first step on the journey towards the SDFP.

sgm.org.nz/foundation-pathway

ARE FINANCES A BARRIER?

Thanks to the generosity of our community, a Year One Scholarship and several financial support grants are available each year to help make formation training more accessible.

sgm.org.nz/apply-now

Book Reviews

IT WORKS: STORIES OF TRANSFORMATIVE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

Edited by Philip John Halstead and Angelika Halstead, Wipf and Stock Publishers (2025).

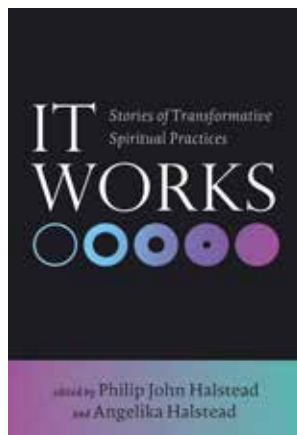
By Rachel Kitchens

At every point in our spiritual journeys, we need spiritual food to sustain us, encourage us, and help us to flourish in our relationship with God. This is deep work, and we need practices that feed us with a balanced diet of prayer and Scripture, but also practices that delight and surprise us with God's rich world.

Recently, I was delighted to read the beautiful book, *It Works: Stories of Transformative Spiritual Practices*, edited and compiled by Philip and Angelika Halstead. Philip lectures in pastoral care and counselling at Carey Baptist College and Angelika is a counsellor, spiritual director, and supervisor in private practice.

What a feast exists inside, friends! Written with energy and vitality by various practitioners, this book offers authentic voices from New Zealanders who live, walk, work, worship, and pray here in this beautiful land we call home. Each chapter offers a different perspective from friends on the journey, who share what practices have sustained and deepened their spiritual lives.

This is not a boring meal but a rich tapestry of flavour, from the beautiful



reflections on 'Counting Down our Days' by Philip Halstead, to 'The Joy of Having Less' by Jaimee van Gernerden, to 'Encountering God in the Whenua (The Land)' by Manakinui Te Kahu and Philip Halstead. These thoughtful writings both echo familiar practices known to mature Christians (like prayer, stillness, and Scripture reading) and offer new

ones too: feasting, hiking, gazing at creation, and dancing.

For spiritual directors and their directees, I highly recommend this book for bedside reading. The Halsteads have carefully curated and crafted contributions from an intelligent, encouraging, and honest group of writers. These authors practice what they have discovered: that life with God is more exciting, more interesting, and more beautiful when we take time to embrace God's loving presence and to embody this in our daily rhythms and routines.

In my work as a spiritual director, I would very much like to share a chapter or two with my directees. Specifically, those directees facing dryness, flatness, or overwhelm. Like a refreshing step into a warm home with a meal lovingly prepared, this book is bread for the spiritual journey: nourishing, sustaining, and ultimately pointing to the One who feeds our deepest hunger and quenches our deepest thirst. ■

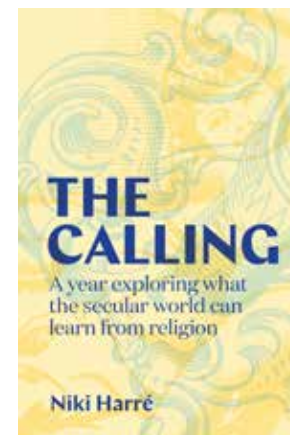
THE CALLING: A YEAR EXPLORING WHAT THE SECULAR WORLD CAN LEARN FROM RELIGION

by Niki Harré, Auckland University Press (2026).

By Vincent Maire

In 2021, Niki Harré, atheist and professor at the University of Auckland's School of Psychology, immersed herself in Christian life. She declared herself a secular priest, held services, listened to people, and embraced vows of simplicity (dressed in a priestly way), hospitality (welcomed strangers) and pause (Centring prayer). At Rhythms and Grace church she found a community, a pastor-mentor, and formed close ties with a broad cross-section of Christians keen to support her year-long sabbatical project. She read extensively, revelling in the writings of Karen Armstrong, Eugene Peterson, Cynthia Bourgeault and especially Richard Rohr, to name just a few. She was much taken with Matthew, found nothing new in Mark, thought Luke flowery and John tedious; by August she is writing, 'Jesus was becoming of great interest to me.'

Niki Harré was amazed and perplexed at the diverse ways people encounter and relate to God/Jesus. A 'strange new feeling of happiness,' that mysteriously waxed and waned initially unnerved her. In the long tradition of spiritual autobiography, our author tracks her growth in self-awareness, her



failings, and a desire to be more priest-like in her dealings with others. Her sincerity shines through on every page.

Niki Harré's goal was not to learn about religion but from religion. She noticed in her encounters eleven key aspects that promoted radical connection and realignment; these include the way Christianity looks to God as the ultimate judge, de-

centres the individual, opens people to the ultimate unknowability of how the world works and that not all problems can be solved. This contrast with the secular world where the self is all important and 'truth known so the acts of others are harshly judged.' Indeed, she was deeply troubled by the actions of many people in her academic circle.

We all have directees who live and work in our largely secular society. *The Calling* offers many insights into how spiritual directors can better understand and respond to directees struggling to cope with the harsher side of secularism. In fact, Niki Harré is a classic example of the tourist who visits a country and ends up writing a book that reminds the locals what a beautiful land they inhabit. For myself, I will soon be leading a retreat based on this book. Highly recommended. ■

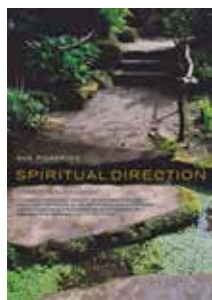
Contemplative Resources Corner



STARTING SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

by John Mabry (2017)

Mabry offers a wise and practical introduction for those preparing to enter spiritual direction for the first time. By the time you finish it, you will have a good grasp on what this ministry is about, what you can expect from your spiritual director, and how to make the best use of your sessions.



SPIRITUAL DIRECTION: A PRACTICAL INTRODUCTION

by Sue Pickering (2008)

This practical guide for spiritual directors, and those in formation, traces spiritual direction from the early church to modern ministry. Clear and grounded, it explores prayer, discernment, listening, and everyday spirituality without drifting into abstraction. A useful resource for clergy and lay readers alike, it balances theology with hands-on guidance for supporting others well.



SPIRITUAL DIRECTION 101: THE BASICS OF SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE

by Teresa Blythe (2018)

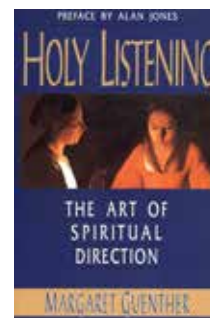
Blythe brings spiritual guidance down to earth, making it accessible to people from a variety of spiritual and religious traditions. This book gives you the nitty-gritty 'here's how it's done' information, such as tips, tools, stories and descriptions to assist spiritual directors and build awareness in those seeking spiritual help.



CONTEMPLATIVE WITNESSING: BIPOC-CENTRED SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

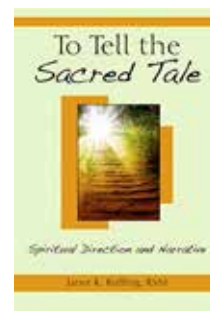
by Cindy S. Lee (2025)

This book explores how BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour) people can experience a liberating spirituality so we can settle into our own bodies, experience the traditions and spirituality of our cultures, and engage with communities that reflect our sacredness back to us. Lee equips spiritual directors to serve as witnesses as BIPOC people encounter our most sacred and honest selves.



HOLY LISTENING by Margaret Guenther (1992)

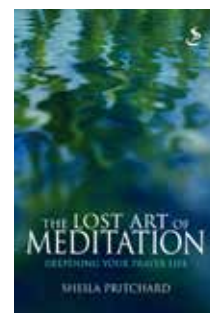
Guenther uses the images of the spiritual director as host, teacher, and midwife to describe the ministry of spiritual direction. She pays particular attention to spiritual direction for women, and addresses such down-to-earth questions as setting, time, and privacy. The stories of real people bring the practice of spiritual direction alive.



TO TELL THE SACRED TALE: SPIRITUAL DIRECTION AND NARRATIVE

by Janet J. Ruffing RFM (2011)

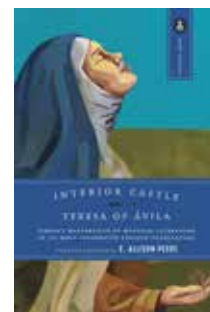
Stories are the connective tissue between culture and nature, self and other, life and death, that sew the world together, and in telling, the soul quickens and comes alive. Ruffing encourages spiritual directors to pay close attention to the actual stories directees tell and suggests helpful responses directors can make to these sacred tales based on theory and illustrated with rich case material.



THE LOST ART OF MEDITATION: DEEPENING YOUR PRAYER LIFE

by Sheila Pritchard (2003)

Written by the late Sheila Pritchard, a much-loved elder within the Spiritual Growth Ministries community, this accessible introduction to Christian meditation invites readers into a deeper experience of prayer and relationship with God. Drawing on Scripture and Christian tradition, Sheila explores a range of approaches to meditative prayer with warmth, wisdom, and practical insight.



THE MYSTICAL CLASSICS

Spiritual direction is a contemplative ministry. Fr. Francis, who leads SGM's Spiritual Directors Formation Programme, encourages everyone to read the following mystical classics: *The Interior Castle* (Teresa of Avila), *The Revelations of Divine Love* (Julian of Norwich), *Practicing the Presence of God* (Brother Lawrence) and *The Cloud of Unknowing* (anonymous). While these classical texts are not specifically about spiritual direction, we wouldn't have spiritual direction without them!

Spiritual Direction Research and Resources

Each participant in the second year of the Spiritual Growth Ministries Spiritual Directors Formation Programme (SDFP) engages in a research project on an aspect of the practice of spiritual direction in which they have a particular interest. Over 100 of these Special Interest Papers are published on the SGM website. Visit www.sgm.org.nz or scan the QR code to browse the research papers.



The following are a selection of research papers exploring aspects of spiritual direction.

THE RELEVANCE AND ENGAGEMENT OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION FOR GENERATION Y – *Murray Lucas*

Lucas explores the case for spiritual direction among Generation Y (Millennials) – a generation often sceptical of institutions yet hungry for authenticity, meaning, and connection. Drawing on personal experience, research, and the voices of Gen Y participants in Aotearoa New Zealand, he examines the pressures shaping younger adults today. Lucas presents spiritual direction as a relevant and timely response and challenges practitioners to communicate its purpose and value more effectively to those seeking deeper spiritual connection.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION THROUGH THE LENS OF WHAKAPAPA FOR THOSE OF MAORI DESCENT – *Trish Rollo*

Rollo explores how receiving spiritual direction in Te Reo Māori deepens understanding of self, identity, and God for Māori. Drawing on themes of whakapapa, belonging, language, and relationship, she highlights the importance of culturally attuned spiritual direction and the transformative potential of practice grounded in Māori experience. Interwoven throughout is her own compelling journey of discovery, adding depth and vitality to the paper.

ATTACHMENT TO GOD: PRACTICES TO AWAKEN US TO GOD'S EVER-PRESENT LOVE IN OUR LIVES – *Kathy Bennett*

Bennett draws on both personal experience and professional expertise to explore the connection between attachment theory and a person's experience of God. Integrating insights from psychology and neuroscience, she shows how early relational patterns can shape our relationship with God. This engaging paper offers practical insights for spiritual directors seeking to help people cultivate a more secure attachment to God, highlighting the importance of presence, attunement, and emotional safety in fostering healing and transformation.

Our Contributors



JO ANASTASIADIS is a spiritual director in Wellington who loves God's creation, and seeing others grow in their relationship with God. She has recently rediscovered the delight of play with her young grandchildren, and the joy of simple moments.



ANDREW DUNN has a wonderful sense of privilege in working with Spiritual Growth Ministries, contemplative prayer and spiritual direction for over 40 years. He is now taking time out to recover from health issues and the surprises of ageing.



LINDA BURSON SWIFT lives in the Waitākere ranges, where she offers spiritual companionship and supervision. Walking and writing ground her nature-centred spirituality and occasionally find expression in her online journal at lindabursonswift.co.nz.



JENNA EDGAR currently offers spiritual direction and retreats in daily life online (www.jennaedgar.co.nz) whilst she is on a pilgrimage around the South Island with her husband and dog. Jenna loves family, hiking, mountain biking and being outdoors.



DAVID CRAWLEY is a member of SGM Workgroup and assists Fran Francis in the Spiritual Directors Formation Programme. He and his wife Sarah live in the leafy Auckland suburb of Titirangi and help lead the local Anglican church.



CHIN CHEN ESTHER offers spiritual direction, supervision, and retreats online and in person from her home in Singapore. She delights in the beauty of hearts opening to divine love and finding, and being found, by God in all things.



FRAN FRANCIS is National Co-ordinator (Kaiwhakahaere) of SGM's Spiritual Directors Formation Programme. She loves collaborating with God to develop spiritual direction skills in others as well as creating retreats and spaces for people to adventure with God.



DIANE GILLIAM-WEEKS is mother to Jessica, life partner to Reg. She was formerly a television producer, parish minister, and professional supervisor. Today she is content in her spiritual direction practice.

Contributors cont.



VIC FRANCIS recently finished up as the Senior Pastor of Shore Vineyard Church after 33 years.

He practises as a spiritual director and supervisor with Solace, and hosts the *For Pastors* podcast. E: vic@solace.org.nz



ANGELIKA HALSTEAD collects books and friends and believes in the process of youthful ageing. She runs contemplative writing

courses and retreats and accompanies others as a spiritual director, counsellor and supervisor. She's looking forward to the arrival of her first grandchild.



AVRIL MANLEY (Ngāpuhi, Waikato) lives in Tauranga with her husband Derek both of whom enjoy bush and beach walks

and gardening. She is grateful to be able to attend both Māori and Pākehā churches. Meditation is an important part of her life.



DONALD SCOTT is a Christchurch-based spiritual director and supervisor who served in pastoral ministry for over

30 years. He facilitates Te Raranga, a city-wide church network, where his passion for kotahitanga (unity) and our bicultural journey find expression.



KEVIN GALLAGHER is a spiritual director and retreat director in Christchurch. He coordinates Ignatian Spirituality NZ, which offers formation in spiritual

direction and the Spiritual Exercises. He is married to Lyn and enjoys time with their six grandchildren.



MIRIAM JESSIE FISHER is a poet, textile artist, educator and theologian in Ōtautahi Christchurch. She

works as an interdisciplinary lecturer in Theology and Education at Laidlaw College. Her default setting is Hope.



ADRIENNE THOMPSON offers spiritual direction and supervision from Wellington. A lifelong contemplative, and a late and reluctant

activist, she is learning to weave and becoming immersed in Ignatian spirituality through Te Mahi Wairua.



JANE WILKINSON lives in Tawa, Wellington where she offers spiritual direction and supervision, works in a charity store, and

volunteers at St Christophers Anglican Church. Regular delights include motorcycle trips, movies and slow reading of novels.



RACHEL KITCHENS is a spiritual director, dancer and Anglican deacon at St James, Māngere Bridge. Her great joy is helping

people find a deeper way to know and experience God. She is married to writer and teacher Andrew Shamy, and they have three children.



VINCENT MAIRE helped re-establish the spiritual direction ministry at St Francis Retreat Centre in 2022. The team includes

Becs Jamieson, Bev McDonald, Nicky Browne, Ron Lang and Vincent. Visit www.stfrancisretreatcentre.org.nz for information on the Friary and Time Out Days.



JO VAN DEN BOGAERT writes from Ōtautahi Christchurch, where she lives and thrives with her husband in their newly emptied nest.

She loves long walks with her dog, art journalling, writing poetry, reading, and practising spiritual direction.



TAY-MARIE YORSTON is a spiritual director in Orere Point. She leads workshops blending the science of sleep and

dreaming with practical interpretation tools to deepen faith and connection with God. Visit dreamsnz.com.



CAROLYN OFFICER lives in Auckland and discovered the practice of spiritual direction through studying a GradDipTh at Laidlaw College. It continues to

transform her life and ground her in Jesus. She enjoys gardening, swimming, writing and making her home a haven for sojourners.



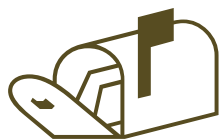
TRISH MCBRIDE is a spiritual director, counsellor and chaplain in a mental health context. She is the author of *Faith Evolving: A*

Patchwork Journey and *Exploring the Presence: More Faith Patches*, fruits of her own 26 years as a directee.



JUDITH WIGGLESWORTH lives in Carterton, on a five-acre lifestyle block, offering a ministry of spiritual

direction and retreat hospitality. Judith finds refreshment in gardening and loves living alongside a small collection of cattle, sheep and hens.



Join the Refresh Mailing List

Refresh Journal of Contemplative Spirituality is published twice each year by Spiritual Growth Ministries. Each issue explores a particular theme – offering sustenance for the spiritual life of the Christian community and beyond.

Whether you are a seasoned pilgrim on the contemplative path or a curious explorer, *Refresh* is for you.

We invite you to join the mailing list and receive future print issues delivered to your letterbox.

Complete the form below and post it to Spiritual Growth Ministries Trust, PO Box 363 New Plymouth 4340 or email details to admin@sgm.org.nz.

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If *Refresh* has enriched your spiritual journey, we invite you to consider making an annual koha to support this ministry.

Suggested annual koha

1–3 copies per issue: \$30

4–9 copies per issue: \$50

10–20 copies per issue: \$70

Donate at www.sgm.org.nz/donate

If you are not in a position to contribute financially, please continue to receive Refresh with our blessing.



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ONLINE

Every issue is also available digitally at sgm.org.nz



Next Time: Creativity

For our next issue, we invite you to explore **creativity as a gift on the contemplative journey**.

Creativity takes many forms, including imaginative prayer, the arts, writing, gardening, craft, and other creative pursuits.

We'd love to hear from people who approach creativity as a spiritual practise, whether in a dedicated or occasional way. We welcome contributions from those who share their creative offerings with others, as well as those for whom creativity is a private yet potent dimension of their spiritual life.

How has creativity shaped your spiritual journey? How can creativity be a contemplative practise? What does this look like for you? What does the image of God as 'Infinite Creativity' awaken in you?

What role has creative expression played in your spiritual, emotional, or psychological wellbeing? How has it helped you engage with the joys, sorrows, questions, and mysteries of being human?

Whose creativity inspires you and why? What creative works have opened you to beauty, truth, wonder, healing, or an encounter with God?

Guidelines for Contributors (please read carefully)

- Keep submissions to fewer than 1300 words
- Send as a Word document
- Leave one space between sentences
- Use single quotation marks
- Be conversational in style
- Use conjunctions where possible
- Use endnotes instead of footnotes
- Use inclusive language wherever possible
- Send images as attachments - at least 2MB
- Send a brief bio (40 words) in a separate Word document to your submission
- Send a head and shoulders photo (1MB) as an email attachment (not embedded in a Word document)

Deadline: please send submissions by Friday September 18th, 2026 to Kathryn Overall-Cass at kathryn@sgm.org.nz

Note: The Refresh editor will edit contributions in accordance with Refresh's contemplative kaupapa, our house style and to work within space constraints.

A New Invitation?



Explore the possibility of
becoming a spiritual director.

**SGM's Spiritual Directors Formation
Programme** offers a transformative journey
into the ministry of spiritual direction.

www.sgm.org.nz

