

About Gloucestershire Spiritual Direction Trust

Gloucestershire Spiritual Direction Trust [the Trust] was established as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), registered with the Charity Commission, in January 2020

The Charity Commission number is 1181357.



It is a community of spiritual directors in Gloucestershire and beyond, an ecumenical body unattached to any church, denomination or diocese.

The purpose of the Trust stated in its constitution is:

1. To promote awareness and understanding of the practice of spiritual direction.
2. To teach, promote and facilitate this ancient Christian practice for the benefit of people of all denominations and none, in Gloucestershire and the surrounding areas. Specifically, to provide vocational training for individuals interested in this ministry.

The language and terminology of spiritual direction vary between different traditions. A spiritual director may alternatively be referred to as a soul friend, accompanier, *anam cara* or spiritual companion.

The Trust achieves its charitable purposes by:

- **providing a course** in training for spiritual directors (A Companion's Way)
- **providing a platform** for spiritual directors to offer their availability to take new directees, and details of their practice and experience, to be accessed after an initial enquiry via the chair of the trustees.
- **organising meetings and opportunities for on-going training** and development for practising spiritual directors, through the Trust and signposting other opportunities available through similar bodies
- **ensuring supervision is available** and encouraging spiritual directors to hold themselves to the highest ethical standards.

The Trust is a *peer group* of those trained in the practice of spiritual direction who join as a community for mutual support, exchange of ideas, to update knowledge and skills, and to foster a culture of professional competence and on-going personal development. Our approach is that we are all amateurs *i.e. lovers of this practice*, acting in a professional, respectful and ethical manner always.

Although the Trustees have a legal duty to see that the aims and purposes of the charity (see above) are carried out, they see themselves as a group that serves and supports the gathered community of individual practitioners in spiritual direction but does not exercise authority over them or hold liability for the work of individual members of its community.

The Trustees are recruited from within the members *or* are asked to join because of particular skills e.g., IT, accountancy, administration. The Trustees are keen to hear from anyone willing to serve alongside them.

All trustees share an understanding of the contemplative nature and practice of spiritual direction.

It is important to clarify what those involved in the Trust (both current trustees and all members of the Ecumenical Community of Spiritual Directors) understand by the term ‘spiritual direction’ and to set out the expectations of the Trust as regards the practice of spiritual direction offered by those who are registered with the Trust. This ensures that those who seek a director understand what they might expect, and that those offering direction are clear about the standards encouraged and expected by the Trust.

It is hoped that the document below will be of benefit to directors and directees alike.

Spiritual Direction

The form of spiritual direction offered by members of the Trust arises from the Christian contemplative tradition. Many other faiths have similar practices.

Spiritual Directors registered with the Trust are trained listeners, having attended a course specifically to learn the art of spiritual direction.

Spiritual directors do not have ‘all the answers’. Each person’s journey towards an understanding of God is their own. Spiritual directors offer a safe and sacred space with the capacity to listen open-heartedly and non-judgementally to anything that the directee may bring to a session, with a view to deepening their spiritual awareness.

Whether someone is struggling with issues of faith and practice, feeling ‘lost’ in their spiritual life, failing to find meaning or purpose in their life or just wants to share the struggles and joys of their relationship with God, the director’s role is to hold space with the directee, God, and the longings of the directee’s heart, listening together for ‘the voice of the Divine’ in that person’s life experience. Unlike ministers who may teach a faith from a particular perspective or therapists who may facilitate change, spiritual directors are companions on the journey of faith, there to help the directee notice the presence of God in their lived experience and offer any resources to support that person’s individual journey.

Spiritual Direction sessions are not a substitute for professional counselling. As a 1:1 listening role there may be some overlap, but counselling primarily focuses on one’s relationship with others and the issues surrounding them, or on a particular situation in which one is seeking resolution, while spiritual direction focuses on one’s spiritual journey and relationship with God. Sometimes issues can surface that need to be worked through and require the help of professional therapy in addition to or in lieu of spiritual direction. ***Spiritual direction does not include financial, professional, relational or health care advice. Decisions or actions taken in that regard are done without the advice or recommendation of the Spiritual Director***

GLOUCESTERSHIRE SPIRITUAL DIRECTION TRUST

GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

To exercise a ministry of spiritual direction (accompaniment/soul friend) is a great privilege. People come to us for many and varied reasons.

These guidelines seek a consistency of ethical behaviour and accepted norms of practice within the ecumenical spiritual direction community while recognising, respecting and enabling the wide diversity of faith and practice of individuals within our community.

NB The Trust is not a diocesan organisation. Expectations in church organisations vary and although similar to are not the same as expectations of this Trust.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS REGISTERED WITH THE TRUST are **required to:**

1. **Be in regular spiritual direction** themselves
2. **Be in supervision** regarding their spiritual direction practice, either in a facilitated group or in a 1:1 relationship with a trained supervisor
3. **Be actively engaged with their own spiritual journey**
4. **Keep their details up to date with the Trust**, including a short biography (of no more than 150 words), current availability, any specific details about those they are comfortable to companion, what remuneration they ask for sessions, whether they hold a current DBS (see Appendix 3), whether they have insurance for their practice (see appendix 4), and their full contact details.
5. **Keep a secure and confidential list of the names and contact details of their directees**, supervisor, supervisees and Chair of the Trust. To ensure that in the case of an emergency these people can be advised of the situation and make appropriate arrangements, this list needs to be made known to an appropriate trusted person and a copy kept with the director's personal papers.
6. **Undertake a safeguarding training course** appropriate to the practice of spiritual direction and renew that training every 3 years (see Appendix 3)
7. **Offer an initial exploratory meeting** with an enquirer (see Appendix 1) to discuss what is hoped for and what is offered and enable a shared decision whether to continue the spiritual direction relationship.

THOSE REGISTERED WITH THE TRUST are **encouraged** to:

1. **Engage with the on-going training** available through the Trust or from other similar organisations. E.g. Spiritual Directors International, Spiritual Direction Forum UK, LCSD or The Retreat Association that enable them to improve their skills, encourage good practice and ensure they are up to date.
2. **Attend a personal retreat** of several days' duration, at intervals as they feel drawn.

3. **Aspire to the ethical guidelines for the practice of direction** as set out in the Trust document ‘Ethical Guidelines for the Practice of Spiritual Direction’ (see Appendix 1) and ‘The Core Qualities of a Spiritual Director’ (see in Appendix 2).

NB In accordance with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), any details held by the Trust will be used solely for the purpose of communicating about the work of the Trust and enabling communication between director and directee.

Appendix 1

Ethical Guidelines for the Practice of Spiritual Direction

(In conjunction with those suggested by the Retreat Association – see Appendix 2)

The Trust considers it important to create a healthy culture within the ecumenical community of spiritual directors in which all may thrive and which rejects unhelpful, unhealthy or coercive practice.

A spiritual director holds considerable power, and responsibility should be exercised with care to ensure the well-being and autonomy of the directee is not undermined. This involves care in the use of language, in the expression of moral judgements and the handling of decision-making.

To this end a spiritual director will:

- themselves be in receipt of regular spiritual direction
- take their ongoing training and development seriously, availing themselves of opportunities to further develop their skills and understanding
- receive regular supervision to help them reflect on and develop their practice
- not (ordinarily) relate to the directee in a separate context (for example as a friend, colleague or supervisor). This enables the directee to be free in sharing whatever they wish and the director to respond with objectivity and balance; it also avoids any confusion of roles
- explain and agree the role of spiritual direction with enquirers
- ensure there is clarity about the nature of boundaries and confidentiality in the relationship
- discuss payment, frequency and length of meetings at the initial meeting
- discuss at the onset how the directee or director will indicate if they wish to cease the relationship and how a ‘good ending’ can best be secured
- keep matters shared between the director and directee as confidential unless a legal obligation is involved. Other disclosures may be made in certain cases of serious harm in agreement with the directee
- have knowledge of local and national legal and ethical guidelines– for example in relation to safeguarding (see appendix 3) – and abide by them. See, for example,

Spiritual Directors International Guidelines of Ethical Conduct and those from the London Centre for Spiritual Direction

- reflect on ongoing practice and vocation
- at all times act in a way that respects the personal and spiritual integrity and wellbeing of the directee
- specifically including acting in ways that respect the sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, disability, gender or other areas of difference of the directee
- comply, where appropriate, with GDPR e.g. any personal data held about the directee will be kept in a safe place, available for inspection and destroyed at the end of the relationship
- offer regular reviews with directees to discuss how they are finding the spiritual direction relationship

Appendix 2: Core skills and qualities of a spiritual director *(from the Retreat Association)*

These skills and qualities are aspired to, and a spiritual director would be committed to continuing development in these areas.

The core skills and qualities of a spiritual director listed below should make it clear that spiritual direction is not about being directive, but a work of great humility in the service of transparency to the Holy Spirit.

1. **Prayer:** The primary requirement is that the person should have an ongoing relationship with God and a commitment to deepening that relationship. It is essential that any person offering the ministry of spiritual direction should themselves meet regularly with a spiritual director.
2. **Listening:** A person who shows themselves able to listen on many levels and pick up deeper resonances ('holy listening') and is able to foster the directee's skills of articulating their thoughts and feelings.
3. **Restraint:** A person who can hold themselves in check and hold the safe, welcoming and hospitable space in which the spiritual direction conversation can develop. This affects listening, holding boundaries and handling the power balance in the direction conversation with integrity.
4. **Clarity:** A person who can enable clarity in establishing agreement with the directee on the length and frequency of sessions and the process for evaluating and terminating the relationship, e.g. contracting, negotiating to establish clarity of relationship, process and expectation.
5. **Self-awareness and humility:** A person who recognises their own strengths and limitations and when to refer, e.g. to a counsellor. A person who holds the awareness that God is at the centre of the conversation and that they must step back, but who is also aware of their own worth.
6. **Able to say 'No':** A person who does not need to be needed and is aware of the dangers of mutual dependency. A person who can distinguish between being a 'soul friend' and a friend; the closeness and mutuality of friendship militate against the objectivity which is necessary for the direction relationship to serve the directee's spiritual growth.
7. **Learning:** A person who never stops being a learner ('beginner's mind') and is open to new perspectives. A person who is willing to participate in ongoing training.
8. **Discernment:** A person who enables the directee to learn the skill of discernment and exercise it themselves, primarily through modelling good discernment: a mutual process of waiting on the Holy Spirit and sharpening awareness of the moral and spiritual significance of the directee's inner processes. A person who already practises good discernment regarding their own spiritual life.
9. **Accountable:** A person who models transparency, integrity and accountability by participating in supervision.
10. **Communion:** A person who shows awareness that the spiritual direction relationship is in service of the wider church and wider world.
11. **Difference:** A person who is able to be with otherness, variety, uniqueness and difference – e.g. gender, age, race, culture, sexuality, theology – including the recognition that to get to know another involves acknowledging ignorance, and preparedness to work at understanding another's life and experience.
12. **Openness:** A person open to the surprise of God, the freedom of the Spirit, who blows wherever [she wills].

Appendix 3: Safeguarding Guidelines and DBS

The Trust takes its duty to protect all extremely seriously. We ask our community to work within safeguarding procedures and guidelines.

If you have any safeguarding concerns relating to any members of our community, please contact the trustees.

Safeguarding for Spiritual Directors

As part of our community, we require all our directors to have up-to-date safeguarding training. This can be accessed through local church structures at low or no cost (Gloucester Anglican Diocese offer regular appropriate safeguarding courses, or through an organisation such as [thirtyone:eight](#). Which has associated costs. They suggest that their webinar on adult safeguarding would be most appropriate for spiritual directors.

This training should be refreshed every 3 years.

At regular intervals, we provide a specific ‘Safeguarding for Spiritual Direction’ session which is designed to be a supplement to other safeguarding training to allow us to explore the unique aspects of safeguarding within Spiritual Direction.

Advice for Spiritual Directors

If you have urgent severe safeguarding concerns for yourself or about a directee, call 999.

If you have any other safeguarding concerns, follow the procedures set out according to your diocese or church community, consulting the relevant safeguarding officer, or contact your supervisor, or consult with our ecumenical partner - the safeguarding team of The Diocese of Gloucester. **Keep a written record** of any concerning incident or conversation. Ideally, the spiritual director should encourage the person to disclose information themselves to the appropriate authority or agency. However, if this is not possible, the director should then ask the person for permission to pass information on to the appropriate authority. If permission is not forthcoming, the spiritual director should disclose only relevant information to the appropriate authority or agency.

Useful contacts include:

- The Gloucester Diocesan Safeguarding Team may be contacted using these details: 01452 835516 (Mon-Fri, 9-5) or 07944 680320 (out of hours, Mon-Fri)
email: safeguarding@glosdioc.co.uk
- [thirtyone:eight](#) is an organisation that offer a 24-hour helpline - 0303 003 1111 - staffed Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm, with an out of hours emergency service for urgent calls. They offer advice and support about a range of concerns.
- The Samaritans - 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org (24-hour response time)
- To find a local NHS urgent mental health helpline (England only)
see <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-urgent-mental-health-helpline>

- The mental health charity Mind has a website www.mind.org.uk which has a directory of crisis helplines, also downloadable as a pdf.

The Trust does not insist members of the ecumenical community of spiritual directors have a DBS check, but some seeking direction are reassured by it and may choose to meet with a director who holds one. Other organisations, particularly diocesan ones, may require that directors have a DBS check. Application for a basic DBS is now available online and the certificate can also be updated online. There is a cost to this, and details are on the Gov.UK website.

Appendix 4: Insurance & Complaints

The Trust policy (March 2022) for Spiritual Directors in the ECSD is that:

1. Public liability and professional indemnity insurance is not obligatory for members but is an important issue to consider when offering a ministry of spiritual direction
2. In the absence of any regulatory national framework, arrangements for insurance cover are a personal decision of the individual director arising out of his/her/their context
3. Contact details for insurance companies offering cover for spiritual direction work may be obtained from the Trust. Oxygen is a common insurance supplier but there are other companies that also offer cover.

The Trust does all it can to ensure that directors are fully aware of good practice guidelines, are in regular supervision and continue to engage with their own formation in this work, thus encouraging all practitioners in the community to aspire to the highest standards. The Trust seeks to keep enquirers safe and confident in the listening they experience. ***However, the Trust does not exercise authority over or hold liability for the actions and practice of any director whose details are available to enquirers. It is a private contract between each spiritual director and directee.***

If, however, a directee has a particular concern or complaint that cannot be resolved between them and their director, they can contact the Chair of Trustees, (email spiritualdirectionglosenquiries@proton.me) for the trustee body to assist them to explore further options towards resolution.

(NB This document will be reviewed by the Trust every 3 years (i.e. next review will be before the AGM to be held in 2029)