

Sacred Encounter Ministry Guidelines

for directees



An apostolate of the Centre for
Applied Carmelite Spirituality, Oxford



Table of Contents

- What is spiritual direction?
- What is spiritual direction not about?
- What is the role of the spiritual director in the spiritual direction relationship?
- What is distinct about spiritual direction in the Carmelite tradition?
- What qualifications do Sacred Encounter Ministry spiritual directors have, and by what ethical code do they abide?
- What does the initial process of the spiritual direction enquiry involve?
- How is the spiritual direction session conducted?
- How confidential is the spiritual direction conversation?
- How do I cancel a session?
- How do I give feedback or make a complaint about my experience of spiritual direction?
- How much does spiritual direction cost?
- How can I make a donation?



What is **spiritual direction?**

Spiritual direction is an ancient Christian ministry from the early days of the Church, carried out by people experienced and educated in the ways of being attentive to the presence and action of God in our lives. These individuals (spiritual directors) support another person (a directee) in reflecting deeply and noticing how God is present in their life experiences and circumstances, enabling them to respond positively to the divine initiative.

What is spiritual direction **not about?**

Spiritual direction is not about problem-solving or 'fixing' issues, or about getting advice. It is not counselling, supervision, coaching, mentoring or prayer ministry. As noted by Barry and Connolly, the support offered is more like that of a companion on a journey, than of an expert who advises the directee what roads to take before the journey begins. The companion instead tries to help the traveller read maps, avoid dead ends and watch out for potholes.

While any aspect of your life might be relevant to the spiritual direction conversation, the heart of spiritual direction will be noticing, sensing and wondering together how the presence of God is being felt, how the Spirit of God is moving in your life and how you might respond. This process is supported by the wisdom of divine revelation in the scriptures, the Christian tradition and the insights of the saints and mystics.



What is the **role of the spiritual director** in the spiritual director relationship?

The real spiritual director is the Holy Spirit of God. The human director's role is to support the directee in paying attention to what the Spirit is saying and revealing and show how the Spirit is intending to lead the directees towards greater intimacy with God.

What is distinct about spiritual direction in the Carmelite tradition?

Sacred Encounter Ministry's spiritual directors receive formation in Carmelite spirituality. This is a way of life in the tradition that has given the Church and the world the great saints, mystics and guides of the spiritual life, such as Teresa of Avila, John of the Cross, Therese of Lisieux, Lawrence of the Resurrection, Edith Stein, and many others. Spiritual directors in this tradition draw insights from their lives and writings to provide maps and guidance for navigating the journey to union with God in our everyday lives.

The Carmelite tradition, taking its inspiration from the prophet Elijah (1:19 Kings), highlights the importance of the inner dispositions and disciplines necessary for the flourishing of the spiritual life, such as solitude, silence, community, contemplation, presence, prayer, listening, discernment, hospitality and integration. These are helpful for deepening our experience of God whether in those moments set aside for prayer or at other times in the course of each day amongst 'the pots and pans', in the experience of joy and suffering and in the various contexts of our relationships with others – including family, friends and one's religious community.



What **qualifications** do Sacred Encounter Ministry spiritual directors have, and by what **ethical code** do they abide?

All Sacred Encounter Ministry spiritual directors receive their formation in the Spiritual Direction Formation Programme, which is a two-year course led by the Centre for Applied Carmelite Spirituality, Oxford and accredited by St Mary's University, Twickenham.

They abide by the Community of Sacred Encounter Ministers Covenant and its proposed ethical code of practice, which has been sent to you along with this booklet.

All our spiritual directors receive training in Children and Adults Safeguarding Leadership and follow the CACS safeguarding policies (<https://www.carmelite.uk.net/safeguarding>). They have all had been DBS or background checked, and follow the guidelines issued by the Religious Life Safeguarding Service (RLSS) of the UK.

What does the initial process of the **spiritual direction enquiry** involve?

When you have viewed the profiles of our spiritual directors posted on the Sacred Encounter Ministry webpage and have selected a spiritual director who appeals to you, email sacred.encounter@cacs.org.uk with your choice and a brief description of yourself. Our co-ordinator will pass this on to your chosen director and arrange an initial exploratory meeting during which you will get to know each other.



The spiritual director will also use this initial meeting to discuss:

- How the spiritual direction meetings will proceed
- The mode for facilitating the meetings (Zoom, FaceTime, Teams, Messenger, by phone or on site)
- The frequency of meetings
- The duration of the sessions (usually around forty-five minutes)
- The cancellations process.

You can take some time to ponder on the conversation and then get back to the spiritual director to let them know if you wish to proceed or not. It is not necessary that the covenant is signed. A verbal agreement between the director and directee is enough. The covenant can however be discussed in the initial meeting. This conversation could be noted by the spiritual director in their brief written account of the meeting, and a short email could be sent confirming this to the directee.

How is the **spiritual direction session conducted?**

Each of the sessions are conducted in prayerful awareness of God's presence in the session. The contributions of the spiritual director during the conversation is aimed at empowering the directee to:

- Listen deeply
- Recognise how much God wants to be involved in every aspect of their lives
- Make decisions in the light of God's invitation to friendship.



How **confidential** is the spiritual direction conversation?

Everything you share is confidential, with one exception: if you share something with the director that indicates that you or someone else was or is at risk of abuse or serious harm (either to your/themselves or someone else). In such a case, your spiritual director may need to pass this information on to relevant authorities but will always try to discuss this with you before proceeding.

During spiritual direction sessions, the spiritual director may keep notes to aid their memory for subsequent sessions. Factual notes about the session will be kept to a minimum and will never include identifying details. All notes will be stored in a safe and confidential place and will be deleted after their work with you is completed, unless agreed otherwise.

Contact details are stored separately on a password-protected phone and computer and will be removed after their work with you is completed, unless agreed otherwise.

How do I **cancel a session?**

If you cannot attend as scheduled session, please email your director at least twenty-four hours before the scheduled time. You may also propose other times that would work for you.



How do I **give feedback** or **make a complaint** about my experience of spiritual direction?

If you are not satisfied with your spiritual direction session(s), you may wish to either give feedback to your spiritual director or contact our Sacred Encounter Ministry co-ordinator at sacred.encounter@cacs.org.uk. If you choose to do so, a meeting will be arranged with you to discuss the issue.

If it is a safeguarding issue, you should immediately contact our safeguarding lead, Fr Liam Finnerty, on +447510175621 and/or email safe@cacs.org.uk.

How much does **spiritual direction** cost?

There is no charge for spiritual direction through the Sacred Encounter Ministry, but donations are much appreciated. These help cover the administrative costs of the ministry, as well as help fund the ongoing formation of our existing spiritual directors and the formation of future spiritual directors.

How can I **make a donation?**

Donations may be made through the pay portal on the webpage of the Sacred Encounter Ministry, which can be found through the CACS website. Your director will explain this, and our co-ordinator will send you the link.



 sacred.encounter@cacs.org.uk