

# How Can Spiritual Direction Benefit the Parish?

## What is Spiritual Direction/Companioning?

The spiritual life is one of the whole person on a journey deeper into God. Many people seek guidance on that journey. Some may desire simply to share their experiences with another who is also seeking to grow in this way. This is often referred to as "companioning."

Others may want a more in-depth experience. This kind of study and spiritual practice, growing out of an on-going relationship with a trained person, is what is meant by the term "spiritual direction." It is important to understand that even though a spiritual director is involved in many areas of a directee's life, this relationship is NOT one of counseling or of psychotherapy. The role of the director is to help the directee recognize and become increasingly open to the work of the Holy Spirit in his/her faith journey.

## How does this ministry fit into parish life?

Often parishioners will come to their clergy with a concern (not a crisis), which truly can be transformed through new and deeper practices of prayer. The God-given desire to launch out on such a faith journey frequently prompts Christians to seek spiritual guidance. Having a person in a congregation who is trained in spiritual direction can be a valuable resource for the clergy because the spiritual director's primary work is to help others deepen their faith journey.

## Is a spiritual director paid for this ministry?

This varies. Many spiritual directors view their work as a volunteer ministry. Others do prefer payment, but may have a variety of options for those fees. Sometimes a directee will want to contribute, donate or pay in order to feel accountability. This is a personal decision for each spiritual director and directee. When clergy complete formal spiritual director training, he or she may be able to offer this ministry as a staff member of the church. Some churches opt to have a paid staff position for a spiritual director in the same vein as having paid music or education directors.

## Can a spiritual director offer anything besides one-on-one direction?

A trained director is an excellent educational resource and spiritual guide. Such a person is able to:

- Supervise group spiritual direction,
- Plan and lead retreats, quiet days, and other spiritual growth offerings,
- Give prayer and spirituality presentations,
- Assist with Inquirer's class, and
- Help form and/or lead prayer groups.

A trained spiritual director can be a valuable asset in any parish, providing a vibrant prayer ministry and instruction in a wide variety of Christian spiritual practices. Such a person can be a vital factor in the continuing spiritual growth of the faith community.

FIND (Formation IN Direction), was created in 1997 by the Episcopal Diocese of Texas to train spiritual directors. The school now also offers a track in spiritual formation as well. If you would like more information regarding this program, contact:

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