

Spiritual Accompaniment (Direction)

Many people now recognise that having a spiritual director/accompanier can be helpful. What is it? One definition 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 live out the consequences of the relationship.* (Barry and Connolly, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, 1984)

If you wish to find a spiritual director/accompanier, you can either use your own networks to search for the right person or contact Whirlow Grange Spirituality Centre (contact details below). Your name will be passed onto one of 3 people (one of whom is Rev Joy Adams, Methodist Presbyterian in the Sheffield Circuit). You will be contacted and after a prayerful conversation you will be offered names from the list of trained spiritual directors/accompaniers held by the Chaplain to Whirlow Grange.

**Whirlow Grange Spirituality Centre,
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Sheffield
S11 9PZ**

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Email: spiritualitycentre@whirlowgrange.co.uk

Should you wish to contact Joy Adams direct, her contact details are:

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Choosing a spiritual director/accompanier can have important consequences in your life, so it is worth making the choice carefully. This following (extracted from a leaflet available from Whirlow Grange Spirituality Centre) seeks to help you do that.

What's in a name?

We recognise there are different ways of describing being accompanied on our spiritual journey – it has variously been called spiritual direction, accompaniment, guidance, companionship or soul friendship

What is it?

Spiritual direction/accompaniment is at the heart of pastoral care (Barry & Connolly, 1984).

It reaches to the core of our being in relation to God and all of life.

It asks the questions; *who am I for God? who is God for me? whose kingdom am I seeking?* – all in the reality of daily living.

What happens?

The first meeting will be exploratory – a chance to get to know one another, to compare what you hope for with what the person can offer.

The director/accompanier may suggest that you meet for a few times and then review the relationship together. Throughout, do say honestly what you think and feel about your meetings.

Thereafter a typical meeting lasts between one and one and a half hours. You will have an opportunity to consider questions such as:

- What has been going on in your life? What feelings or moods have been around?
- When were you particularly aware of God's presence or activity in your life? How did you feel at those times? Have there been any surprises?

- What are your current preoccupations? In your innermost heart what do you hope for?

Why bother?

Some commonly reported effects of having a spiritual director/accompanier are:

- Greater ease with relationship with God
- Greater sense of God's love
- Greater freedom to be yourself
- Affirmation of faith
- Greater sense of being on a faith journey
- Sense of support – particularly through difficult times.

A book that might help: Anne Long *Approaches to Spiritual Direction* (Bramcote: Grove Spirituality, 3rd Edn.1998)

How do I go about it?

Choosing a director/accompanier is a very personal decision. As you begin the process, pray for wisdom and discernment.

You will want to reflect on what you are seeking through the relationship – but you also may want to trust your instinct.

It may be helpful to think about some or all of the following in relation to a possible director/accompanier:

a) The Person

Do you have any preferences regarding gender, age, role (e.g. clergy/ religious/lay), denomination and possibly tradition (evangelical/ catholic etc.)?

b) The Relationship

Are you looking for:

- formality or informality?
- a particular spiritual tradition (e.g. Ignatian) or a broad approach?
- someone with a shared interest (music, painting etc.)?
- someone near or far from your own context?

c) Practicalities

You may want to consider the following questions:

- when (days and times) and how often can you meet with a director/accompanier?
- how far is it reasonable for you to travel?
- What might it cost (some may ask for a donation to cover their training & supervision expenses)

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See above for contact details