

# Presbyterians Today

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## IT'S TIME TO RECONNECT

*Creative ways to care for others*





# Spiritual direction is not therapy

**It's discernment of the soul with a trusted companion**

Catherine McAuley, who founded the Sisters of Mercy in 1831, once said, “We are like the compass that goes round its circle without stirring from its center. We have one solid comfort in all our tripping about. Our center is in God, from whom all our actions spring from their source.”

There's not much that can compare to knowing one's true self. The spirit that dwells within has the answers to our questions and desires of the heart. It's where our true self resides. That's why spiritual direction is important. At the center of spiritual direction is the divine who connects to that true self in a compassionate and gentle way. Spiritual directors are guides in noticing the movements and invitations that are present in us to enhance spiritual growth while holding a sacred space. It is an honest look into one's life as only one can do.

I had my first experience with spiritual direction, also called spiritual companionship, in a group setting. I shared thoughts and struggles on how I believed my life should be. During that encounter, I realized that some of my struggles were rooted in perfectionism. The director was able to accompany me as I reflected back on an incident as a teen that influenced that mindset well into adulthood. It was an incident without malice or blaming, but it triggered unhealthy thinking that I internalized. Sitting in that moment was uncomfortable. Acknowledging and accepting a “stuck point” can be a real challenge for a perfectionist. However, doing so enabled me to connect with other moments when God's movement was prevalent in my life. What had been a stuck point became a pivot point in my journey.

**Who is spiritual direction for?** Everyone can benefit from spiritual direction, regardless of religion or spiritual beliefs. Spiritual directors are trained in deep listening that honors all beliefs without judgment. The invitation is extended to anyone who seeks nourishment, awakening, healing or companionship while reflecting on life. Some seekers may be experiencing a transition. Others may feel stuck, in a spiritual rut, or may be discerning a particular situation. Common questions asked of those in spiritual direction include: What is my purpose? Where is God in my life and how can I be more connected? The spiritual director will not attempt

to answer these questions, but instead will be present along the process to notice, feel, contemplate and discern movement from within.

**What happens in spiritual direction?** You will be invited to share your journey and stories for exploration to wherever the spirit nudges. This is not a therapy session. You will not be forced to share anything. The spiritual director will meet you where you are. The initial visit will usually entail getting to know each other and clarifying any questions. There are different settings where spiritual direction can take place, such as a spiritual director's office, spiritual centers, a church building or even virtually. I know a director who “companions” someone who is a nature lover. They often meet in the park where they are able to make a deeper connection. My best advice for those thinking about spiritual direction is try not to have any expectations. Simply bring an open heart and your curiosity. Take comfort in knowing you will be in a safe and sacred space.

As society transitions out of the current pandemic, many will emerge as different people than they were going in. The experience brings a new perspective on the world in general. As life continues, we must ask how we can experience God where we are. Being present and attending to movement within is key. Spiritual direction offers nourishment for the soul, offering love, light and blessings along the journey. It is a sacred companionship that can be beneficial for everyone.

*Rasheeda Hastings is a spiritual director training at the Cranaleith Spiritual Center in Philadelphia. A member of Cedar Park Presbyterian Church, she enjoys labyrinth walks, reiki and meditation. Hastings is also a military veteran who works with others to address veteran issues and social justice causes.*

## PUT INTO PRACTICE

### Finding a spiritual director

- » A helpful resource can be found on the Spiritual Directors International website: [sdcompanions.org/find-a-spiritual-director-companion](https://www.sdcompanions.org/find-a-spiritual-director-companion)