

Tending the Holy

The Art of Contemplative Listening



A Three-Year Part Time Course in preparation for
The Ministry of
Contemplative Spiritual Direction
Personal formation and Ministry streams

2025 dates: *2-5th May*
 8-11th August
 3-6th October

Applications close 31st March 2025



The House of Prayer

The House of Prayer and Spirituality is a mission of the Catholic Diocese of Townsville. We offer to a busy world an oasis of stillness and quiet, in a natural and sacred environment, amid everyday life in Townsville.

The formation of Spiritual Directors/Companions has been a ministry of the House of Prayer community since 1984.

Program

This program offers participants the opportunity, within a contemplative learning community, to depth their own spiritual life, discern their call to this sacred ministry and develop skills and knowledge in preparation for practice. It draws on the wisdom of the Catholic Christian tradition as well as the lived experience of participants. Participants of all faiths and traditions are welcome to apply.

There is also a personal formation stream available to anyone in spiritual direction and that would support other listening vocations.

The program is conducted at the House of Prayer and attendance is required at each intensive to complete the contact hours of the program. There is no capacity to do this program online.

The Ethos of the Program

Spiritual Direction/Companioning is a sacred gift and calling. It is uniquely concerned with facilitating a person's growth in relationship with the mystery of God and living out the grace of this in right relationship with self, others and all of creation. This ministry has a long and respected history in the Christian tradition and is a means through which Christ continues to minister through God's Holy Spirit. Practised by lay, religious and ordained ministers it is a sacred entrustment calling for the highest standards of formation, practice and accountability.

Our approach to formation invites participants to further develop the contemplative stance in his or her life by creating opportunity for personal transformational engagement. It reflects a practitioner-apprentice approach that acknowledges we are all on the journey. It invites honesty and vulnerability within a learning community that values openness to the presence of the transcendent within self and others, all creation and reflected in the wisdom of the Christian tradition.



The Curriculum.

Elements of the training include:

- The Contemplative Attitude, a way to live.
- Contemplative Prayer: the approach to prayer
different forms of prayer
- Companionship: the place of gentleness,
compassion in the heart of the Companion
- Scripture and Theological Reflection
- Images of God
- Centrality of the Religious Experience
- Evaluating the Religious Experience
- The “Empathetic” response
- The Affective Response
- Ignatius’ Discernment of Spirits
- Ignatius’ Discernment of God’s will
- Touching the Mystery: art/music/poetry
- Christian Mystics
- Movement towards insight
- Ethics
- Supervision
- Set text: “The Practice of Spiritual Direction” Barry and Connolly
(limited copies available for purchase from the House of Prayer for \$28)

Structure of the Program:

This three-year part-time process comprises 200 hours of outcomes-based contemplative learning across three intensives each year.

For those who discern a call to be a Spiritual Director, they are required to complete a 50-session practical component involving group and individual supervision.

A continuing personal formation stream is also offered for those who wish to enhance their reflective listening skills.

The learning community gathers on the Friday evening 5:30pm-9pm, Saturday and Sunday 9am-5pm and Monday 9am-4pm. Some personal engagement may be required between intensives.

Expectations for Assessment

In this Practitioner-Apprentice model, assessment of the contemplative learning outcomes is based around flexible assignment styles that respect the progressive nature of the participant’s growth in skill and understanding. It will seek to evidence transformation and openness to mystery as well as require the ability to communicate verbally and in writing and integrate the foundations on which Spiritual Direction practice is based.



Assignments may include written reflections, oral presentations (individual or group), book reviews, participation in group and individual activities/conversations, self-assessment/review, and discernment through discussion with program team members.

Is this for you?

This process opens the door to deeper awareness of transformative experiences, creates space to encounter God, and supports the contemplation and honouring of the presence of the sacred in everyday life.

We are seeking applicants who,

- Feel drawn to and value the ministry of soul companionship
- Demonstrate a capacity to listen
- Show an openness to learning from their own and others lived experience
- Have enough life experience to enable them to respond with wisdom to people of diverse backgrounds and experiences.
- Evidence a mature spirituality and openness to other worldviews
- Have a commitment to prayer and reflection and engage in spiritual direction themselves
- Are willing to discern their sense of call and giftedness for this ministry
- Understand the time commitment required, and able to attend all intensives

The Application Procedure

Applicants are required to complete an application form (pg.5), an autobiographical reflection (pg. 6) and two referee reports to accompany the application (pg.7). Once applications have been received a discernment interview will be conducted with two team members. This may be via phone or online if required.

The application form, written reflection and referee reports should be marked for the attention of Brianne Falconieri, and emailed to sdformation@tsv.catholic.org.au or posted to House of Prayer 17 Thomas Street Townsville 4812. Applications should be received no later than the 31st of March 2025. Applicants will be contacted after the closing date to arrange their interview.

The first Intensive of the year begins on the 2-5th May 2025.

Application Checklist

- Completed written application form (pg. 5)
- Completed autobiographical reflection (pg. 6)
- Obtained two referee reports to accompany their application (pg. 7)
- Application, written reflection and referee reports lodged with the House of Prayer (pg. 4) by 31st March 2025.



APPLICATION FORM

Name	
Address	
Phone	
Email	
Faith community	
Current occupation (optional)	
Any vocational/ listening roles	
Names of referees	<p>1 _____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>Please ask your referees to provide you with a one-page recommendation (see <i>suggested guideline below</i>) and attach this with your application.</p>



Guidelines to assist the applicant with writing their Personal Reflection

Please submit with the above application *a reflective piece of autobiographical writing*, concentrating on those aspects of your life which have been particularly special and memorable to you, in that you consider them to have been shaping you. Some of these experiences at the time may even have seemed to negate life but in hindsight have proved otherwise. Interwoven throughout this essay let your relationships with God, yourself, others and creation, be of key importance.

The following guidelines MAY be of assistance but let your story flow and do not feel obligated to make particular reference to these:

- Demonstrate how you understand for yourself your sense of call.
- Tell us something of your giftedness?
- Talk about your capacity to listen empathetically and enter sensitively to meaningful conversation.
- Describe your life experience which enables you to respond with wisdom to a wide range of people.
- Reflect on your openness to learning from your own and others experience.
- Reflect on your openness to learning from scripture, tradition, study, group and written work
- Tell us about an openness to struggle, a preparedness to embrace paradox and mystery, a willingness to change in response to the call of God.

Format for Personal reflection - please write or type your response with,

- double spacing
- name and page number in the footer or header
- suggested length 1000 words approximately

Please sign as below, to show us that you have considered and understood the time commitment and the scheduled dates for this program.

Applicant signature: _____

Date: _____



Spiritual Direction Formation Program 2024

Guidelines for Referees

You have been asked to furnish a personal recommendation for an applicant for this course. The application process seeks to discern the readiness and suitability of applicants for the course. We ask you in this reference to tell us whatever you can about the applicant which will inform our discernment with them. We thank you for willingness to assist us in this important way.

Name of Referee: _____

Name of applicant: _____

In what capacity do you know the applicant? _____

How long have you known the applicant? _____

Please respond with a personal recommendation in about 250 words.