



Spiritual Direction Certification Program
– Final Project Descriptions –
Graduation

23-February-2019

<http://metageminstitute.org>



Beth Gregory (Leeds, AL)

- ◆ Final Project Type: Research and Reflection Paper
- ◆ Title: “Comparison of Spiritual Direction to Pastoral Counseling and Professional Psychotherapy ”
- ◆ This project involved an examination of certification/licensure requirements, motivation for provision, and goals of each of these three disciplines. The research for this paper included literature research, interviews with practitioners, and interviews with those who have received the benefit of Pastoral Counseling, Professional Psychotherapy, or Spiritual Direction.



Eric Rieger (Hixson, TN)

- ◇ Final Project Type: Creative Approach to Spiritual Direction
- ◇ Title: “Group Spiritual Direction for Clergy”
- ◇ Eric is currently in his 22nd year as a United Methodist Pastor. He says, “I do not recall ever being encouraged to seek Spiritual Direction. I honestly can’t recall when [it] has ever been explained or discussed in any clergy meeting. Spiritual Direction has been such a gift and blessing in my own life, and it has been very helpful to me in pastoral ministry. I wanted my clergy colleagues to be afforded the opportunity to learn about Spiritual Direction and to experience it.” United Methodist Clergy are required to be in an ongoing clergy covenant group for mutual support and accountability. With the blessing of his District Superintendent, Eric hosted and led a clergy small group that focused on group spiritual direction. The participants have expressed their appreciation and enthusiasm for the practice, thus far.



Jane Major (Birmingham, AL)

- ◇ Final Project Type: Research and Reflection Paper
- ◇ Title: “Spiritual Direction: My Journey”
- ◇ Writing teachers invariably tell their students, “Show, don’t tell,” because stories allow the reader to enter into the world the writer presents. Jane’s project takes the “show, don’t tell” advice to heart. In her reflection paper, she explores what she has learned as a student in Metagem Institute’s Spiritual Direction Program, using her own experiences to illustrate various types of spiritual direction. By sharing her story, Jane hopes others who may have wondered what spiritual direction is like will understand it better and be drawn to experience it for themselves.



Jo Ann Jones (Hoover, AL)

- ◇ Final Project Type: Research Paper and Resource for Spiritual Direction
- ◇ Title: “Praying the Labyrinth in Spiritual Direction”
- ◇ The labyrinth has been referred to as “a profound tool and a safe container” for our use to look within. Although the labyrinth walk is often termed a metaphor for a journey to the Holy City or to meet the Divine, it is also a means for each seeker to be mindful of their *being* and alert to what it may be teaching them about their life’s journey. Some seekers find meditation and centering prayer difficult and are left with a sense of failure after trying them. The labyrinth offers walking prayer where restlessness can be diffused and attention guided by the process of Release, Receive, Return. Spiritual Directors are called as insightful companions and as guides of methods toward transformation. The walking labyrinth is yet another spiritual direction method at our disposal.



Lisa Busby (Clayton, NY)

- ◇ Final Project Type: Spiritual Direction Offering within a Community
- ◇ Communities:
 - Christ Church, Clayton, NY
 - St. John's Church, Cape Vincent, NY
- ◇ This project involved offering a group-based “Exploring Spiritual Direction” program for the two parishes in which Lisa serves as Rector. The small group at each location met semi-weekly for 90 minutes for the purpose of experiencing spiritual practices, spiritual direction, and discernment. This opportunity was offered during the Season of Advent and was open to anyone with interest in the topic. Each session began with Centering Prayer, meditation, or some other form of Christian contemplative prayer. The time together in group spiritual direction provided a framework to explore a variety of spiritual yearnings and disciplines.



Louise Thibodaux (Birmingham, AL)

- ◆ Final Project Type: Research Paper and Resource for Spiritual Direction
- ◆ Title: “Weaving The Threads Of Diaconal Conversation:
A Role For Spiritual Directors”
- ◆ Sharing the story of a life has been compared to revealing the threads that weave that life's tapestry into a fabric. As we listen to our lives and share our stories with others we become aware both of God's presence and of our hidden connections to each other. This qualitative study, drawn from interviews of 7 deacons who were formed in the first cohort in the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama, reveals threads of diaconal identity. The findings of this study prove useful:
 - ◆ to a spiritual director who is helping a directee discern a possible call to diaconal ministry
 - ◆ to a mature deacon who is meeting with a spiritual director seeking to reclaim the roots of his/her calling.



Marge Doyle (Hoover, AL)

- ◆ Final Project Type: Spiritual Direction Offering within a Community
- ◆ Community: St. Alban's Episcopal Church, Hoover, AL
- ◆ This project involved conducting a Spiritual Direction Program within a church community and included the following elements:
 - Promoting the program
 - Developing an informational handout
 - Offering instruction on “What is Spiritual Direction?” and “How does the role of Spiritual Director differ from that of Priest and Pastor?”
 - Offering formal group spiritual direction in the church for three months
- ◆ Part of St. Alban's mission is to be a place where all feel welcome and may avail themselves of the healing Presence. Along that line, Spiritual Direction at St. Alban's is envisioned as a gift that can be offered to parishioners, the homebound, and neighbors.



Mary Ellen Peters (Huntsville, AL)

- ◇ Final Project Type: Research and Reflection Paper
- ◇ Title: “Spiritual Direction in the Workplace”
- ◇ The purpose of this research and reflection paper is to show how the skills and insights learned in Metagem Institute’s Spiritual Direction Program translate to the workplace, especially in a service based industry such as real estate. This paper illustrates that the skills learned for spiritual direction can be used in the workplace and life in general because “all of our life is a spiritual journey.”



Mary Hodgetts (Alabaster, AL)

- ◆ Final Project Type: Spiritual Direction Offering within a Community
- ◆ Community: Holy Spirit Episcopal Church, Alabaster, AL
- ◆ This project involved conducting a Spiritual Direction Program within a church community and included the following elements:
 - Promoting the program
 - Developing an informational brochure and handouts
 - Offering a talk on “What is Spiritual Direction?” at an Adult Forum
 - Offering spiritual direction in the church for one day/month for three months.
- ◆ The program was well received and generated a lot of questions. Most attendees did not know about Spiritual Direction or its history so they found the information very interesting and useful. Due to interest generated by this offering almost everyone in the parish received the handout and some now participate in spiritual direction on a monthly basis.



Sharon Sapp (Huntsville, AL) Nancy Gauldin (Princeton, AL)

- ◆ Final Project Type: Spiritual Direction Offering within a Community
- ◆ Title: “Group Spiritual Direction Using a Circle of Trust Approach”
- ◆ This offering of group spiritual direction was modeled after the Circle of Trust Process based on the work of Parker Palmer and the Center for Courage and Renewal. A circle of trust is defined as “the kind of carefully created space that invites the soul to make itself known; the kind of space where we can practice the paradox of ‘being alone together,’ a space that welcomes our inwardness even as it connects us to the gifts and challenges of community, and to the larger world.” Such a space both safeguards and encourages the inner journey. Essential to this small group approach is the use of an art form for reflection that has the potential for speaking the metaphoric language of the soul. A variety of art forms—including painted images, photography, poetry, and prose—were explored over four sessions held two to three weeks apart.



Natalie Sansom (Birmingham, AL)

- ◇ Final Project Type: Research and Reflection Paper and Video Resource
- ◇ Title: “What is Spiritual Direction?”
- ◇ Spiritual direction, viewed most broadly, has been a spiritual practice for thousands of years and in many different religions. Yet, in the Episcopal Church, in many protestant churches, and in broad segments of orthodox and catholic communities, few are familiar with:
 - ◇ what spiritual direction is
 - ◇ the benefits of spiritual direction
 - ◇ who is most likely to benefit from spiritual direction, or
 - ◇ how to obtain spiritual direction

Natalie explored answers to these questions through a video that she produced.



Sara Ardrey-Graves (Winston-Salem, NC)

- ◆ Final Project Type: Research Paper and Resource for Spiritual Direction
- ◆ Title: “Touchstones of Grace: Spiritual Direction for Discernment of Holy Orders”
- ◆ How can a person enter the Episcopal ordination process with the right tools to articulate their faith in Jesus Christ and their gifts for ministry? Through the ups and downs of the ordination process, how can an individual’s Rule of Life help ground them for the challenges ahead? Sarah’s paper explores the ways in which an ordinand might seek a spiritual director to help in this unique task and provides resources for spiritual directors intending to guide a candidate through the discernment process. Topics include discernment practices, establishing a rule of life before seminary, processing new realities of life as an ordained person, addressing the challenges of the uses and limits of gifts for ministry, and feeling fulfilled in a life of service and church leadership. Included is a worksheet that a directee (or director) might use as they prepare for the first steps in the process of ordination.



Please contact us for further information about any of these final projects
or for details about Metagem's formation programs.

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