



Spiritual Accompanier's Guidelines

*These guidelines are intended to be a working document
and will be revised from time to time*

Spiritual Accompaniment is a Relationship

The ministry of spiritual accompaniment involves relationships between God, the person offering this ministry and the person receiving this ministry.

In these Guidelines '**accompanier**' is used to describe the one offering the ministry and '**accompanied**' for the person receiving. The terms 'accompanier' and 'accompanied' have been used, whilst acknowledging that they may be problematic. Other terms sometimes used are 'director' and 'companion'.

The role of the accompanier is to help the accompanied focus on their relationship with God and so enable their personal vocation (to become the person they were created to be) to grow and be better lived out through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit.

The accompanied's life is lived in relationship to God, creation, the world, local and faith communities. Spiritual accompanying seeks to enable the accompanied to reflect on the dynamic interaction between their experiences of prayer and life, and theology and spirituality.

The accompanier has significant potential power and responsibility which should be exercised with great care to ensure the intention of the relationship and the autonomy of the accompanied are not undermined. This involves care in the use of language, in the expression of moral judgements and in the handling of decision-making.

The accompanier will be offering this ministry as part of their expression of their personal vocation and within the context of their own spiritual life in relationship to their faith community and their own accompanier.

The Focus of the Relationship

The focus of the accompanier is primarily on the inner life of the accompanied, and attention to this in the context of the experience of life and spiritual activities rather than as a moral guardian or confessor.

The accompanier will seek to:

- listen discerningly to what is shared
- Be open to the Holy Spirit's forming and guiding for the sake of the Kingdom of God
- respond in ways that are conducive to the accompanied's discernment of God in their life
- offer insights and perspectives that are helpful to the accompanied in their communication and response to God and living this out in their life

The Nature of the Relationship

The relationship is based upon trust and mutual respect within the awareness that both accompanier and accompanied are within the gracious love of God.

Common and significant areas of exploration in the relationship will include:

- personal experience and inner (emotional and spiritual) reactions to that experience
- discerning reflection on that experience, seeking to enable in the accompanied growing discernment of the movements and leading of God's Spirit in their life
- the practice of prayer and the ongoing development of spiritual life, sources of further insights and perspectives, other ways in which their journey might be explored and supported

Good practice guidelines

Spiritual companions will:

- themselves be in receipt of regular spiritual accompaniment
- take their ongoing training and development seriously, availing themselves of opportunities to further develop their skills and understanding
- receive regular supervision to help them reflect on and develop their practice
- not (ordinarily) relate to the accompanied in a separate context (for example as a friend, colleague or supervisor)
- keep matters shared between the companion and accompanied as confidential unless a legal obligation is involved. Other disclosures may be made in certain cases of serious harm in agreement with the accompanied
- have knowledge of local and national legal and ethical guidelines – for example in relation to safeguarding – and abide by them; hold a current DBS enhanced certificate for work with adults (who may be experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect) at their own home and have undergone Church of England safeguarding training to the foundation level and specialist training as appropriate
- reflect on ongoing practice and vocation
- ensure there is clarity about the nature of boundaries and confidentiality in the relationship
- at all times act in a way that respects the personal and spiritual integrity and wellbeing of the one being accompanied
- Have a contingency plan in place in the event of incapacity or death
- Be informed on legal liabilities and ensure they have taken appropriate legal cover (in Salisbury Diocese the Diocesan insurance covers this ministry providing no professional advice is given)

These good practice guidelines were developed with reference to the guidelines published by The Retreat Association in 2019 (<http://www.retreats.org.uk/documents/spiritual-direction-guidelines.pdf>)
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