

Birmingham Forum for Spiritual Directors and Companions



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Spiritual Accompaniment

***A one year ecumenical training course for lay and
ordained Christians***

September 2025 to July 2026

Who is the course for?

The course is open to Christians of any denomination. Those seeking a place would be people who:

- find others turn naturally to them to talk about their life and faith.
- are stable and open to learning in their Christian faith, and keen to develop their knowledge and discipleship.
- already have, or are prepared to have, a spiritual director.

The course aims to:

- Encourage each person to grow and develop gifts for spiritual accompaniment in various contexts.
- Offer knowledge, critical awareness and skills for spiritual accompaniment and direction

By the end of the course, participants will have:-

- Broadened and deepened their understanding of Christian traditions of prayer.
- Experienced differing approaches to, and emphases within, Christian spirituality.
- Explored the meaning of their faith and spiritual traditions and how these encourage growth and personal fulfilment.
- Practiced key skills as a spiritual companion, and supported others in this process.
- Developed a reflective approach to their work as a spiritual companion.

Could this course be for you?

Some questions you might want to ask yourself . . .

- *Do others come to share with you their hopes and fears about their faith and life journey?*
- *Have you felt that God may be calling you to 'companion' others in this way?*
- *Have you considered whether training might develop your gifts?*

When and where?

The course consists of **17 Tuesday meetings** over three terms meeting from 10.00am - 3.30 pm. This is a hybrid course with 10 days online via zoom, and 7 in person days in Birmingham at St Paul's Centre, Selly Park, B29 7LL. In person course days are in **Bold**. Online days in italics

Term 1: (2025) **16 Sept**, *30 Sept* **14 Oct**, *4 Nov*, *25 Nov*, *9 Dec*.
Autumn Half Term : (*27th* -*31st* Oct)

Term 2: (2026) **13 Jan**, *27 Jan*, *10 Feb*, **10 March**,
Spring Half Term (16- 20th Feb) Holy Week (29 Mar – 5th April)

Term 3: (2026) *14 April*, **28 April**, *19 May*, *9 June*, *30 June*, **14 July**
Day 17 Tues 22nd Sept (in-person follow up day)

Cost: £30 per day = £510 (payable in full or in 3 termly instalments).

Help with costs may be available within your church or diocese or through a small bursary fund.

Course content

Each day will include teaching input, prayer and discussion, small group sharing and skills practice. In Term 2 course members begin a 1-1 spiritual accompaniment practice with someone outside the course, supported and guided by the facilitating team.

Foundation: *Introduction and Approaches to Spiritual Accompaniment, Human faith development, Images of God, Forms of prayer*

Skills: *Reflective Listening, Presence, Forms of communication, Discernment, Beginnings and Endings, Safeguarding, Inclusion and Diversity, Ethics and Boundaries, Making use of supervision*

Assessment: Peer and facilitator feedback is continuous throughout the course. Towards the end of the course, participants are also asked for a reflection on their learning in written or other agreed format.

Attendance and Certification:

In order to protect the quality of the course, a Certificate of Attendance will be presented to candidates who have had at least 80% attendance and submitted an their course reflection statement

The Facilitating Team will include:

Maureen Slattery Marsh: *Maureen is Catholic with a background in theology, therapy and training. A past member of the course, she offers spiritual accompaniment and supervision (clinical and pastoral) alongside her therapy practice. She has been involved in various ecumenical and reconciliation initiatives over the past 30 years and is a member of Manresa Link Ignatian Spirituality network.*

Phil Hoar : *Phil is a Methodist minister and past member of the course. He has been involved in spiritual accompaniment, groups, workshops and retreats for many years, as well as involvement in the community among LGBT asylum seekers, and prayer guiding in prison. He is also a member of Manresa Link.*

Magdalen Smith: *Magdalen is an Anglican priest and author. She has been involved in spiritual accompaniment within several parish settings and as a Director of Ordinands. She has a background in the visual arts and is particularly interested in the fusion between faith and ordinary life. Magdalen returned to Birmingham after a gap of 18 years and has recently published a memoir and reflection on current ordained vocation entitled *Reverence* (Sacristy Press).*

Caroline Homan: *Caroline is a Methodist minister who was brought up an Anglican and was for many years a Quaker. After many years in teaching, she was ordained. She has enjoyed using the training in spiritual accompaniment in both formal and informal contexts as a chaplain, prayer guide and as someone listening to others. She is a member of Manresa Link.*

We will also be drawing on the specialist skills and experience of other leaders and facilitators from different traditions and denominations during the course.

The course administrator is Revd Canon John Austen: *John is an experienced spiritual director and chair of the Birmingham Forum for Spiritual Directors and Companions. (BFSDC)*

Applying for the course

Course places are limited to 20. Applications are welcome while places are still available.

Since we want to ensure that the course is right for each participant, admission is not automatic and will include an informal interview to be arranged in **May- July 2025**.

For further information about the course, and details of how to apply, please contact **Revd Canon John Austen** by email at johnausten151@hotmail.co.uk or **Maureen Slattery-Marsh** by email at sonas@slatterymarsh.com