



THE CERTIFICATE IN CONTEMPORARY
SPIRITUAL DIRECTION HANDBOOK

(Revised July 2026)

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Certificate in Contemplative Spiritual Direction

I look at God. I look at you, and I keep looking at God.

-Julian of Norwich, The Path of Prayer

Spiritual Direction, also known as *spiritual guidance* or *holy listening*, is a sacred companionship between an individual(s) and a trained guide, grounded in Divine Love. This practice offers a safe, prayerful space where the seeker is invited to explore the unfolding mystery of God's presence in their life. Through deep listening and discernment, spiritual direction nurtures awareness, fosters spiritual growth, and supports the seeker in embracing their unique path with greater freedom.

The Certificate in Contemplative Spiritual Direction (CSD) at the Center for Lifelong Learning of Columbia Theological Seminary, rooted in the Christian mystical tradition and contemplative spirituality, is a transformative pilgrimage toward awakening. Guided by the cohort model, participants begin their training with immersive learning in contemplative spiritual practices, cultivating essential qualities as spiritual directors. The program places a significant emphasis on supervised practicum and discernment in Spiritual Direction, facilitating a deeper understanding of diverse contexts and self-awareness. Employing a hybrid model that blends in-person and online components, participants can complete the program within two years. For further insights into the program structure and curriculum, refer to the Overview of the Program and the Course of Study. The CSD program is committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion as core values.

Program Features

- Contemplative Spiritual Formation as the foundation
- A 24-Month Focused Program with home-based assignments
- A Cohort Model in a hybrid format (online and residential components)
- Facilitated by seasoned practitioners
- A Supervised Practicum (One-on-One/Peer Group) facilitated by trained supervisors
- The use of the Enneagram in Spiritual Direction for greater self-awareness and spiritual growth
- Integration of The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) assessment and reflection to foster cultural humility, equity, and inclusive spiritual direction practices.

Overview of the Program

Phase I

Listening Heart: Cultivating contemplative orientation and sensibilities

Spiritual Formation in Contemplative Living courses include:

- Introduction to Contemplative Spirituality (ONLINE): July
- Contemplative Living I (ONLINE): September-December
- Contemplative Living II (ONLINE): January-April
- Contemplative Five-day Prayer Retreat (In-Person): Fall and Spring

Phase II

Awakening Heart: Fundamentals of Spiritual Direction

Five-day residency during the fourth week of July
at The Center for Lifelong Learning
Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA.

- Includes Practicum (see below)

Phase III

The Nurturing Heart: Spiritual Direction in Contexts

Monthly Sessions (ONLINE): January-April

- Includes Practicum (see below)

Practicum in the Art of Spiritual Direction

The Practicum is designed to deepen competency, cultivating participants' receptivity to the Spirit and their unique embodiment of God, and enriching understanding of the art of Spiritual Direction. Throughout the program, seasoned leaders guide both combined group and individual modules of the Practicum, facilitating the formation and learning process. Group reflection, self-assessments, and supervisor assessments will be used to monitor growth in skills as a Spiritual Director.

NOTE: Following Phase II: Awakening Heart, participants will be required to give spiritual direction to two directees

Course of Study

Phase I

Listening Heart: Contemplative Orientation and Sensibilities

Spiritual Formation in Contemplative Living courses ONLINE

The art of Spiritual Direction is intrinsically anchored in receptivity to the Spirit. This first phase of the program is designed to guide participants in attuning to their inner self and to the movement of the Divine. Participants will experience the profound implications of contemplative listening as a sacred gift. Throughout this phase, you will learn to experience daily life as prayer with a goal of living as a contemplative heart.

Courses and Topics

❖ **Introduction to Contemplative Practices: Centering Prayer as a Doorway**

- Overview of Contemplative Spirituality
- Centering Prayer and other Contemplative Practices

❖ **Contemplative Living I: Contemplative Practices in Daily Life**

- Lectio Divina
- Logging
- Spiritual Reading,
- The Active Prayer
- The Welcoming Prayer
- Sabbath

❖ **Contemplative Living II: Daily Life as Prayer**

- Contemplative Listening
- Contemplative Discernment
- Contemplative Awareness related to Addictions, Attachments, and Aversion
- The Forgiveness Prayer: Weavings
- Contemplative Service- A Way of Life rooted in Living a Contemplative Life
- Commitment to a Contemplative Rule of Life
- Contemplative Living Communities

❖ **Contemplative Retreat:**

Five-day Centering Prayer Retreat (recommended before Phase 2, required to complete before the end of the program)

Phase II

Awakening Heart: Fundamentals of Spiritual Direction

Five-day residency at the Center for Lifelong Learning

Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, GA

Awakening Heart delves deeper into the fundamentals of Spiritual Direction. Participants will build upon their contemplative orientation and sensibilities to learn the theory and practice of Spiritual Direction. They will gain practical knowledge, including how to conduct initial meetings with directees, fostering director-directee relationships, and maintaining professional ethics. This residency includes experiential learning in classroom including real plays and small group practices led by experienced Spiritual Directors.

Topics

- Intro to Spiritual Direction
- 1:1 Spiritual Direction Relationship
- Discernment: Movements of the Spirit
- Spiritual Director as a Healer
- Self-awareness with the spiritual dimensions of the Enneagram
- Self-awareness with intercultural sensibilities
- Addiction and Trauma
- Boundaries and Ethics

Practicum

- Peer Group Supervision sessions
- Individual Supervision sessions
- **NOTE: Following Phase II: Awakening Heart, participants will give Spiritual Direction to two directees.**

Phase III

Nurturing Heart: Spiritual Direction in Contexts

Monthly Sessions (ONLINE)

Nurturing Heart focuses on the application of Spiritual Direction in diverse contexts to meet the unique needs of varied individuals and communities. Through a better understanding of the myriad layers that shape personal narratives, lenses, and barriers participants will offer Spiritual Direction as compassionate practice envisioning diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. This includes praxis-driven lectures and groups practices led by experienced Spiritual Directors and the faculty of Columbia Theological Seminary. Integration of IDI assessment and reflection to foster cultural humility, equity, and inclusive spiritual direction practices

Topics

- History and Theological Grounding of Spiritual Direction
- Social Discernment
- Multi-Faith Pluralism and Multiculturalism,
- White Supremacy and Decolonization

Practicum

- Peer Group Supervision
- Individual Supervision
- Individual meeting with Group leader

Enrollment in the Certificate in Contemplative Spiritual Direction Program

Application Process

The application operates on a yearly basis, with a deadline of **May 1** each year.

To apply, please complete the application form and submit all required documents, along with the application fee, by May 1.

1. The leadership team will review applications and notify applicants of their acceptance by the end of June.
2. Phase I begins in August.

Individuals who have already completed Phase I or are currently enrolled in *Contemplative Living I and II* must still complete the application process in order to proceed to Phases II and III. Phases II and III are open to those who have been accepted into the Certificate in Contemplative Spiritual Direction program and have successfully completed Phase I coursework.

Admission Requirements

- Applicants for the Certificate in Contemplative Spiritual Direction (CSD) program must have completed at least one year of spiritual direction with a trained spiritual director before beginning Phase II. They are also required to continue receiving spiritual direction throughout the program.
 - Writing short narratives, one for each question below, through which applicants should be able to:
 - articulate an understanding of spiritual guidance and discernment of call to the ministry of Spiritual Direction;
 - narrate their faith journey and current spiritual practices;
 - exhibit readiness for the program; and
 - reflect on current relationship to a faith community.
- One letter of reference is required.

Please Note: Computer and Internet access are needed to participate in some events, use the online learning platform, and complete the online components of the course work.

Program Fees

Phase I: Listening Heart – Refer to the program fee for each course (Introduction to Contemplative Spirituality, Contemplative Living I, Contemplative Living II and a Contemplative retreat in which room and meals are included).

Phase II: Awakening Heart – \$2250 (includes the fee for the Practicum)

Phase III: Nurturing Heart – \$2250 (includes the fee for the Practicum)

The program fee covers all online modules, course materials, meals during the residency, and the practicum fee. Housing for ***Phase II: Awakening Heart*** is available for an additional cost.

Program Completion and Certification

Upon completion of the coursework's three phases, Practicum, and required reading and writing assignments, two certificates will be awarded:

- The Certificate in Contemplative Spiritual Formation (CSF), Contemplative Living concentration as recognition for completion of comprehensive training and depth of spiritual formation.
- The Certificate in Contemplative Spiritual Direction (CSD), attesting to the completion of this formation and training program, allowing the participant to develop the gifts and sensibilities of Spiritual Directors and supporting the participant's calling to this ministry.

Click here to learn further about the program and registration:

<https://www.ctsnet.edu/academics/lifelong-learning/certificate-programs/>

Cancellation

If you need to cancel, please notify us in writing at Lifelonglearning@ctsnet.edu or fill out the [cancellation form](#). Cancellations must be received 10 business days before the class begins to receive a refund of the program fee minus the deposit. For the sake of all who would like to

participate, you are asked to contact us as soon as possible if you find that you cannot attend the class.

A full refund of the program fee and other payments will be made should our office need to cancel a course for any reason. Registrants will be notified of the cancellation at the earliest possible time.

Financial Assistance

Limited financial assistance is available, and is generally for no more than 50% of the program fees. Please request as early as possible, before submitting payment. Registration can still be completed by selecting “pay by check”, then making an aid request.

To make a request for financial assistance, complete the online *Application for Financial Assistance*: <https://form.jotform.com/81276262831962>. You will be notified about your financial assistance application within a week.

Upon completion of the course, we ask you to write a letter sharing your experience and thanking those who contributed to the scholarship fund. In your letter please include:

- Your name and faith community.
- A few insights that continue to be helpful or meaningful to you about this course.
- Concrete ways you think you will use what you have learned and experienced in your ministry.

Please provide us with this letter within a week of the course’s conclusion. Our donors appreciate knowing that their gifts are being used well. This small act goes a long way in our ability to provide scholarships.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Are there prerequisites for beginning the certificate program?

A: Yes. Applicants must have completed at least one year of receiving spiritual direction before entering Phase II. It is necessary that participants need to be proficient in reading and writing

English, and has basic computer skills and access to internet and computer. Participants are expected to read books, engage in online written discussions, and submit reflection papers.

Q. Who may participate in these programs?

A: All are welcome. However, this certificate program is intended for individuals who discern a call to the ministry of spiritual direction, have an ongoing spiritual practice, and possess spiritual maturity and self-awareness in relationship to the Divine.

Q. What does the certification signify?

A: The Center for Lifelong Learning (CLL) at Columbia Theological Seminary does not certify your calling; only the Spirit can do that. CLL certifies that you completed all required coursework and training. You will need to complete all assignments and papers for credit. Upon successful completion of the program, you will receive certification in both **Contemplative Spiritual Direction (CSD)** and **Contemplative Spiritual Formation (CSF)**.

Q. The application asks about my experience in giving and receiving spiritual direction. What if I haven't given direction to others yet? In the short Essay Question #3 on the Application, I was asked to describe my experience of giving and receiving spiritual direction. What if I have not yet given spiritual direction to others?

A: Prior experience offering spiritual direction is not required. The application welcomes individuals with a variety of experiences. If you have received spiritual direction and have been shaped by that experience, that is a strong foundation for the program. You are encouraged to share any related experiences, whether formal or informal.

Q. What if I cannot find two directees after Phase II to begin providing spiritual direction?

A: Our leadership team will offer guidance and support to help you identify directees.

Q: Can I apply courses in other programs and have them count towards the Certificate completion?

A: No. All courses must be taken through the Center for Lifelong Learning at Columbia Theological Seminary as part of the CSD program.

Q. Are there any specific steps I need to take in order to turn the Certificate in Contemplative Spiritual Formation (CSF) into the Certificate in Contemplative Spiritual Direction(CSD) program or is there a natural path to do that in a year or so?

The CSD program is by application only. While Intro to Contemplative Spirituality: Contemplative Living I and II are natural paths to the CSD program, acceptance is not

automatic. You must complete an application and be admitted. Upon successful completion of the CSD program, you will be certified in both CSF and CSD.

Q: When is my program fee due?

A: Balances can be paid at the time of registration or are due one month before the event. Methods of payment accepted are checks, Discover, Mastercard or Visa. Payment plans are available by contacting lifelonglearning@ctsnet.edu.

Q: Can I take these courses for academic credit?

A: Courses are not designed for academic credit. You will need to coordinate academic credit through your institution if you seek academic credit hours.

Q: How many people are there in each cohort?

A: Class cohort typically ranges from ten to fifteen participants.

Q: What if I need an extension on an assignment?

A: Extension requests must be submitted to the course instructor via email. Please include your proposed submission date, which must be no later than two months after the original due date. You will be notified if your request is approved.

Q: What happens if I cannot complete the requirements for the certificate in two years?

A: If your course of study is interrupted, please contact the Spirituality Program Director to discuss a plan for completion.

Q: How do I schedule travel arrangements for Phase II: Awakening?

A: Participants are expected to be in residence for the full duration of the course. To ensure full participation, do not schedule airline departures earlier than three hours after the scheduled conclusion of the event.

Q. How do I make a housing reservation for Phase II: Awakening?

A: Housing reservations on campus can be made during registration. Space is limited, so early registration is encouraged. If you prefer a single room or to room with a specific participant, please note this when registering. Housing fees are typically due at the same time as the program fee.

Please note that the information and requirements contained in this handbook are periodically revised. When consulting the handbook for program requirements, please refer to the most recently updated edition at www.CTSNET.edu. For more information, please email lifelonglearning@ctsnet.edu

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SPIRITUAL DIRECTION HANDBOOK

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