

Spiritual Direction Client Disclosure & Covenant

I am so glad to be entering into this sacred practice of spiritual direction with you! Here below are some things I want us both to be clear about so that our work together is well-defined and safe for the deep, sacred listening we will do together.

Spiritual direction is...

At the root of this practice is the sense that God/Spirit/Source, by whatever name you know God, is present, accessible, and knowable, even in everyday human life. Those who seek spiritual direction are sometimes drawn to it in times of change, times of discernment, or times when their spiritual well runs dry or muddy. Others seek spiritual direction as a longterm spiritual practice — of having a committed and skilled companion to walk alongside them, tuning in and encouraging attention to the on-going movements and invitations of the Holy. Our shared task in spiritual direction is to be alert to the mystery of God wherever God shows up, and to care for your spiritual life.

Spiritual direction is not...

Spiritual direction is not therapy, and it is not coaching. These disciplines are out of my scope of practice. More information on my training is detailed below. I am happy to assist you in finding mental health support and/or goal setting/coaching support if these disciplines are what you desire. In our sessions, our task is soul care, and while any topic can relate to your spiritual life, some topics will be best addressed in other care settings.

I am a strong advocate of spiritual direction being part of a multi-disciplinary approach to self-care. I encourage clients to be active in receiving therapy, participating in relevant support groups (12 step, grief, parenting, vocational peer groups, etc.), attending worship, and joining faith-encouraging study groups as one is led to these. “Who is on my self-care team?” may be a helpful query to consider. I am happy to help you think through building your self-care team.

Working with me

My sacred and central task in this ministry is to listen with you for God’s movements and invitations. My roots and my background are in the Christian tradition, and I find inspiration and insight in Jungian theory, eco-theology, Celtic spiritualities, and somatic practices. I have joyfully and lovingly walked this listening path with clergy, people discerning a call to ministry, non Christians, spiritual-but-not-religious people, recovering Christians, and people tentatively on the edge of belief in a nameless Something Bigger. My training, many years of practice, and my own faith are actually what allow me to carry this ministry with wonder and curiosity in an open hand, extended to those who are drawn to work with me. Words reflective of my approach include: unfolding, contemplative, embodied, curiosity, wonder, prayerful, inner landscape, metaphors, freedom, relationship, commitment. Questions are sometimes more valuable on the spiritual path than answers. Together we will dwell in the questions.

A session with me often begins in silence and/or vocal prayer and leads into your speaking and my listening, with pauses for me to offer reflections, questions and wonders. Sometimes within the session, one of us senses the need to enter into silence again to settle or re-focus on what is rising. Often to close, we have prayer or shared silence, followed by scheduling and naming any follow up items. Some sessions also include dreamwork, discussions of specific prayer- or spiritual practices, guided imagery or guided somatic explorations.

My preparation for this ministry

My training includes a masters in divinity (M.Div.) from Earlham School of Religion and a two-year certification program in Spiritual Direction at the Haden Institute in Flat Rock, NC. I have been seeing clients for one-on-one spiritual direction since my final year of seminary as part of my ministry field placement in 2007. I have been running spiritual groups, leading workshops, and staffing retreats for individuals and groups since 2006. I am a dedicated dream worker of more than two decades, and find particular joy in exploring spiritual practices related to dreams with others. For more information about my formal and informal studies, please ask! Or see my website, www.jennieisbell.com.

The accountabilities I have

- I am a member of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), and I have an oversight of ministry committee provided by the community I belong to. They provide general care for the ministry I engage in, of which spiritual direction is one manifestation.
- I am a member of Spiritual Directors International, the largest professional association of spiritual directors in the world. Members are given guidelines for ethical conduct (https://www.sdicompanions.org/docs/guidelines/Flip/guidelines_ethical_conduct.html) that include maintaining boundaries, operating within our scope of practice, making referrals, on-going professional development, and receiving professional supervision.
- Our spiritual direction sessions are confidential.** As noted above, part of my commitment to this work is that I receive supervision on a regular basis from others who are also experienced in spiritual direction. In order to do this most effectively, I provide written reflections to my supervisor(s) with all identifying aspects expunged. The focus of professional supervision is me— specifically my skill and faithfulness in being with my clients, and the activities of God working in me and through me. Receiving professional supervision is a commitment that all members of Spiritual Directors International are invited to, and it is something I value greatly. If you have questions about this aspect of my on-going professional development, please ask!

**Regarding Confidentiality, please note, I hold the highest value in confidentiality as well as privacy, and I am ethically bound to report suspected cases of child- or elder abuse, self- endangerment, concern or threat of suicide or harm to others. Other than the above-noted exceptions, I will not disclose the content of our sessions unless required to do so by law or court order. For your part, you are free to share from our conversations with whomever you choose.

Time, Money and Checking In

Typically I meet with clients once a month for about an hour, and not more than 75 minutes. If, between scheduled sessions, you desire a quick check-in, prayer support, or another full-length appointment, please be in touch.

In recent years I have instituted a sliding scale fee of \$65-\$85 per session, and invite clients to locate themselves on the scale based on your own financial situation. If your financial circumstances change, I encourage you to reach out to me. I am committed to making spiritual direction financially accessible for clients and also financially sustainable for me.

At present, I do not charge a missed session fee or cancellation fee, however, if you cancel repeatedly, or do not give a minimum 24-hour notice when such is possible, we will need to address these issues for the health of our professional relationship.

Usually after 3-6 sessions, it becomes clear to one or both of us, whether I am the best companion to walk with you at this time. I am very interested in supporting referrals and having intentional transitions with clients when ending our spiritual care relationship is the best option. As we proceed, if you find a sustained sense that it is time to end our relationship, please let me know so that we can plan for a final session together.

Where/How we meet

I have been “seeing” clients at a distance almost since the beginning of my practice. At that time, distance sessions were by phone. Now, I most often use ZOOM for video sessions. Some clients prefer FaceTime. I am flexible, but ask that we plan in advance for the method of connection. In the event of technical difficulties, please call me at the appointed time on my mobile phone (508) 560-6516.

I tend to use a digital calendar that “invites” clients to the next session via email, which is particularly helpful for ZOOM meetings because it includes a clickable link. If that method does not work for you, I am also able to send a stand alone email as a reminder. Clients tend to set the next month’s appointment at the close of the current session to insure continuity of care.

If you have questions about any of these aspects of disclosure or covenant, please ask. I share them in this level of detail so that we can do this sacred work together, rooted in a strong foundation of clear expectations and healthy boundaries.

Please sign and date below to indicate your receipt of this disclosure and your agreement to the terms stated.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____ Per Session fee: _____