

**May 2015**

***Guidelines for Ethical Conduct for Spiritual Directors***  
***Association of Covenant Spiritual Directors***

Adapted from Spiritual Directors International, The Ethical Principles for Those Serving in Vocational Ministry in the ECC, and ECC Spiritual Directors' Networks

**GUIDELINES FOR ETHICAL CONDUCT**

Ethical conduct flows from lived reverence for God, self, and others but is not inevitably the reality of every spiritual direction relationship. Therefore, these guidelines are meant to inspire spiritual directors in the Evangelical Covenant Church toward integrity, responsibility, and faithfulness in their practice of spiritual direction. This means that we view those to whom we minister as part of a sacred trust from God. It is our responsibility to seek their well being, safeguard their interests, and protect them, as we are able, from danger and harm, even to the point of sacrificing our own interests. Hence, we act in the best interests of those under our care, even when this action does not serve our needs or interests.

We understand that spiritual direction is a ministry of listening, discernment, and prayer in a confidential setting of encouragement and compassion. Through this ministry a spiritual companion listens and helps one discern the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit in one's life. This companion intentionally sets aside the concerns of his or her own life to listen and attend to the experience of God in another's life.

The goal of spiritual direction is that one would grow closer to God and become more the person that God created one to be.

Our calling is the reflection and expression of God's redemptive work in making oneself known in Christ through the Holy Spirit, which is attested to in scripture and given narrative in the Church's tradition.

The benefits of maintaining the integrity of the director's role are profoundly positive. When boundaries are maintained, the result will be wholeness and well being for the directors themselves, those whom they direct and the setting in which it takes place.

**I. THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR AND THE SELF**

Personal Spirituality

1. Spiritual directors assume responsibility for personal growth by:
  - a. participating in regular spiritual direction and supervision;
  - b. following personal and communal spiritual practices and disciplines;

- c. committing to fully developing wholistic formational lives through disciplines such as exercise, study, meditation, prayer, Sabbath-keeping, mentoring relationships, collegial companionship, and life-long learning;
- d. providing for one's own physical care, psychological care, self care, and soul care, with activities such as: recreational pursuits, scheduling time off to care for one's family, the nurturing of personal friendships, attendance at retreats and educational events. Good ethical behavior is a result of one's own initiative in self care and soul care.

#### Formation

- 2. Spiritual directors engage in ongoing formation opportunities for directors such as:
  - a. continuing to discern their call to the ministry of spiritual direction;
  - b. nurturing self-knowledge and freedom;
  - c. cultivating insight into the influences of culture, social-historical context, environmental setting, and institutions;
  - d. studying scripture, theology, spirituality, and other disciplines related to spiritual direction.

#### Supervision

- 3. Spiritual directors engage in supervision by:
  - a. receiving regular supervision from peers or from a supervisor, while keeping confidential the stories of one's directees.
  - b. seeking consultations with other appropriately qualified persons when necessary;
  - c. avoiding isolation by maintaining contacts with colleagues and consulting with them regularly recognizing that one's perspective and judgment can be compromised by isolation.

#### Personal Responsibility

- 4. Spiritual directors meet their needs outside the spiritual direction relationship in a variety of ways, such as:
  - a. self-care, wisely balancing time for worship, work, leisure, family, and personal relationships;
  - b. understanding the need for self care and soul care for nurturing one's physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Failure to live out the methods of self care and soul care by maintaining a healthy life style and balance in one's vocation, personal lives, family and financial obligations can result in misconduct. Spiritual directors are responsible for seeking out accountability partners, who may be other than one's spiritual director, who are truth tellers that encourage, challenge and walk along side.
  - c. addressing the difficulties multiple roles or dual relationships pose to the effectiveness or clarity of the spiritual direction relationship;

- d. removing oneself from any situation that compromises the integrity of the spiritual direction relationship;
- e. entering into the directing relationship to benefit those served, not oneself.
- f. considering the impact social media might have on friendship, vocation, and healthy boundaries. (See “Covenant Clergy and Social Media,” by Sean Curtis, Rebekah Eklund, and Efrem Smith – [www.covchurch.org](http://www.covchurch.org).)

#### Limitations

5. Spiritual directors recognize the limits of:
  - a. energy by restricting the number of directees; (A spiritual director is a diligent steward of one’s own time and effort in carrying out one’s call. A spiritual director avoids burn out and being a workaholic.)
  - b. attentiveness by appropriate spacing of meetings and directees;
  - c. one’s personal limits and seeks appropriate professional help for any personal or interpersonal problems that may impair one’s ministry or judgment;
  - d. competence by referring directees to other appropriately qualified persons when necessary;
  - e. appropriate boundaries by being clear about one’s role; (Spiritual directors are not therapists, and provide direction, not therapy. Spiritual directors value the insights of other disciplines and seek to work cooperatively with therapists and pastors.)
  - f. the requirements of mandatory reporting laws in their states and understand when for the safety of one’s directee and others, a directee must be reported to the proper authorities.

#### Competence

6. Spiritual directors value the necessity of competency by:
  - a. enrolling in and graduating from a recognized spiritual direction training program;
  - b. participating in appropriate continuing educational activities which include awareness workshops, seminars, conferences, classes, and independent readings in the areas of spirituality, ethics and other applicable topics.

## **II. THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR AND THE DIRECTEE**

### Covenant

1. Spiritual directors initiate conversation and establish agreements with directees about:
  - a. the nature of spiritual direction;
  - b. the roles of the director and the directee;
  - c. the length and frequency of direction sessions;
  - d. the compensation, if any, to be given to the director or institution;
  - e. the process for evaluating and terminating the relationship;

- f. the role of supervision and gaining permission for some directee sessions to be brought to supervision anonymously.

#### Dignity

- 2. Spiritual directors honor the dignity of the directee by:
  - a. respecting the directee's values, conscience, spirituality, and theology;
  - b. inquiring into the motives, experiences, or relationships of the directee only as necessary;
  - c. recognizing the imbalance of power in the spiritual direction relationship and taking care not to exploit it;
  - d. establishing and maintaining appropriate physical and psychological boundaries with the directee;
  - e. refraining from sexualizing behavior, including, but not limited to, manipulative, abusive, or coercive words or actions toward a directee.

#### Confidentiality

- 3. Spiritual directors maintain confidentiality and the privacy of the directee by:
  - a. protecting the identity of the directee;
  - b. keeping confidential all oral **and written matters** arising in the spiritual direction sessions;
  - c. conducting direction sessions in appropriate settings;
  - d. understanding that confidentiality simply means to hold information in trust and not to divulge it. Confidential information may be shared with others in the best interests of the person involved. This shall be done only with his or her permission; for instance, in order to seek consultation with a professional counselor or in order to protect the individual involved or others from future harm.
  - e. addressing legal regulations requiring disclosure to proper authorities, including but not limited to, child abuse, elder abuse, and physical harm to self and others.

### III. THE SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR AND OTHERS

#### Colleagues

- 1. Spiritual directors maintain collegial relationships with other spiritual directors and supervisors by:
  - a. developing intra and interdisciplinary relationships;
  - b. striving to maintain mutual accountability with other members of the spiritual direction community as a safeguard for personal life and ministry. Spiritual directors also seek to maintain peer relationships through faithful participation in spiritual direction networks of the ECC;
  - c. requesting a directee who is in therapy to inform his or her therapist about being in spiritual direction;

- d. respecting other spiritual directors, ministers and professionals by not disparaging them or their work.

#### Faith Communities

- 2. Spiritual directors maintain responsible relationships to communities of faith by:
  - a. remaining open to processes of corporate discernment, accountability, and support;
  - b. appropriately drawing on the teachings and practices of communities of faith;
  - c. respecting the directee's relationship to his or her own larger community of faith, as well as, the directee's congregation and fellow members.

#### Society

- 3. Spiritual directors, when presenting themselves to the public, preserve the integrity of spiritual direction by:
  - a. representing qualifications and affiliations accurately;
  - b. defining the particular nature and purpose of spiritual direction;
  - c. respecting all persons regardless of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, marital status, political belief, mental or physical handicap, any preference, personal characteristic, condition or status.

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