

2025-2026 YEAR 1 MSD SESSION OVERVIEW

September 12-13, 2025

Defining Spiritual Direction

Rev. Laura Baber

Why do people seek Spiritual Direction and how is it distinct from other ministries?

During this session, the class will seek to define what spiritual direction is, and is not. The class will explore why people come for spiritual direction and the complementary relationship between spiritual direction and other soul care and well-being ministries, such as counseling, pastoral care, and healing prayer; identifying similarities and distinguishing differences.

October 10-11, 2025

Theologies of God in Spiritual Direction

Dr. David Mellott

What is your understanding of the theologies and philosophies of God?

This class will explore several theologies and philosophies of God, including ones from West Africa, Europe, and the Bible. The class will begin thinking about their own theological and philosophical perspectives and how such understanding effects the spiritual direction relationship and the implications for the journey of the spiritual directee.

November 7-8, 2025

Spiritual Disciplines Overview

TBA

How are the spiritual disciplines incorporated into spiritual direction for the spiritual director and the directee?

This session will explore the Spiritual Disciplines to discover what they are, best practices for incorporating them into our personal spiritual life, and ways we can introduce them into our practice of Spiritual Direction.

December 12-13, 2025

Past, Present, Future: A History of Spiritual Direction

Rev. Dr. Russell Hart

How has Spiritual Direction been a lived experience throughout the centuries?

The class will explore key historical influences in spiritual direction, how they inform contemporary spiritual direction practices, and inform our own ways of being and doing as spiritual directors.

January 9-10, 2026

The Role of Listening in Spiritual Direction

Rev. Dr. Debbie Heisley-Cato

How do we engage deeply with our directees in order to hear the movement of God in their lives?

Class participants will identify critical practices for deep spiritual listening to guide soul questions and directee movement and response.

February 13-14, 2026

Spiritual Discernment: Practice and Prayer

Rev. Greg Favazza

How do we discern God's will and response versus our own in spiritual direction?

As part of this session, the class will explore the role and process of spiritual discernment for the spiritual director and the spiritual directee.

March 13-14, 2026

(Year 1 and Year 2 classes combined)

Soul Care in African American Tradition

Rev. Dr. Barbara Peacock

What does it mean to embrace African American tradition in the practice of Spiritual Direction?

This session will explore the import and need for spiritual directors to integrate and broaden their cultural perspective in practice. Based on our common reading of the book "Soul Care in African American Tradition", guest author Barbara Peacock will share perspective and best practices on how to be culturally authentic for ourselves as directors and in our work with directees.

April 10-11, 2026

Discerning the Dark Night

Rev. Greg Favazza and Rev. Dr. Russell Hart

How do we recognize and journey with someone experiencing a dark night of the soul?

This session will examine two classical approaches to God, the apophatic and the kataphatic, and explore the nature of Divine Union, which is all God's work and not our own.

May 8-9, 2026

The Gift of Suffering

Rev. Dr. Debbie Heisley-Cato and Rev. Jan Hughes

How does suffering become an invitation in the work of spiritual direction?

The class will explore how suffering often produces a crisis (theological, existential, relational, etc.) which leads one into a spiritual direction experience. Spiritual practices that are life giving before a crisis can be empty post crisis. Working through one's theology of suffering is critical to the art and practice of spiritual direction.

June 12-13, 2026

Infusing Creativity in Spiritual Direction

Kathy Milans

How can creativity and imagination enrich the work of Spiritual Direction?

This interactive session will explore how the creative arts are used in Spiritual Direction to facilitate Divine connection.

July 10-11, 2026

Practical Application of Spiritual Direction

Rev. Laura Baber

How do I begin the work of SD?

Class members will examine the initial steps in building a working alliance at the beginning of the spiritual direction relationship.