

CLASS WEEKEND RHYTHM

Invitation to the Work of the Spirit

Being fully online has made the MSD program very convenient for many people. We also recognize that this convenience can also make it difficult to fully disconnect from the activities and responsibilities of daily life.

Therefore, we highly encourage you to be very intentional about building in space prior to and after each class session so that you can prepare your mind and heart to the work of the Spirit in the MSD program. This may include finding a quiet place to rest in silence, to take a prayer walk, or seek God's presence as you soak in some inspirational music. Some students who live in a bustling home have found it wise to participate in sessions at an alternate location, such as a quiet office or local church.

Light a Candle

We ask that everyone have a candle ready for all class sessions. We will light these candles together as we invite the presence of Christ among us.

Friday Evening Schedule

Each month, the MSD program gathers at 6:30 pm (EST) and lasts for approximately two hours.

Our time begins with the lighting of our candles and a time of centering.

Every few months, we enter into a time of group conversation and sharing based on our Common Reading, which are highlighted on the Reading List.

The group is then divided into smaller peer groups that will meet together for the remainder of the year. We utilize a contemplative approach to group direction, which is often referred to as the 'Prayer, Share, Prayer' model. This is a time to hold sacred space for one another, to practice and hone our skills as we learn to listen to God and one another, which is the foundation of our work in Spiritual Direction.

As we end our time on Friday evening and prepare ourselves for the work we will undertake on Saturday, we encourage all participants to hold space in the quiet. For some, this may mean observing silence until we gather on Saturday morning. For those with busy families, this may mean finding some time and space in the quiet.

CLASS WEEKEND RHYTHM (continued)

Saturday Schedule

HOLY COMMUNION

We gather as one group on Saturday morning at 8:15 am (EST) to share in the Daily Office and the sacrament of holy communion. Class members take turns serving as readers and song leaders. This communion service usually lasts 30 minutes. We recognize that some faith traditions do not allow for online communion. We still encourage persons of those faith tradition to still join us for the prayers, songs, and readings of the Daily Office.

We open the Zoom room on Saturday morning at 8:00 am. Please note that we ask everyone to enter the Zoom room in silence and to observe the silence until the group is formally greeted for the start of the communion liturgy.

Those individuals serving as a leader of the communion liturgy are encouraged to print out the Daily Office for that day that will be sent to them. There is no need for other students to print out the liturgy, as it will be displayed on a PowerPoint presentation to the entire group.

There is a short break after the communion liturgy for approximately 15 minutes, allowing class members to get a beverage and prepare themselves for the day.

CLASS SESSION

Beginning Fall of 2025, we will begin a new schedule for our Saturday gathering for teaching and application.

Class sessions on Saturday will begin at 9:00 am (EST) and will end around 1:30 pm (EST).

The faculty presenter will choose to take two 15-minute breaks or one 30-minute break mid-day.

We ask that everyone keep their video on during class sessions.

However, if you need to take a quick restroom break, you may turn off your video so that we know you are not present with us. Be sure to turn the video back on when you return! Likewise, especially since we are not taking a lunch break, if you need to have some type of snack handy, you may turn off your video so that everyone does not watch you eat.

Please keep these times when your video is off to an absolute minimum. Much of our time is spent having group conversations and being able to see one another during these times is very important.

POST SESSION REVIEW

When the Zoom room is closed at the end of the day, each student should plan to spend 15 minutes in reflection as they fill out a session review survey, which is available on the student portal.

The purpose of the review is two-fold.

First, it allows you to provide feedback on the topic and the presenter. This feedback is vitally important to us as we review the program each year, discerning what changes are needed in the program.

Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, the reflection time of doing the survey will help you identify any themes or questions that will need further reflection, as well as topics you can bring up during your next session with your spiritual director.

VIDEO REVIEW

The MSD sessions are recorded and will be posted on the Student Portal usually within 48 to 72 hours after class. Although these videos are uploaded to the MSD YouTube channel, they are set to 'private' to ensure the privacy of our students. These videos can be viewed on the MSD website. The purpose of the recording is two-fold:

- It allows class participants to view the recording in the days and weeks after class as they review their notes and process what had been discussed during class.
- It also allows class members who are unable to attend a specific presentation to view the video so that they can keep up-to-date on class discussions. More information on this is available in the following section of this handbook.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Attendance and Commitment to Community

The MSD program covers a great amount of material over the course of two years, which is why it is very important that class members do whatever they can to ensure their participation in each session. However, we recognize that persons called to the work of Spiritual Direction are often very busy individuals, and their professional and personal responsibilities occasionally require absence from the MSD program. For this reason, there is much grace built into the program.

If you are unable to be present for a weekend gathering or part of a weekend gathering, please do the following:

- Contact the Program Administrator when you know you will be absent.
- Stay current on any readings or other pre-class assignments.
- Watch the video of the session once it has been uploaded to the Student Portal.
- Have a conversation with another class member about the content of the session and process any assignments and highlights of the session.

If you find that your personal and professional responsibilities often interfere with the MSD schedule, please don't hesitate to connect with the Program Administrator to discern what may be the best way to stay connected and engaged in the program while navigating life circumstances. It is our desire to assist you in your journey through the MSD program, and we recognize that each circumstance is unique and will be handled with grace as we attempt to find the best way forward in the program for each individual student as well as our MSD community as whole.

We believe that participation/attendance in the MSD program dovetails with leaning into the commitment to integrity in the life of the spiritual director. By attending the MSD weekend gatherings, participants are not only gaining information and practical application in the work of Spiritual Direction, but also are showing up to hold space for one another on Friday evenings in the work of community with the peer groups sessions.

The practice of engaging in solitude and making time for space in the quiet in-between the Friday evening and Saturday morning sessions gives the opportunity to be present to ourselves and God and then by the very nature of having done so, we now are able to be present one another in communal worship as we open the Saturday session through communion, and present in our learning sessions as we engage with our presenters and in our breakout groups with our peers. Just as the MSD program is an invitation to a way of life, so is each weekend session a rhythmic model to that way of life and is vitally important to health of the community as a whole.

Class Communication

EMAIL

The vast majority of information about the MSD program is communicated through email.

If you have a question or problem, please feel free to reach out to the program administrator or another member of the MSD team. Their contact information is printed on the back page of this handbook and is also available on the ADMIN page of the MSD website. Please allow 24 to 48 hours for email responses. If you have a time sensitive issue, please call or text the Program Administrator.

TEXT MESSAGING

Recognizing that most of our MSD participants are very busy people often involved with various programs, we understand that people's inboxes can be very full, which makes it easy to overlook an incoming email. Therefore, we will text any information that we feel is time-sensitive to ensure that all participants are aware of the information. We will keep texting to a minimum. Every effort will be made to send texts as a 'broadcast' so that they are delivered individually, rather than as a group text. Please refrain from responding "OK" or other similar messages, so that the sender is not inundated with multiple text responses. If you do not wish to receive texts from the MSD program, please contact the Program Administrator.

Spiritual Direction

We require that all participants in the Ministry of Spiritual Direction program work with a trained Spiritual Director during the two years of the coursework.

In addition, Year 2 class members should also work with a directee.

If you need assistance in connecting with a director or a directee, please contact the program administrator.

Peer Supervision

The Year 2 program includes a session on the importance of supervision in the work of Spiritual Direction. The Center for Spiritual Formation offers online Peer Supervision sessions, as well as occasional online supervision retreats. Since part of the Year 2 program includes working with a directee, the Year 2 students will participate in several peer group supervision sessions as part of the Friday night experience. They are also encouraged to take part in the seasonal supervision program provided by the Center for Spiritual Formations.

Tuition

All financial responsibilities are handled through the office at The Center for Spiritual Formation. The website is www.centerformation.org. Invoices are sent out quarterly. Students have the option to pay yearly, bi-annually or quarterly. Please contact the Center Administrator if you would like to investigate other payment options.

A link to the Center's page for paying your tuition online can be found on the MSD website under the ADMIN tab.

Program Completion and Certificate

At the end of the two-year training program, The Center for Spiritual Formation provides a Certificate of Completion of the Ministry of Spiritual Direction. We do not 'certify' individuals as Spiritual Directors, as we strongly believe that it is the Holy Spirit that certifies individuals for the work of Spiritual Direction. The Center awards 12 CEU's per year for a total of 24 CEU's upon completion of the program and fulfilling required criteria.

Website

In addition to general communication about The Ministry of Spiritual Direction, the student portal is the location of all the resources you will need for your coursework during the program.

Be sure to bookmark **www.ministryofspiritualdirection.org** on your computer's browser.

You have been given individual access to the Student Portal. However, if you have problems with your personal login or password, you may use the following login information:

Login: msdstudent2025@centerformation.org

Password: [msd*2024](#)

CALENDAR

A detailed calendar of dates pertaining to the MSD program is available on the Admin Tab of the student portal.

CLASS MATERIALS

All documents and other materials you will need for the course will be available on the student portal of the website. Every effort will be made to make materials available three weeks in advance of the session. Class members should download those materials to your local computer. You may choose to print those materials or, for those who are comfortable doing so, may view them on your computer screen during the Zoom session.

CONTACT INFORMATION

A list of contact information for the MSD team and other class participants is available on the Admin Tab of the student portal.

DAILY OFFICE

Based on the ancient practice of prescribed daily times of prayer, the Daily Office is a liturgy of prayers and scripture readings for morning, noon, and evening. The Center's Daily Office has been carefully ordered to follow the rhythm of the MSD program, and is available on the LITURGY page of the MSD website.

READING LIST

We recognize that the people called to the work of spiritual direction are often people who already have very busy schedules. Therefore, we have taken a new approach to our reading list.

We have narrowed down our reading list to just a few books each year that are foundational to the work we will be doing together in the Ministry of Spiritual Direction program. Some of these books will be used for our Common Reading Experience, which is a quarterly discussion on a featured book.

The Reading List for the MSD program can be located on the top of each year's Document Page of the MSD website.

Any other additional readings required for a particular session are provided as a PDF on the MSD website or as a link to an online article. These readings and links are made available one month in advance of that particular session, and are listed on the "Class Prep" Document for each month's session.

The "Class Prep" document may also contain additional readings on the monthly topic that avid readers may want to investigate; but these additional resources are NOT REQUIRED readings.

Zoom Video Conference Platform

The Ministry of Spiritual Direction program uses the Zoom Video platform. This following information is intended to provide general information and tips for participating in our Zoom sessions.

Most people are already familiar with the Zoom platform. However, please be sure to read the following information, as it has some guidelines we would like you to be familiar with.

If you have not already done so, we recommend that you download Zoom by going to <https://zoom.us/download> and clicking on the blue “Download” button for Zoom Client for Meetings.

Please be sure to create a FREE Zoom account. This will allow you to access certain features that would be unavailable to you if you use it as a guest without an account.

Side Note: Having a free Zoom account will let you host video conferences of your own once you are comfortable with the program. The only downside to free accounts is that you are limited to 40 minute conferences, but they can be great to meet with family and friends.

If you have previously downloaded Zoom, we do suggest that you update your Zoom software to the most current available. You can do this easily by launching the Zoom app on your computer, signing in, clicking on the profile icon on the upper right, and then choosing ‘Check for Updates’.

CONFIGURING YOUR ZOOM APPLICATION

We suggest you check the following settings in your Zoom app. You can launch the Zoom app if you have the blue Zoom icon on your computer desktop, or you can locate it on your list of programs.

Click on your profile icon on the upper right of the screen, and then choose settings.

Under Video & Effects tab, check for the following:

- If you have unreliable internet, we suggest that you DO NOT select “HD video” under ‘Camera’. HD is not needed and will save you bandwidth.

Under Audio tab, check the following:

- Make sure “Zoom background noise removal” is selected.

Zoom Video Conference Platform (continued)

Under Notifications & Sounds tab, under “Sounds”, check the following:

- Go to ‘Notification Sounds’ and be sure “Play new chat message sound” is selected.

Under Meetings and Webinars, under “When Joining”, check the following:

- Be sure “Keep My Microphone Muted” is selected.
- Be sure “Automatically connect to computer audio” is selected.
- Be sure “Enter full screen automatically” is selected.

Under Meetings and Webinars, under “Display”, check the following:

- Be sure “Keep participant names visible” is selected.

Under Meetings and Webinars, under “Controls”, check the following:

- Be sure “Keep meeting controls visible” is selected.
- Be sure “Press and hold ‘space’ key to temporarily unmute yourself is selected.

Under Meetings and Webinars, under “Participant Video”, check the following:

- Be sure “Maximum participants per screen” is set to 49 participants. This is very important for our group conversations.

Under Meetings and Webinars, under “Reactions”, check the following:

- Be sure “Show reactions above toolbar” is selected.
- Be sure “Animate emojis” is selected.

Zoom Video Conference Platform (continued)

CONNECTING TO ZOOM

If you have good internet and good WiFi signal, you should be good to go. If you do not have good WiFi signal, we recommend that connect your computer/laptop directly to your router. This will help ensure that your connection is not interrupted during the class gathering.

Remember that if you are using WiFi in your home, other people using their phones, computers and tablets may affect the bandwidth that is available to you for Zoom.

We **strongly** encourage that you leave your camera on at all times when participating in the MSD sessions. However, if you live in an area in which the internet is not reliable, one option you have is to turn off your camera during the session. This will save bandwidth and will dedicate your signal to the audio connection rather than trying to process the video. If this is something that you need to do, please advise the Zoom host on that day; otherwise they may ask you to turn your video on for full class participation.

Avoid using battery power if using a laptop. Plug it in!

Avoid using other applications during the Zoom conference. Close any programs that are running but not needed during your Zoom presentation.

In addition to our Zoom link page on the MSD website, a Zoom link document is available on the MSD website. This document will have the appropriate links for the video sessions. Be sure to use the appropriate links. Please note that there are separate sections for Year 1 and Year 2 sessions. There is also a section with links used whenever the entire class participates together. Download this Zoom link document and save it to a location on your computer where it can be easily accessed when needed.

IMPORTANT NOTE

Please note that the Center for Spiritual Formation has turned off AI settings in our Zoom accounts.

Because our gatherings include times of sharing, we want to have full control over what is recorded and/or captured.

As mentioned earlier, all of our videos are set to private, so that no one other than class participants can view these discussions. If a discussion ever includes some very private information, that will be deleted from the video recording.

Zoom Video Conference Platform (continued)

GENERAL TIPS

What are you using?

If at all possible, we highly recommend that you use a desktop or laptop computer for our sessions together. This is especially important for those of you who will prefer to view your documents and notes digitally on the screen instead of printing everything out on paper.

If your internet connection is not reliable, and you have no alternative place to connect (such as an office or church), then using a tablet (such as an iPad) will be your answer. The downside of using a tablet is that you don't have all the features that are available.

Where are the audio and video controls on Zoom?

If you are using a desktop or laptop computer, you can start and stop your audio and video by selecting the buttons on the bottom left of your screen.

If you are using a tablet, these options will appear when you touch the top of your screen.

Please mute yourself and turn off your camera during any breaks. We do this because it eliminates the noise from everyone's home, turning the camera back on after break confirms if everyone is back and ready to go at the end of the break.

Where are you participating?

Avoid using common spaces such as living rooms, etc. where other people may be passing through.

Don't forget that everyone participating will hear whatever is in your background ... dog barking, someone else watching TV, etc.

Consider finding a place where you can be relaxed and focused for our time together.

Avoid participating while outdoors. There might be a slight wind where you are, but your mic may make it sound like a hurricane to the other participants.

Please use discretion in using virtual backgrounds. They often distort a person, which can be very distracting.

Zoom Video Conference Platform (continued)

Do you have enough, or too much, light?

The majority of your light source should be in front of you, on the other side of your computer/laptop.

Too much light behind you will be distracting. If there is a window behind you, close the blinds or curtains. And, if needed, hang something to cover glass doors.

What camera and mic are you using?

Newer laptops have good webcams and integrated microphone cards, and should be fine to use.

You may wish to purchase a webcam w/mic for older computers. Decent ones are available for around \$40. Need help? Get in contact with the Program Administrator.

Decide whether you want to use your computer/laptop for sound or if you prefer to use headphones with an integrated microphone.

Where is your camera located?

Being able to see one another is important to the bond we will build over the coming year. Looking into your eyes on the computer is better than nothing at all.

Your camera should be in line with your eyes. You can achieve this by putting your webcam on a small tripod so that you are looking straight at the camera, instead of up at one, or down at one. If using a laptop, you can always set it on something to lift it up so that your camera is at eye level. Seeing your eyes and face is much better than seeing the top of your head or looking up your nostrils because your camera is too low!

What are you doing?

Because Zoom has become second nature for many people over these last several months, we have become quite comfortable, and perhaps even complacent, when on a video conference.

Since you are in the comfort of your own home, feel free to have a beverage or light snack handy as we share together. However, please remember that everyone can see you! You may want to choose to temporarily stop your video while you are chomping down on that sticky bun!

Zoom Video Conference Platform (continued)

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE USE OF THE MICROPHONE

During class sessions, we recommend that everyone MUTE their microphone at all times.

We highly recommend that you get used to the practice of holding down the SPACE BAR while you are speaking. This temporarily unmutes you, and will remain unmuted as long as you are holding down the space bar. As soon as you release the space bar, your mic will be muted again.

Why do we suggest this? Please remember that if your audio is live, we can hear all the background noises from your location. This can be very distracting when you have 20 people participating in a video conference.

This feature will not work if you did not set up the settings as instructed earlier in this document.

WHAT YOU'LL SEE ON YOUR SCREEN

We record each session of the MSD gathering. These recordings are used in case a participant needs to refresh their memory after class or was unable to attend. This affects what you will see on the screen during the class session.

You have a few options on how to view the Zoom Room. You can select these on the top right of your screen.

The “Speaker View” highlights the video of whoever is speaking. This is great, except for the times that someone puts a coffee cup down or their dog barks in the background. Because, at those times, Zoom automatically detects the noise and highlights their video.

The “Gallery View” shows thumbnails of those participating all at once.

The “Side by Side” view will both show the Speaker view and whatever file (PowerPoint, video, other document) is being shared. You'll notice two thin lines between these screens. If you hover over these lines, you can slide it either direction, which will adjust the size of the screens.

Because we record these sessions, the host will often choose to ‘Spotlight’ the video of the presenter. The session host will do their best to turn off the ‘Spotlight’ at times of discussion.

At any time, everyone should have the option of choosing between the Speaker and Gallery views. We suggest that you choose the Speaker view when the presenter is talking and then switch to Gallery view during group discussions, as this will allow you to see and interact with one another.

Zoom Video Conference Platform (continued)

USING THE CHAT FEATURE

At the bottom of the Zoom screen, you will see a “chat” button. Selecting this button will open a chat box where you can communicate with the other participants. You can choose to send a message to everyone participating, or you select an individual and communicate directly with them.

The chat box can be used to share information with the class. For example, if someone mentions a book that they recommend, they can enter the author and title in the chat for everyone to refer to.

If you have a question during a presentation, feel free to ask it in the chat box. The online host will then be sure the question is brought up for discussion.

Please do not use the chat box to contact the presenter privately during a session, as that will be distracting to them during their presentation. Please address your comments to the entire group or to the online host.

Feel free to use the chat and choose ‘direct message’ to ask the session host with any questions or if you have need assistance during your presentation. They are there to help you in any way that they can.

GENERAL INFORMATION

The session host will have the Zoom room open 15 minutes prior to the beginning of class.

Please be sure to join that room no later than the appointed time. If you need to be late, please advise Chuck Kaufmann prior to class. You can always email, call or text him. His contact info is:

Email: msd.chuck@centerformation.org

Cell #: 717-343-7975

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