

## Mary Adams

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My name is Mary and I am excited to be in your cohort! I'm joining you from rainy, lush western Washington. My interest in heartfelt conversation and prayer about where the Holy Spirit makes itself known to us is what drew me to Spiritual Direction. I am looking forward to learning alongside you in how we can help others discern God's voice in their lives.

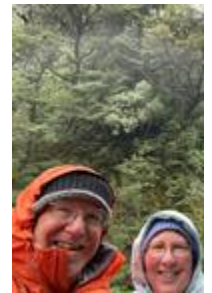
As a mom of three young children and working at a senior center, I believe people of all walks of life hold a wisdom in being able to see God through a unique lens. We are all each other's teachers and guides.



## James Bernhardt

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Way back in my early 80's college years, I searched for a fellowship where I could explore my faith. I did not warm to high pressure on-campus groups, and stumbled into a group led by an ecumenically supported chaplain. The Seekers group was built on faith, acceptance and wonder. Bob, our chaplain, taught us and led us in spiritual practices: journaling, lectio divina, centering prayer, praying with art and icons, and he led us to connect these things to doing local mission. I have been part of and creating such seeking groups in this mode ever since. Professionally, I am a pastor. With retirement on the horizon, knowing that I thrive in the soil of matters of the Spirit, I feel that there is a path I might walk with others. My pastoral care is more like Spiritual friendship. My gifts tend this way. My Spiritual Director has asked if I have considered being a director. So, here I am. I am married to Anita, who is also a pastor. Our two children are grown and on their own. We are grateful grandparents. I enjoy mornings, hiking and walking, music, travel, conversation, laughter, reading (many subjects), movies, silence and stillness.



## Rhonda Burnette-Bletsch

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Rhonda Burnette-Bletsch was born in NC where she earned a Ph.D. in biblical studies from Duke University. She spent the first half of her teaching career on the faculty of a small Methodist college in NC. She now teaches biblical studies and theology at Eastern University in eastern Pennsylvania. She and her husband John (a UMC pastor) recently celebrated their thirtieth anniversary. They share three children ranging in age from 17 to 25. They also share their home with five loveable cats.



## Brian Burton

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Hello friends, my name is Brian Burton. I live in Texas with my wife, JJ, who is a high school science teacher, and we have two daughters—Jade (30) and Savannah (22). Marriage and family have been a gift in my life, shaping me through love, joy, and faithfulness.

I'm also a longtime supporter of Liverpool FC—if you hear “You'll Never Walk Alone,” you'll know why my heart beats a little faster.

Vocationally, I serve as Creative Director at Digizent, a digital marketing agency that helps nonprofits raise money to fuel their missions. Before this, I served as a worship leader and pastor for 30 years. Music and liturgy remain places where I encounter God deeply, and my recent seminary studies (Western Seminary) have been shaping my love for Scripture and formation.

Recently, I've been especially shaped by books like *Now I Become Myself* (Shigematsu), *Invitation to a Journey* (Mulholland), *Gospel Allegiance* (Bates), *Power in Weakness* (Gorman), and *Sacred Companions* (Benner). I also draw from podcasts like Bridgetown Church, The Holy Post, Bible Project, Praying in Color, and The Rule of Life, which continue to expand my imagination for spiritual formation, community, and life with God.

What draws me to the work of spiritual direction is the conviction that we encounter God not just in ideas but in lived experience—through prayer, attentive presence, and the companionship of others on the journey. Meeting regularly with a spiritual director myself has been life-giving, helping me notice God's nearness, attend to my inner life, and rest more deeply in His love. I want to learn how to create that same kind of sacred space for others.

I'm grateful to be part of this cohort and eager to learn alongside you.



## Carolyn Coleman

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A native of Nashville, Tennessee, Carolyn Coleman comes to the Spiritual Direction program with a background in the comparative study of religion, eighteen years of ordained ministry as an Episcopal priest, and five years as a death doula and conscious dying educator. She tries to be outside as much as possible, especially where dirt and water are, and has recently taken up handbuilt pottery. Carolyn seeks certification as a Spiritual Director as a means of augmenting both her parish ministry and her death doula practice.



## Jim Daniels

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My name is Jim Daniels (he/him). I live in Holland, MI with my bride Dana. We have two grown children: Alex, who lives in Flagstaff, AZ and Madalyn, who is a student in Grand Rapids, MI. We also have a dog named Leo. I've served as a pastor in Iowa and Michigan, and for the last 9 years have been serving as a chaplain for a hospice. I'm drawn to spiritual direction because that type of listening has been my favorite part of any ministry I've been a part of, and would love to have a better and broader understanding of the practice. Also, now that my kids are out of the house, I have no more baseball games nor track meets to attend, and therefore have no excuse to finally jump in and get started in a program like this – as I have desired for more than a few years now. I'm looking forward to the journey with you all.



## Debra DeVos

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Hi, I'm Deb! I am an ordained deacon in the United Methodist Church having just entered my 11th year in full time ministry. Previously, I was an accountant and for 30 plus years a Software Quality Assurance Engineer testing software. I was even a Mary Kay Beauty Consultant and Director for 12 years. Now I'm an associate pastor in a local church where my focus is Spiritual Formation and Discipleship. My specific areas of ministry are Small Groups, Missions, Church and Society, our food pantry and our United Women in Faith Group as well as our Dismantling Racism group.



I was a lifelong Roman Catholic prior to finding the UMC but it was in the UMC that I was more openly introduced to spiritual disciplines and practices. I have always longed to be close to the Jesus I fell in love with as a child and I would love to help other people feel that love and have that deep connection with God also. I get so much out of my relationship with my spiritual director. I would like to provide the same for others.

On a personal note, I live with my husband of 13 years, Rob and our two black cats, Dusty and Elvis. I'm a huge Elvis Presley fan and I love music. I love to read, I sew, quilt, embroider, crochet, and do Bible Art Journaling as a spiritual discipline.

## Edna Pearl Esquibel

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I am Edna Pearl Esquibel and a Felician-Franciscan Sister. I was born and raised in New Mexico and have been involved in some form of ministry in the Catholic Church nearly all my life. I currently serve as Director for Faith Formation for the Archdiocese of Santa Fe in Albuquerque. The heart of my ministry is to journey with and offer ongoing formation for parish directors of religious education and their catechists. I completed the MTS program offered by St. Norbert College and the Ecumenical Institute for Ministry in Albuquerque. Most recently I also have been a caregiver for my father who was on hospice and participated in a group for other family caregivers. I have witnessed the number of known spiritual directors across the State of New Mexico dwindle down to just a handful and yet I receive numerous requests for spiritual guidance and companionship from those I minister to and with. Having benefited from my relationship with a few spiritual directors over the last twenty-two years as a religious sister, I know the benefits of having a companion to help guide me spiritually as I try my best to minister to God's people. I know there is both a need and desire for spiritual direction among those I encounter and I, having been encouraged by those I have walked with, would like to be trained to provide my assistance for those seeking spiritual direction.



## Joe Fisher

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Blessings, my name is Joseph "Joe" Fisher, I am an ordained United Methodist Elder and a member of the Florida United Methodist Annual Conference. I've been in fulltime pastoral and chaplaincy ministry for almost 38 years. Seventeen of those years was as an active-duty military chaplain in the U.S. Air Force. I retired from that adventure and since August 2020 I have been the pastor of St. Andrew UMC in Titusville, Florida where I reside with my wife of 37 years, Rev. Laura Fisher (a UMC Elder on "honorable location") and our mixed breed rescued dog Laci.



I began my journey in Spiritual Direction in 2001 during a joint two year Spiritual Director's program of the Florida UMC and Orlando Episcopal Diocese. I completed the first year but prior to the second year I began my military chaplaincy journey. Somewhere along the joint program ceased to exist.

During my military chaplain career much of my work was entry level spiritual formation and direction. I want to continue assisting others on their spiritual journey and I feel that being credentialed along with praxis and directed studies in the subject, will be of great value. I also have a goal of writing for publication in the areas of spiritual formation and spiritual direction. I want to blend my Wesleyan and Celtic Christian studies along with my B.A. in Christian Education and a C.E. focus of my MDiv degree. (I am a credentialed UMC Minister of Religious Education.)

## TJ Geiger

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I work as an associate professor of technical communication and rhetoric in the Department of English at Texas Tech University. I conduct research in the areas of religious rhetorics, feminist rhetorics, rhetorical history, rhetorics of science, and deliberation. I'm the author of Faithful Deliberation: Rhetorical Invention, Evangelicalism, and #MeToo Reckonings, a study of the #MeToo movement and its influence in the context of US evangelicalism, especially the Southern Baptist Convention. Throughout my career, I've taught courses in rhetoric, professional and technical communication, spiritual writing, persuasive writing, science writing, creative nonfiction, civic writing, style, and literary theory. Before receiving the Ph.D. in Composition and Cultural Rhetoric from Syracuse University, I received a BA in history and English from Lamar University. I also received an MA in English and a graduate certificate in women's studies from Texas Woman's University. In January 2025, I started volunteering with the lay chaplain and spiritual care program at one of the hospitals in Lubbock, the city in West Texas where I live. Given this work, I am interested in my own discernment and the ways I can support others' spiritual lives. While chaplaincy and spiritual direction are distinct traditions of spiritual care, I believe the spiritual direction program, with its pastoral focus, can help me in navigating the connections between my inner and outer lives so that I may have integrity in my relationship with God and be of service to others.



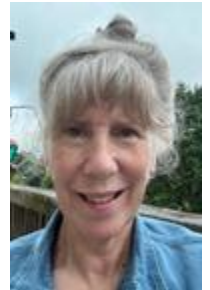
## Lea Deane Jacobs

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I have always been a spiritual seeker, a student of the truth no matter the source and upon meeting Jesus as a child through church, one who knows the power of unconditional love - I am drawn to do the work to be a Spiritual Director to continue my personal growth in my relationship to the God of my ever expanding understanding - and to serve others, assisting them to align and grow closer to the God of their own unique perspective!

I am a mature curious student ready to take on the rigors of change to myself in the course of this study - I am responsible in my desire to offer only the highest and best for others!

I have marvelous support of friends and family and my church, Oakwood UMC in central Virginia as I do my course work and allow for my own and others' personal and spiritual transformation! And so it is.



## Scott Jobe

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I am Scott Jobe, and I have been married to a wonderful woman, Kim, for over 31 years and have a 25-year-old son, David. I am a retired U.S. Air Force Chaplain since 2013, having served a total of over 30-½ years in the military. I retired in Cibolo, Texas, which is near San Antonio. After retiring from the military I volunteered as a hospital chaplain at two local hospitals, Northeast Methodist and Brooke Army Medical Center for over 10 years. I am an ordained minister in Community of Christ since 1993. I graduated with a Business Administration (Management) degree in 1988, a Master of Divinity degree from Eden Theological Seminary in 1998, and Doctor of Ministry degree from Oblate School of Theology in 2007 with my doctoral dissertation focus on Divorce Recovery Ministries. I graduated with 4 units of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) after serving 1 year on trauma wards, emergency rooms, burn units, and other areas at Wilford Hall Medical Trauma II Center and BAMC burn unit in 2004. I will graduate in October 2025 and get a certificate of completion from the Spiritual Formation and Companionship Program (SFCP) offered by the Community of Christ seminary, which introduced me to formal spiritual direction, both in having to have a spiritual director and doing exercises in spiritual direction. I like helping people and feel like the Holy Spirit led me to this Ministry in Spiritual Direction certificate program and look forward to participating in it with each of you.



## Juana Jordan

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I'm Rev. Dr. Juana Jordan, a pastor, preacher, podcaster, writer, church planter, theologian, and self-proclaimed hope dealer. As a former award-winning journalist, radio host and media consultant turned Gospel storyteller, I have a knack for seeing and showing the hope in every person's story and connecting their story with God's story.



A native of Jacksonville, Florida, I am an ordained elder of the Florida Conference of United Methodist Church, where for years I led congregations. That was until God called me to the front lines in January 2023 to do life with young adults and create spiritual formation spaces for them. I am currently the Executive Director of FAMU Wesley IMPACT, a campus ministry at Florida A&M University and it is in part why I am drawn to this work of spiritual direction. Young adults are seeking an empathic ear, wisdom and spiritual guidance. And so am I, since unexpectedly losing my mother last July.

I hold a Master of Divinity degree from Emory University Candler School of Theology and a bachelor's degree in broadcast journalism from HBCU Johnson C. Smith University in Charlotte, NC. Last year, I finished my DMin. in Spirituality and Story from Wesley Theological Seminary, where I centered my work on Thriving in Contested Spaces: Using the Dislocation Stories of Hagar and the Babylonian Exiles and the Reclamation of the Imago Dei as Frameworks for Black Clergywomen's Flourishing in Cross-Cultural Settings.

When time permits, I like to kickbox, African dance, listen to my favorite podcasts, thrift and consignment shop, rack up sky miles and share my thoughts about faith, God, and my spiritual journey on my various social media platforms.

## Susan Juergensen

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Hello! I'm excited to be part of this community and get to know everyone. I'm currently serving as solo pastor for Corona United Methodist Church in Corona, California. I've been there since July 2021. I'm ordained clergy, elder in full connection, with the California-Pacific Conference and just celebrated 25 years. This is the 5th church I've been appointed to and the 8th congregation I've served since I was 22.



In September my husband, Mark, and I will have been married for 28 years. Mark's a project developer of clean energy power plants on the finance side. Yes, his business is getting more difficult as the days go by.

I'm blessed to have had two children - a boy and a girl. My son, Drew, is 25 now. He's starting graduate school at UC Davis in a few weeks, studying Energy Systems and Policy Management in the Energy Graduate Group. My daughter, Mara, is 22 and just graduated from Point Loma Nazarene University with a degree in Psychology. She's still trying to figure out exactly what she wants to do when she grows up.

I grew up in Torrance, California (near Hermosa Beach), but spent four years in southern Indiana for undergrad studying journalism/public relations. I attended one year at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA, for my M.Div. then finished at Drew University Theological School in New Jersey.

The part of my ministry I continue to love most is pastoral care. I look forward to experiencing spiritual direction and learning how to implement it in the local church.

## Christine Kumar

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Rev. Christine Kumar serves as pastor of Memorial First India United Methodist Church. A graduate of Wesley Theological Seminary (Master of Divinity) and the University of Maryland, University College (B.A. in Communications), she is committed to proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ and guiding others to experience God's love, grace, and hope. Christine's ministry is rooted in her passion for connecting people to Christ, nurturing discipleship, and building a strong, Spirit-led community of faith.

Beyond ministry, she enjoys gardening, spending time with her family, cooking, and reading—simple joys that keep her grounded and grateful for God's blessings in everyday life.



## Twila Lahey

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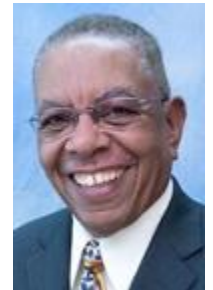
My name is Twila Lahey (pronounced lay-hee) and I am from Lees Summit, Missouri which is in the Kansas City Metro. I engaged more fully in my faith when I went to college. Here I met my husband and we have been heavily involved in ministry for 25 years. We have been blessed with two boys through adoption, who are just starting middle school. We attend an Evangelical Presbyterian affiliated church called Lakeland Community Church. Our church has embraced contemplative practices for many years. I am part of a women's ministry that offers quarterly solitude retreats. It is through these retreats that I have been a part of group spiritual direction and been affirmed that I have a gift of wisdom and listening. A common thread of encouragement in my vocation as a teacher is also that I am a compassionate listener. Entering into this spiritual direction program is an act of worship of who God made me to be and an incredible opportunity to sharpen spiritual gifts. I am eager to learn more, to be challenged and to see how God uses these skills and gifts for his glory in the Church!



## Stanley Long

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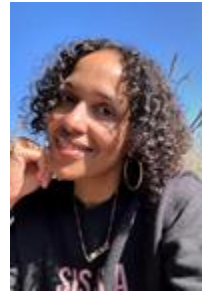
Stanley B. Long is Pastor Emeritus of South Bay Community Church (SBCC) in Fremont, California, which he founded in 1985. Born and raised in Philadelphia, PA, his early years were shaped by a challenging urban environment that helped forge his commitment to service, leadership, and transformation. After retiring as lead pastor, Dr. Long continued his ministry and leadership work through board service, consulting, coaching, and training leaders across the U.S. and internationally. His broad experience spans decades of pastoral ministry, organizational leadership, and urban outreach. Before planting SBCC, he served as President of Fellowship Urban Outreach, a San Francisco-based ministry focused on inner-city transformation. Dr. Long has also been deeply engaged in mentoring emerging leaders, facilitating cohorts of Christian pastors and ministry leaders seeking growth, clarity, and support in a rapidly changing world. His leadership training emphasizes practical wisdom, emotional health, and sustainability in ministry. Through his consulting and coaching practice, he empowers churches and non-profit organizations to navigate complex leadership challenges and maximize their impact. As a thought leader, Dr. Long is committed to equipping the next generation with the tools, courage, and spiritual resilience needed to lead with integrity. Whether through board leadership, one-on-one coaching, or group training sessions, he remains passionate about the local church and its capacity to transform lives and communities. Today, he continues to influence lives through strategic guidance, spiritual insight, and a legacy of faithful service rooted in compassion, vision, and hope for what God can do through dedicated servant leaders.



## Melissa Love

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I am Melissa Love. I recently relocated to Bowie, MD, from Wesley Chapel, FL (near Tampa). My husband, Antonio, is a retired USAF veteran. We met and were married in Maryland, where I lived most of my life, so this move feels full circle or like going back home. Together, we have six children, ages 25 to 12. Only the youngest two (the baby girl and the youngest boy) still live at home. We also have three daughters in college, and our oldest son is in the Air Force stationed in Hawaii. He married our first daughter in love this Spring. I love spending time and making memories with family. I also love holidays, decorating, learning new things, and am looking forward to getting into some new hobbies very soon: gardening and woodworking.



Within the past year, I completed a Master's Degree in Biblical and Theological Foundations at Asbury Theological Seminary and a spiritual formation cohort with the School of Formation at New Life Fellowship based out of New York. I first learned about and received Spiritual Direction through the School of Formation. Each session was with a different director who had a different style. I still left each session with more clarity and peace. I also realized that I often unknowingly offered "spiritual direction" in my closest relationships and with people who knew me well enough to trust me with some of the things they were going through. By the conclusion of the spiritual formation cohort, I knew that Spiritual Direction, as a participant and as a director, was something I wanted to pursue more of.

## Lisa Montuori Trimble

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Hello! I'm a life-long New Englander and live with my husband and cat north of Boston, MA. A deep love of nature, animals, music (I study piano - classical and jazz), and gardening enrich my life, along with connections to my faith community, family, and friends.

I'm grateful to have been part of wonderful spiritual communities throughout my life. My faith has been informed by Benedictine, Ignatian, Anglican, African American, and Native American spirituality, the Twelve Steps, Buddhist-Christian contemplative practice, and healing/listening prayer practices. I've completed Education for Ministry, a four year lay ministry formation program through Sewanee School of Theology and the School for the Second Half of Life at the Mercy Center in CT. Currently my husband and I are members of an Episcopal Church where I serve on the vestry (until Jan.), and we lead a small prayer group.



Professionally, I was privileged to accompany individuals during difficult life transitions through work as a nurse specialist in oncology, palliative and hospice care, and later as a public health practitioner. My career encompassed advocacy, social justice, health equity, and transforming systems to deliver effective, equitable, and personalized care for all. More recently, I became a champion for addressing climate change in health care, co-founding a Climate Health Action Partnership in the system where I worked until my retirement two years ago.

Recognizing that deep prayerful listening undergirded my work with patients, communities and the teams I led, and that one of my deep joys has always been to help others grow into their own connection to a Living God, I'm entering this program to discern how to use my gifts and experience in the service of the kingdom of God at this stage of my life. I'm excited and grateful to be on this journey with you!

## Patrick Munyakazi

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My name is Patrick Munyakazi. I am a pastor and mental health advocate who works with churches in Iowa. I have been married to Mamyna for 22 years and we have four kids: David, 21, Daniella, 19, Dashny, 18, and Dashella, 14. God's grace, my ability to get through tough times, and my desire to help others thrive in mind, body, and spirit have all molded my journey from growing up in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Africa) to serving in the United States. The holy privilege of walking alongside individuals as they listen for God's voice, figure out what He wants them to do, and accept the completeness He gives is what drives me to spiritual direction. I think that spiritual direction isn't about providing people solutions; it's about making a safe, grace-filled environment where they can meet Christ and be changed. My heart beats for helping people find their purpose, become closer to God, and live boldly in their faith. I want to help others see their stories as part of God's bigger story, which is full of hope, redemption, and love that can't be shaken. I plan to do this by listening, praying, and being open to new ideas.



## Stefon Napier

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Hello everyone, my name is Stefon Napier and I'm excited to embark on this journey with you all. I am a New Monastic currently living in Wheeling, West Virginia as a part of the Appalachian Order. These last couple of years for I've been in the desert spiritually as I discerned my call, and my place in the church. In part because of my own experiences, recent denominational rifts, the deconstruction movement in America, and the recent establishment of my order, I see the need for spiritual direction becoming more important than ever. Disappointment in religious and spiritual leaders and disappointment with church, has left many to wander alone in that same desert. I simply want to help them navigate it.



## Shereita Neleigh

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I am Sherieta Neleigh, and I live in Texas, just north of San Antonio, though I consider myself from northern New Mexico where I was raised. I'm married and we are active members of Schertz United Methodist Church. I currently serve as a workplace chaplain, but have a background in a variety of roles, but most notably in mental health counseling, hospital and hospice chaplaincy. I love hearing and carrying people's stories and journeying with them in seeking God's grace and presence despite the suffering and hardships that come with living with purpose and growing in faith. When I reflect on the history of my calling and path in ministry, I see many triumphs in living my purpose as chaplain, (and teaching spiritual practices at church), as well as obstacles which have been overcome. Some obstacles such as a pursuit of a full graduate degree in ministry, ordination, are now seen as distractions which fade with time. I seek to pursue what God reveals as the purpose for all I have been given; a passion for life care as well as end of life care; an honoring of entering other's stories to walk through challenges together; and a love for the rich diversity of not only Christian faith, but other walks of faith as well. The ultimate progression of propelling this calling and these gifts has led me to pursue training as a spiritual director.



## Brad Pembleton

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I have a BA in Bible from Dallas Christian College, a ThM from Fuller Theological Seminary, and a DMin in Leadership and Spiritual Formation from Portland Seminary at George Fox University. I work as a pastor and a teacher at a college preparatory high school where I teach Christian Worldview. In my spare time I enjoys golf, visiting MLB baseball stadiums, and spending time with my family. My wife Tanya and I have two grown children, Brant and Camden, and live in Houston, TX. The work of spiritual direction has been life giving over the past several years as it has given space for the Spirit to reveal and work as I become more aware of his presence in my daily life through prayer, silence, meditation and reflection. To deepen and widen my relationship with the triune God through spiritual practices while in community is what draws me to spiritual direction.



## MaryAnn Piccioni

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Hello Everyone! My name is MaryAnn Piccioni. I am an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church. I get to serve as Associate Pastor for Congregational Care at Saint Paul's UMC in Tallahassee, Florida. I am also a PRN chaplain at our local hospital.

I'm drawn to spiritual direction because I believe the wisdom we seek already lives within us—and sometimes all we need is a fellow traveler to help us unearth it. Listening to people's stories reminds me how beautifully diverse our journeys can be, even as we share a common longing for purpose and meaning.

When I'm off duty, you'll often find me with my hands in the dirt. I love watching things grow! I also love being on the water in my kayak. Gliding through the water and listening to the sounds of nature helps clear my mind. I am married to Jim, and we love building and renovating things together. Last, but certainly not least, I have the honor and privilege of being the mom of 5 adult children, "G'Ma" to 3 grandchildren and 3 fur "grandbabies".

I can't wait to learn from everyone's experiences, swap stories, and grow together in this sacred work. Here's to meaningful conversations, unexpected discoveries, and a journey filled with grace and peace!



## Amy Powell

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Hello! My name is Amy Powell, and I live in Janesville, Wisconsin. I've been happily married to my husband, Ron, for 22 years, and we are the proud parents of two college-age sons—Jameson, a senior at UW—Stevens Point, and Leo, a sophomore at UW—La Crosse. Our home is also brightened by Pippin, our energetic two-year-old Dachshund mix who keeps us laughing and active.

For the past three years, I have served as Pastor of Discipleship at Cargill United Methodist Church. In this role, I have the privilege of walking alongside individuals and groups as we explore who God is and how God might be leading them. I'm very excited to be part of this class—not only because I have a personal interest in spiritual direction, but also because I believe it will be a valuable tool in ministry.

When I'm not engaged in full-time ministry or spending time with my family, I enjoy crochet, exploring watercolor painting, and what we call "adventure walks." These are slow, curious strolls on different trails with Pippin, who leads the way with nose to the ground and tail wagging—reminding us to slow down and delight in the beauty around us.

I'm looking forward to hearing your stories and sharing this season of learning together!



## Aurora Rose

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In response to the current fear and anxiety in the world, my heart is urging me to “be the change” by engaging in a one-on-one basis with those who may be struggling or seeking clarity in their walk of faith. I have been sponsoring in a 12-Step program for thirty-six years and have developed the skills of deep listening and being open to messages from the Spirit. I seek to deepen these skills and hone others that will allow me to be of greater service to my fellows. My walk of faith has been a long one that has encompassed my Jewish heritage, Tibetan Buddhism, New Age philosophies and, finally, coming to Christ and being baptized into the Lutheran faith at the age of forty-nine. I am a survivor of an abusive father and of sexual assault. Recovering from the PTSD that resulted from these experiences has given me great compassion for those with similar backgrounds. I have worked as an actor, singer/songwriter/arranger, band leader, paralegal, and Director of Contemporary Worship. The best way I can best characterize my call to be a Spiritual Director comes from the writing of Frederick Buechner: “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”



## Brian Thie

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I am an administratively retired Ordained Elder with the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church. After earning my degree from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio in 1984, I spent 14 years in Information Technology with Elder-Beerman Stores before receiving my call to ministry in April 1998. Over the years, I’ve served rural, suburban, and urban congregations, large and small, including Hyde Park Church in Cincinnati, Oakwood UMC in South Dayton, Farmersville UMC in Farmersville, and an Interim appointment for six months at Amity UMC in Boise, Idaho, a satellite campus for Cathedral of the Rockies.

In 2022, my wife Donna and I moved to Boise to support her daughter’s growing family. We’ve been married eight years and enjoy hiking, travel, dining out, and time with our adult children and grandchildren. I have three children in the Midwest and one granddaughter. I’m passionate about staying active—whether through hiking, biking, swimming, running, yoga, or basketball—and I find joy in writing music and exploring science through reading. In May 2023, I completed a nine-month Ignatian retreat, and in June, joined twelve members of my Boise church for a seven-day pilgrimage along the Spanish coast on the Camino. Since 2018, I’ve been deeply engaged in spiritual direction, a practice that continues to enrich my life and faith.



## Christin Tomy

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My name is Christin Tomy, and I’m a Catholic Sister residing in Chicago, IL. I began my discernment with the Dominican Sisters of Sinsinawa over twelve years ago and I made my perpetual profession in May of 2022. My past ministry experiences have included social work, accompaniment of adults with intellectual disabilities, sustainable agriculture, and hospital chaplaincy. I currently serve as a campus minister at a small liberal arts college. I’m interested in pursuing spiritual direction training because I am increasingly being invited to accompany others (especially my students) on their spiritual journeys. I deeply desire to hone my skills and capacity for this sacred role ... and hopefully deepen my awareness of God’s movement in my own life!

Although professionally and socially I am often in ecumenical and interfaith settings, most of my education and religious formation has been in a Catholic context. Because of this, I am eager to learn alongside companions from differing traditions as a part of the MSD program. I love to be outdoors: I’m an avid runner and I enjoy swimming, hiking, camping, and gardening. I also enjoy cooking for my community mates, choral singing, a glass of wine, and a good book. One of my favorite places to pray is along the shore of Lake Michigan.



## Christina Turner

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I'm a pastor, an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church. I write fiction and spiritual writing, particularly around progressive faith and pilgrim wanderings. I'm also a salty snack enthusiast, a reader, a hiker, a cook, a cross-stitcher, a minister of memes, and a lover of the road. Though I grew up in wild, wonderful West Virginia, I've called North Carolina home for nearly ten years. (Go Duke Blue Devils!) Recently, I've been on a sabbatical (or "grown-up gap year"), walking the Camino de Santiago in Spain, working as a kitchen assistant with the Iona Community on the Isle of Iona in Scotland, studying Spanish in Peru, and working at the museums at Ghost Ranch in New Mexico. I can't wait to be part of the program!



## Julie Wagner

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My name is Julie ("JuJu") Wagner. I've been in this realm for 58 years. I've been married to my partner (Rodney/"Grandpa") in this life space for 37 of those years. We have 5 grand girls and 1 grandboy making life full of wonder and amazement. Life is my greatest 'Teacher' and I'm continuously looking for ways to be the best version of a curious 'Student'. For as far back as I can recall, I've been conversing with the Divine Beloved. I'm thrilled to be invited into the MSD Program as it seems to have the essence of yet another way to go deeper with this sacred conversation. Thank you for the opportunity of walking with each other on this holy path.



## Jennifer Ward

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Hello! My name is Jennifer Ward. I've been a pastor for 11 years and am the proud mom of a 29-year-old daughter, Cecelia, and a 40-year-old stepson, Steven. I also share my home with Jonah, a 106-pound, two-year-old Goldendoodle.

I am a Local Licensed Pastor in the Michigan Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Before entering pastoral ministry, I served the church for over a decade in various roles and maintained a counseling practice within the church for about two years. I hold a graduate degree in Family Counseling as well as a Master of Divinity from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C.

While I chose not to pursue ordination as a full Elder, I remain deeply committed to growing in my care for my congregation and exploring ways I can serve the wider conference. A dear friend who became a Spiritual Director has encouraged me for the past TEN YEARS to pursue that path as well. Though it's hard to put into words, I feel a calling toward it. In a world filled with distractions, I believe cultivating a deeper awareness of God's presence—both personally and in others—is vital, not only for my own spiritual life but also for the well-being of those I serve. I'm excited to embark on this journey and look forward to getting to know all of you.



## Daniel Weick

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Daniel Weick lives in Lower Manhattan with his dog, Juno. As an active member at Trinity Church, he has engaged in a variety of community service, educational, liturgical, and pastoral care ministries, and has recently pursued discernment toward ordination to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church. Receiving spiritual direction has been an important part of Daniel's discernment process, and that experience as well as his interest in spirituality more generally has led him to seek formation as a spiritual director. In addition to the MSD program, Daniel has completed the Community of Hope International program in lay pastoral care skills through the Episcopal Diocese of New York and has completed five of six courses toward an Advanced Certificate in Christian Spirituality from Fordham University. Professionally, Daniel is an antitrust lawyer with Hausfeld LLP specializing in representing plaintiffs in class action cases. He looks forward to learning and growing with this year's MSD cohort.



## Lisa Woodlee

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I grew up in Northeastern Pennsylvania and earned my B.S. in Science Education from Penn State University, where I first discovered my passion for walking alongside others in their faith journeys. For 15 years, I served with The Navigators, investing in both campus and community ministries in Texas, Nebraska, Washington, and California. Through these years of ministry, I've had the privilege of helping people connect with the living God, grow in their love for Him, and discover how to practically live out their faith in their everyday lives.

My heart beats for discipleship—coming alongside others to study God's Word, pray together, and help them grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus. I love creating spaces where people feel safe to ask hard questions, wrestle with truth, and experience the transforming power of God.

I've been married to my best friend, Martin for 14 years, and together we are raising our two children, Andrew and Josiah. As a family, we love creativity, sharing meals with friends, and finding fun ways to make memories together. Eight years ago we moved to Kentucky to be closer to family. Here started a business, Sound Word & Light that helps churches and businesses with their audio, video and lighting.



## Kathy Boyle

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My name is Kathy Boyle. I believe I am being called to work with LGBTQ+ persons who are seeking a deeper relationship with God. I am a member of Christian Life Community (CLC), and I have completed a nine-month Ignatian Spiritual Exercise program. My relationship with Christ deepened profoundly during those nine months. Discernment during the Spiritual Exercises is what brought me to this program. I am now a graduate student at Villanova University, in the Theology and Religious Studies Department. I am in the MA Theology, Chaplaincy Track. I hope to become a hospital chaplain when I graduate.



## Diann Brower

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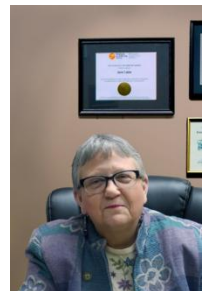
Hi All! My name is Diann Gault and I am 73 years old, a widow of a year and a half. I have 3 children living all over the country but I'm living in Ohio. I have been searching for a deeper understanding and love of my Lord for a while and I have faith that this adventure will begin to show me what I need to grow into my desire. I am looking forward to meeting and learning with you all and developing a spiritual friendship with you. May the Lord guide us all.



## Jane C. Cable

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My name is Jane Cable. I am a Lay Speaker in the UMC and have been in spiritual direction since 2006. Wanting to share this ministry with others, I explored online programs as I do not wish to relocate from my home in western Colorado. To find this one, and to be accepted, is a blessing.



## Claudia Deede

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I have had an ongoing interest in walking with others as they discern the call to deepen their relationship with God. One of the ways that I fulfill my call to walk with others is through my ongoing ministry as an Ordained Elder in the United Methodist Church. In this capacity, I was able to offer insights and starting points for discussion about how God works in each of our lives as we discern the path we are called to travel. My work as a Hospice Chaplain also helped develop a deep sense that our faith journey is never complete and there is always room for discussion and discernment even to our last days in this world. One of my deepest joys is seeing the face of a person who is experiencing an "aha moment" – an epiphany - that indicates they have a clearer idea of how God is at work in their life. I have been "retired" and "serving in retirement" since 2020 and look forward to many more years of self-discovery and accompanying others on their journey to a closer, more meaningful, relationship with God.



## Cheryl Demetros

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Hi! My name is Cheryl Demetros and I live in the Hudson Valley, NY, having moved here directly from the University of Connecticut (Go, Huskies!), where I received a Master's Degree in Speech-Language Pathology in 1982. While at UConn, though, I had received something far more valuable than a mere education; I had essentially experienced a mystical visitation from Jesus, which challenged the Jewish upbringing I had received growing up on my parents' farm.



After college, having dedicated our lives to Christ, my fiancé and I moved to NY to start our careers, and unexpectedly heard from friends about the baptism in the Holy Spirit, which we received with great amazement. We soon became involved in leadership at our local non-denominational church, and although we continued at our secular jobs (my husband George as a software engineer and me as an SLP), we both felt a passion to help others experience the reality and love of God.

Along the way, we successfully raised seven children, including one who became a medical doctor, two engineers, a pastor, a special ed teacher, a fantastic dental hygienist, and a business/finance girl; the latter is the only one who moved out of our area, having heard the Sirens call from the climate in Florida. We're also blessed with 3 to 6 grandchildren (a few are on their way as I'm writing this).

We both are transitioning into retirement from our secular jobs and having recently heard about the ministry of spiritual direction, the thought of training in this field became enticing to me; and when I asked for thoughts from my husband, my pastor, our children, and my friends, I was humbled by their unanimous support. So here I am, hoping to becoming better equipped to help others in this fantastic walk we call faith.

## Elizabeth Green

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My name is Rev. Elizabeth Green (D.Min). I am a Canadian Anglican (Episcopal) priest who has been serving God's people in parish ministry since 2004. In 2015, I graduated with a Doctorate of Ministry that I completed through United Theological Seminary (UTS) in Dayton Ohio. The focus of my work explored the ways in which oral, print and digital media communications impact the meaning of worship for Anglicans (Episcopalians). My professor and mentor for the D.Min program was the Rev. Thomas Boomershine, Founder of the International Network of Biblical Storytellers. Learning, internalizing and telling Scripture by Heart is both a passion and speciality within my work and ministry. I am now serving as the Incumbent priest for the Anglican Church of the Epiphany in Sudbury Ontario Canada. I learned about the MSD Program through UTS as well as through my own spiritual director. I am drawn to the MSD program for three main reasons: 1) To learn and to grow in my pastoral and spiritual care ministry. 2) To meet new people and to network with others who are called to the MSD program. 3) To pray and discern where and how God may be calling me to a new role in ministry. I am eagerly looking forward to gathering online with everyone in September.



## Sherry Johnson

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My name is Sherry Johnson. I am a church girl formed through Sunday School, sermons, and spirituals at St. John African Methodist Episcopal Church in Hammond, Indiana. In my twenties I married and moved to rural Edwards, Mississippi. At first I didn't understand the call to ministry I heard in the United Methodist Church since I had no affinity or gift for preaching. My call became clear when I read Celebration of Discipline as part of my candidacy. After reading Richard Foster I could name the ministry God had appointed me to—Christian faith formation. I have been pursuing that calling ever since through formal and informal study and practicing what I have learned in formal and informal settings. I was ordained a deacon in the UMC almost three decades ago and wove spiritual formation and spiritual practice into each of my appointments. I am widowed now, and I live in a suburban college town, Clinton, Mississippi. My four sons are grown, and they've gifted me with three daughters-in-law, five grandsons, and one granddaughter. As a retiree, I realize that appointments may end but calling doesn't. In this season of my life, I feel called to pursue my passion for Christian faith formation by studying and practicing spiritual direction.



## **Nina Johnson-Wright**

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My name is Nina Johnson-Wright from Clayton, Delaware. I have served as a pastor for the past ten years in Maryland and Delaware. I am studying towards a Master of Divinity having attended Palmer and Lancaster Theological Seminaries. I also hold a Master Degree of Public Administration from The Ohio State University, '89. My career experience involves working in mental health and human services, education, and the local church. I am married to Arthur Wright, and we are blessed with a blended family of two sons and two daughters. I want to train in spiritual direction to support those who are on their own spiritual journey. I want to help others discover how God through the Holy Spirit, is working in and through our lives. It is a passion of mine to walk close with those who are looking to deepen their relationship with God.



## **Pamela Kavanaugh**

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My name is Pamela Kavanaugh. I am a practicing Catholic and a retired register nurse with a specialty in diabetes education. In that work I had the opportunity to engage with patients at a more personal level as they struggled to make lifestyle changes in managing a chronic condition. At times patients would confide in me other difficult or painful situations they were encountering. I would have liked to explore spirituality with those patients when I sensed there was an openness to it, but it would have been inappropriate in a federally funded clinic where I was working. These experiences were factors in leading me to seek further growth in my own spirituality. I have been guided by a spiritual director for about 10 years. Also I have been participating in a program called Gestalt Pastoral Care (GPC) which focuses on body work as part of an inner healing process. Now in my parish I teach citizenship classes and English classes to immigrants. In that population I see a need for healing from trauma. My hope is to develop a pastoral foundation for the GPC ministry I would like to provide. I look forward to joining a group of other spiritual seekers as we learn and grow together. I am grateful for acceptance into the MSD program.



## **Jacqueline Lynch**

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My name is Jacqueline Lynch (affectionately known as Rev. Jackie, Jackie, Chap, Chappy or Chaplain Jackie) I am a Pediatric Chaplain at a facility for medically fragile children. I have a MSW degree, MDiv and Dmin degrees. My DMin degree was obtained at United Theological Seminary. I am a mother of three adult children, a grandmother and great-grandmother. I am an Itinerant Elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. I am currently serving as a Pastor at Mt. Olive AME Church. My interest in being trained as a Spiritual Director is due to a long desire to be a Spiritual Director. This has always been a desire of mine to receive Spiritual Direction and was unable to find someone. However, as a Pastor and Social Worker, I am often in a position where others are seeking "Spiritual Direction" from me. Pursuing this program will provide me with the necessary tools to meet the needs of those who seek direction.



## Kyle McCain

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My name is Kyle McCain, and I live in Charlotte, North Carolina with my wife of almost 42 years, Jil. Charlotte became home for us in 1996 after a series of relocations across the Southeast United States during the first 15 years of our life together. My career as a sales representative in the institutional chemical industry offered growth and exciting times in a variety of places. After staying close to home in the Florida Panhandle and South Alabama for the first part of my life, we found relocation and work-related travel to be an eye opening season of spiritual growth and exciting adventures.



Jil and I have three adult children, two girls and one boy, and three grandchildren, also two girls and one boy. All live nearby in North Carolina.

I am a second-career pastor serving the United Methodist Church. After a time of being bi-vocational, I am blessed to be appointed full-time to the congregation who helped form me and encouraged my call. I attended Candler School of Theology at Emory University for my United Methodist Course of Study work, which was completed in 2023.

Long before hearing my call to vocational ministry, I entered the world of caring ministry through Stephen Ministry training. Serving as a Stephen minister helped me see the spiritual gifts lying within me for this kind of work. Sitting with people in their time of need has made my own walk with God richer. Continuing that work in the pastoral context blesses me more and more every time. I look forward to developing the skills of spiritual direction in the context of deeply rich Christian community for the work God has ahead of us.

## Colleen Moscov

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I experienced my first call to ministry at 10 years old. Following a spiritually moving week at summer camp, my mother came to pick me up with the camp director who asked me to show him my favorite place on campus. I took them to the outdoor chapel. The camp director told me that a tragedy had occurred at home that week that left me confused and angry with God. I ignored the call I had felt and shut God out. I became a young adult addicted to substances. In 2020, I was tired of trying to make it on my own, and I visited a church. I was hesitant to open myself back up to God. I was invited back to that same camp for a women's retreat. It was there that I felt God's presence again. It was like experiencing a holy hug, the most beautiful feeling that I have ever felt. God never left my side, through all those years, I can look back now and see where God was keeping me safe.



By God's holy and healing power, I have 2 years and 10 months clean from substances. I have spent this time deepening my relationship with our Creator. I am currently a student at Liberty University's Master of Education in School Counseling program. I have also been consecrated a Deaconess with the United Methodist Church. Now it is time to focus on the Ministry of Spiritual Direction.

Favorite scripture: Philippians 4:6 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (NIV, 2011).

## Heather Niemas

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My name is Heather Niemas. I just turned 50 this past year. I have been an educator in high school and one year in middle school teaching different science classes. I have also been an athletic trainer. I have two boys, Lucas and Cole. Lucas is a senior in high school (17) and Cole is in 8th grade (13). I am a single mom. I have been searching for my calling. Along with this comes finding my passion and purpose. I have been through some struggles in life (along with everyone else), and I want to give back. I would like to provide a safe space for others to be seen, heard, and known.



## Sydney Powell

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Hello! My name is Sydney Powell. I look forward to meeting all of you and embarking on this journey for spiritual formation and for learning so much more about the art and practice of spiritual direction. What draws me to spiritual direction? Wow - I guess I just feel honored and humbled to stop, to get quiet and to marvel in awe and wonder at what God is doing. Spiritual direction is a beautiful reminder of the Holy in the Every Day, and oh how my heart swells when I see someone reconnect to God, to self, to living.... A brief introduction - I am a Vanderbilt Divinity School graduate with an M. Div. I have been a minister of Christian Education in the United Methodist Church, but now serve in Christian Education as a heavily active volunteer at Kent Millard's former church in Indianapolis, St. Luke's UMC.



I love log cabins in the woods in the fall and thick fuzzy blankets even in the summer when I kick back on my recliner with a lap full of shih-tzus. I'll always take time for poetry. I love snow and never get enough of it in Indiana. I'm a gal who grew up in Texas and am all about peanuts in my coke! My husband and I have two grown kids - one wedding down and another tbd!

Three cheers to starting this spiritual journey together. We will learn to listen, to commune together and how to just give thanks. Lovely. See you soon!

## Alyssa Ruch

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Alyssa Ruch is drawn to the companionship offered through spiritual direction and the ways she can journey alongside others as they discern God's presence, respond to the invitations of the Holy Spirit, and find wholeness – healing and love – for their entire being inside and out.



## Julie Teo

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I am Julie, a mother of two daughters with a recent addition of a furbaby! I have been regularly attending Silent retreats since my 30s together with my husband, Reverend Edwin Tan, who has been an Anglican Priest for the past 20 years. He is currently completing his Doctorate Ministry in Spiritual Formation and Soul Care at Biola University.

Through getting some exposure in the area, I became very interested and chanced upon this MSD course. I believe it's by divine appointment as God knows both my desires and obstacles! I have been listening regularly to Soul Care and SD podcasts and that further piqued my desire to pursue SD. I am also enriched in personal and emotional awareness when I lead in small groups based on Ruth Haley Barton and Peter Scazzero's books to journey and accompany those interested in the practices together.

Over the years I have sat with different SDs and am greatly blessed by their presence and continue to seek God together in my silence and solitude. In my ministry, I am often sought out for prayers and advice. As such, I started to ponder if I was giving advice only depending on my natural giftings and abilities. While I know this is helpful, I aspire to give more and learn to wait for guidance from the Holy Spirit. I aim to practice being present with both God and people, hoping to learn from everyone here.



## Christina Vasquez

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Hello, my name is Chris (Christina) Vasquez. I'm from Chicago, IL and currently reside in southwest Florida. I have a colorful religious upbringing and formation, but have found a home in the Episcopal church. I'm a wife, mother, nurse and musician who has a passion for spiritual formation. In many ways and for many reasons, I have found myself walking alongside others who are journeying. It doesn't seem to matter what context I'm in, nurse, mother, formation leader or musician, there's a consistency of walking alongside others in my communities. The pastoral nature of this program really excites me as does the prospect of learning new skills, training, practice and nurturing this gift of walking with others. I'm grateful for this opportunity.



## Joan Alexander

*Faculty Presenter*

Joan (she/her) is a Spiritual Director and Supervisor who lives in Canada. Her training in spiritual direction began at The Haden Institute. She has an active spiritual direction and supervision practice with clients in Canada, the USA and the UK. As a member of Spiritual Directors International's Board of Directors (2024-2027), Joan is passionate about spiritual direction and the ways deep listening heals our hurting world.

Joan became a supervision educator purely by synchronicity. Her belief in the benefits of supervision for all spiritual directors, brought her to a training course offered by Spiritual Directors International. The facilitator of this course, Lucy Abbott Tucker, has become Joan's mentor and teacher. Now Joan offers accessible and affordable virtual supervision workshops based on these teachings (resource: Spiritual Direction Supervision: Principals, Practices; Storytelling).

Married to Barr and with two adult sons, Joan identifies as a member of the (2S)LGBTQ+ community. She facilitates educational opportunities on queer allyship. Joan also presents on Spiritual Trauma (SDI ENGAGE 2022), Dreams – What They Mean, and The Labyrinth – Walking Your Path.

More about Joan may be found here: <https://www.joanalexanderspiritualdirector.com/>



## Laura Baber

*Faculty Presenter, Program Consultant*

Laura received her M.Div. from Asbury Theological Seminary, Wilmore, Kentucky; a B.A in English Literature from Randolph-Macon Woman's College, and completed the Ministry of Spiritual Direction Program through the Center for Spiritual Formation in 1999. She has worked full time vocationally as a spiritual director since 2007. Laura is a Deacon in the United Methodist Church and offers pastoral care at St. Mark's United Methodist Church in Ocala, Florida where she lives with her husband John Esbenshade. Laura currently serves as the board president of The Center for Spiritual Direction.



## Lisa Beckman

*MSD Facilitator*

I'm Lisa Beckman and I live in Signal Mountain, TN near Chattanooga. I share my home with my golden retriever, Jax. Although I have lived in Chattanooga since 2017, I am relatively new to the Signal Mountain area. I serve Signal Crest UMC as a Certified Lay Minister in Faith Formation, having my Certification in Spiritual Formation. It is from my coursework in spiritual formation that I enrolled in MSD, whose journey enriched my relationship with God. I hope to emerge on a path to help others grow in their authentic relationship with God. I look forward to meeting everyone as we build a new community.



## **Michelle Bodle**

*Faculty Presenter*

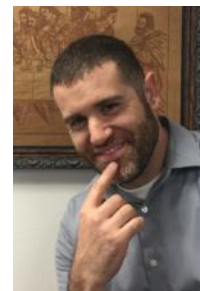
Michelle Bodle is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church and currently serves as a Conference Superintendent in the Susquehanna Conference. She runs Abide in the Spirit, a ministry focused on creating sacred spaces for holy listening through spiritual diction, supervision for spiritual directors, and particular seasons of need, such as grief. She graduated in 2023 from Fordham with the Advanced Certificate in the Supervision of Spiritual Directors, where her capstone project explored making meaning in grief and spiritual direction. She graduated in 2022 with her DMin from Wesley Theological Seminary in Church Leadership, where her project paper focused on the impact of group spiritual direction on young clergywomen. She additionally holds a certification in Spiritual Formation from Drew Theological School (2012), an MDiv from Drew Theological School (2011), and a BA from Houghton College (2007). Her Spiritual Direction Training was through the Center for Spiritual Formation.



## **Greg Favazza**

*Faculty Partner*

I am a husband, father of three children, and serve as a priest in the Episcopal Church. I believe that one of the greatest gifts you can give to another human being is to listen to them, especially in a world where everyone is waiting their turn to speak. Listening deeply to another is to love them deeply and to incarnate the listening presence of Jesus. This is a major part of the work of spiritual direction and why I am drawn to it. I also have a heart for pastoral leaders, coming alongside them for spiritual care and companionship in a vocation that is often difficult, tiresome, and lonely. I seek to care for those who care and serve those who serve.



## **Ashleigh Gonzalez**

*Supervision Coordinator*

I live with my spouse and 4 cats in Winter Garden, FL. I love good food, good coffee, and books. I believe deeply that creating intentional space for people to come and rest and be nourished by God with a sacred companion is one of the deepest gift that we can offer another. The movement of the Holy Spirit within the context of Spiritual Direction has changed my life and deeply healed my soul. It has shaped/reshaped the lenses by which I view God, myself, and others and is the reason that I feel so deeply drawn and called to this way of life and journeying with others.



## Deb Gregory

*Faculty Presenter*

Deborah Gregory is a spiritual director specializing in Ignatian spirituality, the author of *Spiritual Wayfinding: 33 Walking Meditations for Navigating Life with Embodied Wisdom*, and the host of *The Betwixt Podcast*. Her holistic approach to Christian formation bridges ancient wisdom and modern neuroscience. Drawing from her experience in a neurodiverse family, she champions inclusive spirituality and supports those navigating a neurotypical world. Deborah enjoys leading retreats, training spiritual directors, and exploring nature in Central Florida, where she lives with her husband and two daughters.

## Russell Hart

*Director Emeritus, Faculty Presenter*

Russell has been a ministerial member of the Susquehanna Conference of the United Methodist Church for over fifty years, having served parishes in Three Springs, Altoona, Harrisburg and Red Lion, PA. In 1995 he became Center Director of The Center for Spiritual Formation, retiring in 2017.

He received a PhB from the University of North Dakota in 1966, an MDiv from Wesley Theological Seminary in 1970, and a DMin from United Theological Seminary in 1979. In 1984 he received a call to become an iconographer and in 1991 received instruction at l'Ecole Russe de St. Georges in Meudon, France.

His publications include *The Icon Through Western Eyes* (1990, Templegate Publications), *Crossing The Border: An Introduction To The Practice of Christian Mysticism* (1993, Templegate Publications), *Communing With The Saints* (1994, Templegate Publications), *Reclaiming Your Calling; A Guide For Managers In The Health & Human Service Field*, (2012, an Open Minds Publications), *The Upper Room Dictionary of Christian Spiritual Formation* (2003, Upper Room Books, contributor) and *A Guide To Prayer For All Who Seek God* (2003, Upper Room Books, contributor).

In 2019, Russell received the Bishop D. Frederick Wertz Award for Outstanding Service to the Church. As Center Director Emeritus, Russell continues his ministry as a retreat leader and presenter with the Center's on-line Ministry of Spiritual Direction Program.



## Kathy Harvey Nelson

*Director Emeritus, Faculty Presenter*

Kathy completed the MSD program of the Center for Spiritual Formation in 2006. She came to the program because she was spiritually depleted after a year of pastoral ministry; she knew that something was missing from her faith walk, which turned out to be a deep, intentional, non-negotiable, personal, committed relationship with God! She was so busy "doing things for God" as a pastor that she forgot how important it is to just "be with God." Her entire understanding of God and who she is in God changed, and she never has regretted a moment of the time that she's "wasted" spending time with God instead of busily rushing through life!

Kathy graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary (MDiv, 2003; DMin, 2019) and currently is the Coordinator of the Ministerial Studies program for which she teaches a six-week section on Spiritual Formation. In addition, she facilitates classes for the PATHWAYS program of the Southern Conference of the UCC. She has served two congregations over the years, served as the Director of Continuing Education at Lancaster Theological Seminary and Director of Continuing Education at Lancaster Theological Seminary. Kathy served four years as the Director of The Center for Spiritual Formation, retiring in 2021. She currently engages an active Spiritual Direction practice. Her life is blessed by husband, Hill, who is a Professor of Art History with Penn State, York and with whom she has written a children's book: *Eva, the Perfect Little Puppy*. They have two adult children; a turtle, kitty, and one very spoiled pup named Starr.



## **Deborah Heisley-Cato**

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*Faculty Presenter*

Deborah grew up in Pennsylvania and attended Clarion State College (now Clarion University). She holds a Master of Divinity degree from Lancaster Theological Seminary in Lancaster PA, and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington DC. She has served as pastor of churches in Central Pennsylvania and Northern New York as well as serving as District Superintendent of the Harrisburg District in Pennsylvania. She retired as Lead Pastor of Fishing Creek Salem United Methodist Church in Etters Pa in 2019. She has served on the Board of the Center for Spiritual Formation since its founding. She has graduated from the Ministry of Spiritual Direction and currently provides Spiritual Direction, accepts invitations to do guest preaching, and enjoys providing childcare for her 3 year old grandson. Deborah is married to Randall and the mother of adult children Forrest and Joanna.



## **Charles “Chuck” Kaufmann**

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*MSD Program Administrator*

Originally from Northeast PA, Chuck attended Lycoming College in Williamsport, PA, where he earned degrees in Music and Religion. His first job was as organist at his home church at the age of 14, and he has played every Sunday morning since then. After a few years in the corporate world, he has been in full time ministry for the last 30+ years, serving in worship arts, Christian education, and administrative roles. The goal of his ministry is to provide opportunities and administrative support for church members as they develop and use their skills and talents in the life and ministry of the church. Chuck serves on the Board of Directors for Family Promise of the Harrisburg Capital Region and also Christian Churches United of the Tri-County Area. After completing the MSD program with the Center of Spiritual Formation, he has discovered a passion for group direction and exploring new ways to include spiritual direction in the life and ministry of the local church.



## **Melissa Madara**

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*MSD Facilitator*

Melissa is a United Methodist Deacon and serves as the founder and director of Sacred SoulScapes, a ministry that weaves together attention to the natural world, the physical body, and the spirit of God within, through spiritual direction, yoga, and hiking/outdoor ministry. Melissa holds a bachelor's degree in Music and Religion from McMurry University (2004) and an M.Div. from Duke (2007). She received her 200-hour yoga instructor certification from Holy Yoga (2018) with specialty certifications in senior/adaptive yoga, kids' yoga, trauma-sensitive yoga, and yin/restorative yoga, and completed the Ministry of Spiritual Direction program in 2022. She currently lives in central Pennsylvania with her husband, two children, and two cats.



## **David Mellott**

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*Faculty Presenter*

Dr. David Mellott became the seventh President of Christian Theological Seminary in 2019. Prior to this position he was Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Lancaster Theological Seminary, where he had been a member of the faculty since June 2005. He has taught in masters' and doctoral programs, including courses in pastoral ministry, queer theology, sacramentology, worship, Roman Catholicism, philosophy, and spiritual formation. Dr. Mellott is also a spiritual director and retreat director. He has led retreats throughout the United States and in Central Europe. Prior to his doctoral studies, Dr. Mellott was a residential faculty member and coordinator of worship at St. Mary's Seminary & University in Baltimore, MD from 1994-1997. Originally ordained a Roman Catholic priest in 1992, Dr. Mellott is now ordained in the United Church of Christ. His husband is the Rev. Lance Mullins, who is also ordained in the United Church of Christ.



## **Kathy Milans**

*Faculty Presenter*

Kathy Milans is a KY Licensed Pastoral Counselor, Spiritual Director, and host at Sanctuary Cabin. She lives on the Kentucky River in Wilmore, KY with her husband, Steve, Ellie the black lab, Penny the Comfort Retriever, and Zoe the Greyhound. When not serving in a professional capacity, Kathy can be found kayaking, weaving wall tapestries, creating alcohol ink tile coasters, gardening, or reading. As an older seasoned woman, she "gets" Psalm 16:11, "You make known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand." As a spiritual director she finds great joy in accompanying others on their path of life.



## **Kimberly Preske**

*Faculty Presenter*

Kim blends her personal experiences as a 20+ year school shooting survivor with her professional training as a biologist, social worker and spiritual director. In 2008, she completed the Center for Spiritual Formation's Ministry for Spiritual Direction. Soon after the start of the pandemic, Kim served on the Pennsylvania Office of the Governor Office of Advocacy and Reform Trauma-Informed PA Think Tank. The members worked together to create the Trauma-Informed PA Plan which is now being implemented through HEAL PA.

Kim currently provides mental health therapy in an outpatient setting. She believes in the innate worth and value of all individuals and that grace and mercy can lead to healing.



## **Rhonda Strouse**

*Center Director, Faculty Presenter*

Rhonda is privileged to serve as the Executive Director for the Center for Spiritual Formation Committed to raising up others be successful in their personal life and work adventures, Rhonda is in her "second act" as she combines her multiple passions in leadership development and spiritual direction. Rhonda's active interest in pursuing spiritual direction began in 2016, eventually culminating in her completing the MSD program in 2019 through the Center for Spiritual Formation. Rhonda also serves as Chief Operations Officer for Centenary Church (Lexington, KY). She is a partner with Wiley Publishing, working with leadership assessment emphasizing succession planning and talent management along with leadership coaching, facilitation, and team development initiatives.



Prior to her "second act" career life, Rhonda had a long professional career in higher education where she served as an executive administrator and instructor in leadership and student development, leading a broad portfolio of student engagement programs and staff teams. She earned her master's degree in Adult and Higher Education with an emphasis in Counseling from Morehead State University (KY) and has served and led with many leadership special projects, professional and community boards, and committees. Rhonda enjoys spending concerted time toward writing, speaking, and partnering with others to develop those around her to meet with personal and professional success. Rhonda invites you to walk together in exploring and knowing the presence of God.