

Spiritual Accompaniment – Beginning the journey together



'A person without a soul friend (Anam cara) is like a body without a head.' Brigid of Kildare 'Soul' in the biblical sense means the whole person - mind, body and spirit. This Celtic idea of a soul friend can be found all throughout the Bible, from Moses and Joshua, David and Jonathan, to Jesus and his disciples. It is also seen in Christian traditions throughout the ages: Celts, Desert Fathers, Ignatian, Anglican, Carmelite and Benedictine, to name but a few.

A longing for Spiritual Accompaniment usually comes out of a person's desire to grow deeper in their walk with God. Although accompaniment is centred on prayer, you do not need to be a great prayer to begin! Accompaniment is often first experienced on a guided retreat or at a retreat centre.

What is Spiritual Accompaniment?

'Spiritual Direction is the art of helping another person pay attention to God in their life, in detail and not in generalities.' Eugene Peterson

Christian Spiritual Accompaniment (also known as Spiritual Direction) is the prayerful ministry by which one Christian accompanies another on a regular basis, seeking to look and listen together for where God at work. The image of Emmaus Road is helpful, the two of us walking and talking together about life, and Jesus walking with us.

The purpose of a spiritual accompaniment is to enable a person to discern God in their lives for themselves. Helping a person to reflect on all areas of life, it is not just limited to 'religious' topics or for just when you hit 'problems.'

The choice of companion for the spiritual journey ahead of you is an important and deeply personal one that you should make carefully. Take time finding the right person for you.

What should I look for in a Spiritual Accompanier?

A Christian Spiritual Accompanier is a trained individual, ordained or lay, who has discerned with others that she or he has a ministry of holy listening and empathy. The spiritual accompanier does not lead or decide for another (despite any confusion implied in the use of the word *direction*), but instead seeks to be balanced and unbiased when accompanying a person, so that they can prayerfully to make their own decisions.

Christian Spiritual Accompaniers are people of prayer and integrity who are self-aware, conscious of their own relationship with God and engaging in their own ongoing personal

spiritual formation. They have a love for Scripture and spiritual practices. Their love for God and personal experience of the love of God will enrich their care for others as they listen with empathy.

They offer a sacred and safe space to help the other person deepen their personal awareness of themselves, God and others in all areas of life, and in discovering the will of God. Conversations are guided by the Holy Spirit, as they come alongside another. Accompaniers minister out of an awareness of their own humanity and fragility, and a consciousness that we all stand in need of God's love and forgiveness.

You might find Spiritual Accompaniment helpful if:-

- You desire a deeper intimacy with God
- You desire to broaden your prayer experience
- You are in the process of transition or decision making
- You find that your experience of faith and understanding of your faith is changing

A little about me:

Trained in the Ignatian Tradition, at the Ignatian Spirituality Centre, Glasgow (ISC). As an Associate of ISC, I follow the centre's Code of Practice (details can be provided). This code requires my ongoing supervision, training in the practice of Accompaniment, and that I also meet with my own Spiritual Director.



I am English but now live in Northern Ireland. My faith background is Protestant, Evangelical and Charismatic. I run a prayer ministry called My Father's House, teaching on prayer, offering accompaniment and leading retreats. I love working cross-community, meeting people from all church backgrounds or none. I'm passionate about unity in the Church and believe every Christian tradition has gifts to share if we take the time to talk and listen together. For more information on my ministry see www.myfathershouse.co.uk

This is not 'prayer ministry' and I am not a counsellor, psychotherapist or mentor, so if I feel that is something you would benefit more from than Accompaniment at any stage, I will recommend this to you.

All sessions are treated in strictest confidentiality, with the exception of two areas;
1) Any child or at risk adult abuse that is disclosed, I am legally bound to report for safeguarding. This would always be discussed with you first. But if you don't want it reported, please don't share it.
2) Supervision, which I have to undertake to keep me accountable. However, the anonymity of all my Accompaniees are safeguarded during this process.

Practicalities:

- We will meet once a month, for about 1 hour by prior arrangement
- We will review how things are going after our first 4 sessions and then annually thereafter. Reviews are an important and honest two-way process to help both parties find the right fit.
- I prefer to meet in person in the Sandel Centre, Coleraine, but if that is not possible, alternative options can be discussed, including online video chats.
- This is primarily a listening ministry, reflecting back and unpacking what you say to help you grow in your relationship with God.
- At times it will include moments of prayer and stillness; I may encourage you to consider a Scripture or a specific prayer tool as appropriate for your growth and journey.
- Remuneration is by donation only;
 - If your connection with me came via the ISC (Ignatian Spirituality Centre in Glasgow), they suggest a donation of £30 per session to ISC and they will contact you regarding this. There is also bursary funding available through ICS if you are not earning or are on a low wage.
 - If you are coming to me independently, there is no suggested donation for the session. Please accept this as a gift and ministry from the Lord. If, after prayerful thought, you feel you would like to make a donation towards my ongoing supervision and training, that would be welcome. (Helen Hunter trading as My Father's House, Monzo Business Account - Ac No. 08002970, Sort Code: 04-00-03)
- Contact: Phone 07714101596 or email myfathershouse.coleraine@gmail.com

First meeting and beyond:

Our first meeting will be exploratory and a chance for us to get to know each other. Ask any questions you may have. Discuss what you hope for and expect. Do say honestly what you think and feel about your meetings as we journey together.

Bring something to discuss that is currently affecting your life. It could be spiritual, but it could also be about practical or relational issues. You will find our meetings most fruitful if you prepare a little for them and bring an idea of what you want to talk about. You might find it helpful to keep a journal. A couple of questions to help you begin:

- What has been going on in your life recently?
- How have you been feeling? What have your prevailing moods been?
- Have there been any moments when you have been particularly aware of God's presence in your life?

Blessings, let our journey begin!

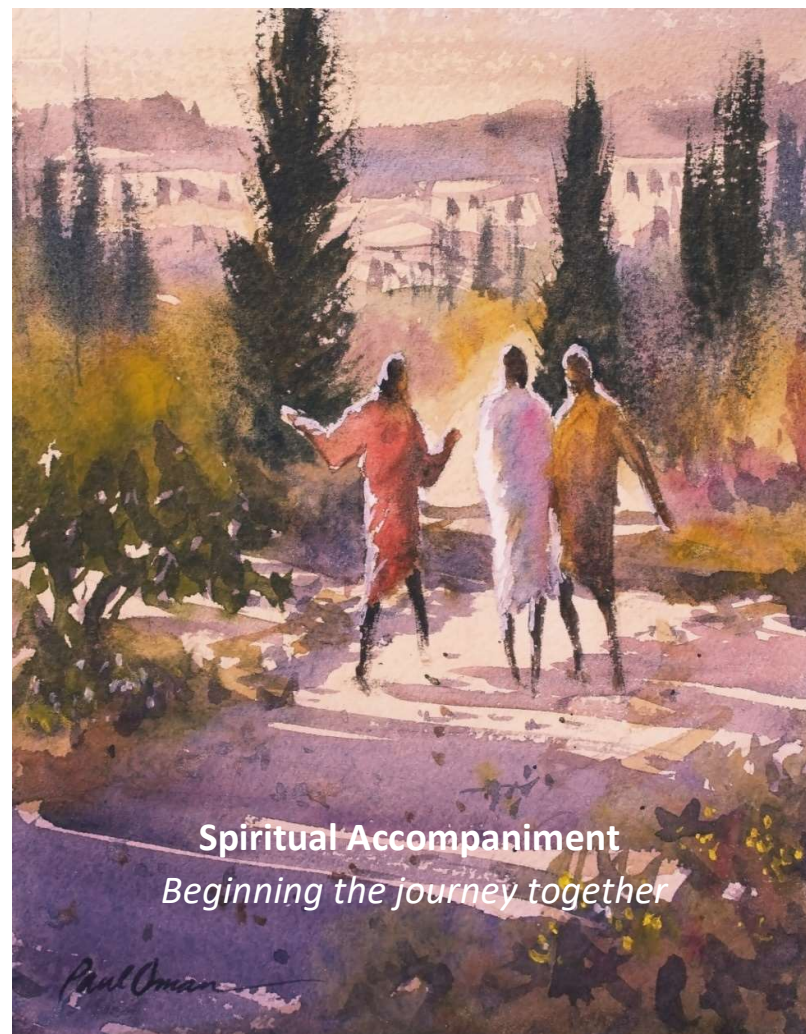


Image: Road to Emmaus- Paul Oman ©paulomanfineart.com