

# Listen

APRIL 2017 VOLUME 11 ISSUE 2

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

“That which we call spiritual direction by any other name would smell as sweet.”

Or would it?

Shakespeare's famous phrase, slightly adapted here, pointed adroitly to the limits of language. The “finger pointing to the moon” is not the same as the moon itself after all.

So, what of “spiritual direction?” Is it the same by any other name?

The term “spiritual director” has many associations and a long history in the Abrahamic faiths traditions, where it has been closely associated with certain strands of Judaism, with spiritual directors referred to as “*Hashpa'ah*” or “*Mashpai'h*,” depending on the strand; Christian and, much later, in particular Ignatian spirituality; and in the Islamic Sufi path, where the spiritual director is known as a “*Murshid*.” But even within these traditions there is great (and

increasing) variability in how the terms are used, defined, and contextualized. The common approach that they share is that in all of them, the spiritual director looks to engage with seekers in an open and non-judgmental way, steeped in contemplative practice and deep listening, to provide guidance and enable seekers to get closer to God.

In Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism and Vajrayana Buddhism, spiritual teachers or guides are referred to as “gurus,” or their equivalent. In Sanskrit, “Guru” means “weighty or grave,” with the connotation of “elder teacher,” or “esteemed teacher.” But the long story of that term contains overtones of someone who removes spaces and obstacles that may lie between us and our spiritual evolution. Gurus can develop highly personalized relationships with seekers, with a dynamic that is distinct to each teacher but that is deep and all pervasive.

In most strands of Buddhism, it is more

common to refer to spiritual “friends,” rather than to “directors,” “guides,” or even “teachers.” These friends encourage and allow us to evolve, such that the Buddha was reported to have said that spiritual friendship is the sum total of the spiritual life (in the Meghiya Sutta of the Pali Canon). Spiritual friends help seekers by allowing intimacy; virtuous conduct; dialogue which facilitates and encourages practice; determination, dedication, and enthusiasm for the good; and awareness of impermanence. Spiritual friends, therefore, are the most important key in the spiritual path.

Other examples include followers of Indigenous religions, who usually work with Shamans, or Taoists and Confucians, who learn how to connect with their true natures through wise and learned teachers.

Finally, a significant portion of the over 1.1 billion people worldwide that the Pew Research Center refers to as

## WHAT'S IN A NAME? continued

“unaffiliated,” many of whom describe themselves as “spiritual but not religious,” seek connection with a higher power and a larger meaning in variety of ways: for example, by working with philosophy teachers as their guides, or through their work with psychologists, and other types of counselors.

Given all of this, how are we to approach the issue of who qualifies as a “spiritual director/guide/teacher/friend/counselor/advisor?”

Here are some ideas.

First, spiritual direction should be an inclusive, rather than an exclusive concept. It should always strive to welcome and invite, rather than to separate and divide, which it does on occasion, often unwittingly.

Second, at their roots, spiritual directors are individuals committed to helping others seek and find connection with a higher power,

however that power might be defined. This characteristic always holds true, regardless of the particular spiritual configuration or orientation of the directors and seekers.

At a recent retreat I had with the SDI Coordinating Council, we identified some other key factors to look for in authentic spiritual directors, namely that they be:

- rooted in personal experience, and display “depth.”
- willing to follow universal ethical guidelines, summarized as “Do no harm.”
- accountable in a community setting.
- committed to contemplative, compassionate listening, with respect for the agency of directees.
- supervised by other spiritual directors and accountable through that direct supervision.
- committed to ongoing education and learning.

What do you think? What characteristics do you see as essential in a spiritual guide? As SDI strives to broaden its spiritual director public square, your thoughts are most encouraged and welcome.

Please send them to us at [listen@sdiworld.org](mailto:listen@sdiworld.org) and we will publish a sample in our next edition. ✨

—Anil Singh-Molares



**May 28 – June 2, 2017**  
Kanuga Conference Center • NC BlueRidge Mountains

# Summer Dream & Spirituality CONFERENCE

**25+ WORKSHOPS, 4 DREAM GROUPS & 10 PRESENTATIONS**

**Michael Higgins** – "Thomas Merton and Henri Nouwen: Wise Hounds of Heaven"


**Brian McClaren** – "Tending the Fire of Love in a Dangerous Time"

**THE UNQUIET MONK**  
MICHAEL HIGGINS'S SPIRITUAL JOURNALS

**A NEW KIND OF CHRISTIANITY**  
BRIAN D. MCCLAREN

**THE HADEN INSTITUTE**

To Register:  
[www.HadenInstitute.com](http://www.HadenInstitute.com)



**PUBLISHER:** Spiritual Directors International  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND EDITOR:** Anil Singh-Molares, MTS  
**PRODUCTION SUPERVISOR:** Tobias Becker  
**SUBMISSIONS:** [listen@sdiworld.org](mailto:listen@sdiworld.org)  
**ADVERTISING:** [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org)

*Listen* is published four times a year (January, April, July, October). The names **Spiritual Directors International™**, **SDIWorld™**, and **SDI™** and its logo are trademarks of Spiritual Directors International, Inc., all rights reserved. Opinions and programs represented in this publication are of the authors and advertisers and may not represent the opinions of Spiritual Directors International, the Coordinating Council, or the editors.

DO YOU HAVE A  
FAVORITE BOOK,  
SONG, PERSON,  
OR COMMUNITY  
THAT CONNECTS  
YOU WITH YOUR  
FAITH AND  
SPIRITUALITY,  
OR THE MYSTERY  
SOME NAME GOD?



# Field Notes

SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS RESPOND:

**In response to the following question:**

“When you have experienced deeply meaningful community with other spiritual directors, what characteristics of the community made it valuable?” ✨

“Characteristics of the deeply meaningful community with other spiritual directors include the following: the authenticity of the participants, trust, honesty, vulnerability, rapport, respect, acceptance, and a non-judgmental deep listening. All of these characteristics allowed members of the group to feel free to be real, and share what has been on our minds and hearts even when we didn’t have the words yet. Often the group helped individuals articulate the niggles that obsess us and needed to be released.”

—Marjorie English, OSF ✨

Let us know your thoughts about spiritual director community at [listen@sdiworld.org](mailto:listen@sdiworld.org).

WWW.SDIWORLD.ORG

*Listen* is an outreach publication of Spiritual Directors International. When you visit the SDI website at [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org), you can learn about retreats, programs, conferences, and other educational events related to spiritual companionship. You can read descriptions of the spiritual direction relationship from a variety of

spiritual traditions, and discover excellent questions to ask yourself and any potential spiritual directors you choose to interview. To locate a spiritual director or guide, go online to *Seek and Find Guide: A Worldwide Resource of Available Spiritual Directors*. More than 6,000 spiritual directors are listed by geographical location at [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org). ✨



P O E M

**BIRTHED**

Glory be for lambs that leap  
 and mincing calves that bolt and bleat  
 for runnels parched then deeply sodden  
 rivers bogged and swift gills streaming  
 for thin leaved tendrils prodding curling  
 horsehair patching thinning winging  
 all birds that shriek and squawk and plunge  
 into the heights and depths as one  
 below the wave beyond the cloud  
 for April's steely measured coming  
 May's most ardent roving raving  
 Hue and dab so mildly hurled  
 and hearts  
 that flutter  
 birthed  
 for earth

*after Gerard Manley Hopkins*

—Barbara Hudspith, Ontario, Canada

**Know Yourself ...  
... Go Deeper**

“Who am I?”  
“What is my purpose?”  
“Who can I become?”



“Experience Living Purposefully ...  
... Into Your Very Own Story”



**See the video series at:**  
[www.virginiawatersselfcare.com.au](http://www.virginiawatersselfcare.com.au)



**Enneagram Spectrum Training and  
Certification Program: with Jerry Wagner,  
Ph.D. and Kathryn Grant**

Two opportunities to add Enneagram wisdom and  
competency to your Spiritual Direction practice:

**Chicago/Skokie:** June 26 – 30, 2017  
**San Antonio:** July 15-19, 2017.

For registration and further information go  
to: [www.enneagram\\_spectrum.com](http://www.enneagram_spectrum.com)

- > Jerry Wagner, 847-400-6507;  
[jeromewagnerphd@gmail.com](mailto:jeromewagnerphd@gmail.com) ;
- > Kathryn Grant, 805-479-4117;  
[kathryn7grant@gmail.com](mailto:kathryn7grant@gmail.com)

\*\*A certificate and 30 CEU's are awarded to  
enhance your credentials as you use and teach the  
Enneagram.



## POEM

## GLOBAL RESOURCES

All aggregated things  
Are like a dream, a fantasy,  
a bubble and a shadow,  
Are like dewdrops and  
a flash of lightning.  
They should be regarded as such.  
—and so you should  
Consider in this way  
all this transient world:  
As a star at dawn,  
a bubble floating in a stream,  
A dewdrop, a flash of lightning  
in a summer cloud,  
the flickers of a lamp,  
a phantom, and a dream.”

—excerpted from the Diamond Sutra,  
trans. by Anil Singh-Molares

- **Hungry for spiritual depth?**  
Two-Year Academy for Spiritual Formation  
NEW at Malvern Retreat House, Malvern, PA  
Beginning 7/23/17 for clergy and lay  
Come journey with us.  
More at [academy.upperroom.org](http://academy.upperroom.org)
- **Connect on Facebook:**  
Spiritual Directors International for spiritual care,  
<http://on.fb.me/SDIFacebook>
- **Order a FREE subscription**  
to Listen: A Seeker’s Resource for Spiritual Direction.  
Go to: [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org)
- **Access online education from home**  
through SDI Webinars. Participate in a live webinar or  
download a recording today. CEUs are available.  
<http://bit.ly/SDIWebinarsOnDemand>
- **Join more than 6,000 people**  
in an inclusive, global, contemplative, multi-faith  
learning community called Spiritual Directors  
International. For more than twenty-five years, SDI has  
been committed to compassionate listening around the  
world and across traditions. SDI inspires and connects  
seekers with spiritual guidance. Everyone who cares  
about spiritual companionship is invited to become a  
member of Spiritual Directors International, a nonprofit  
charity serving the educational needs of seekers and  
people who offer spiritual companionship. [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org)

FRIDAY-SUNDAY

September 15-17, 2017

# GRIEF & GROWING™

Our 21st year



PHOTO: THEA BELLOS

## A Healing Weekend for Bereaved Individuals and Families

Dealing with the loss of a loved one is a difficult process. During this weekend, people with similar experiences come together to learn to live with their loss in a safe, beautiful, and nurturing environment. For more information or to register, visit [www.jewishhealingcenter.org](http://www.jewishhealingcenter.org) or call 415.750.3436.

[www.jewishhealingcenter.org](http://www.jewishhealingcenter.org)

THIS WEEKEND IS CO-SPONSORED BY:



WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT PROVIDED BY:

ALL FAMILIES AND GENDERS WELCOME

# Listen

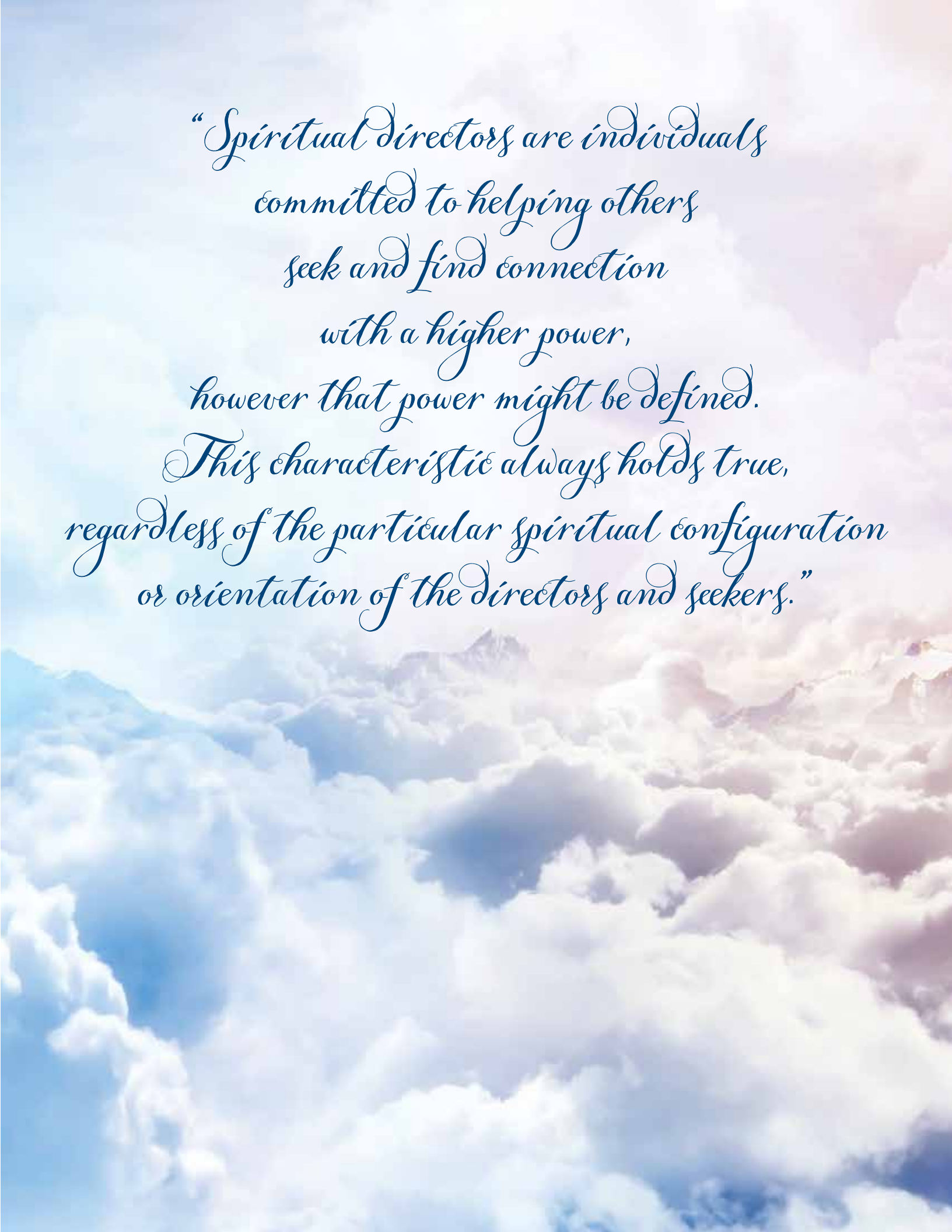
A FREE SUBSCRIPTION AWAITS YOU, YOUR FRIENDS, AND COLLEAGUES AT [WWW.SDIWORLD.ORG](http://WWW.SDIWORLD.ORG)

- \* Do you have a sense of something bigger, something just beyond?
- \* Are you wondering how to listen to the spirit of your life unfolding?

*Listen* is a simple, inviting, contemplative resource that will help you explore basic spiritual questions and quests. It is published four times a year and includes guidance, inspiration, poetry, retreat ideas, and spiritual book reviews.

*Listen* is a FREE GIFT, offered to you by Spiritual Directors International. To download a sample copy, go to [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org). For a free subscription to the print edition, go to [www.sdiworld.org](http://www.sdiworld.org), and tell us where to mail *Listen*.

TAKE THE NEXT STEP ON YOUR JOURNEY



*“Spiritual directors are individuals  
committed to helping others  
seek and find connection  
with a higher power,  
however that power might be defined.  
This characteristic always holds true,  
regardless of the particular spiritual configuration  
or orientation of the directors and seekers.”*



spiritual directors international

*Publisher of Presence: An International Journal of Spiritual Direction*

PO Box 3584 | Bellevue, WA 98009 | USA

A photograph of a forest scene. The central focus is a large, moss-covered tree trunk in the foreground, with its roots spreading out over a bed of fallen brown leaves. The background shows a misty forest with tall, thin trees and a soft, golden light filtering through the canopy.

# Seeking Connection

TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA

20–23 April 2017

SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS INTERNATIONAL