ACSD Members Handbook

Updated October 2026 to include new disputes resolution and constitution, and updated requirements for Full Membership and Professional Development

Any Questions to our Secretary acsdanz1@gmail.com

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Assumptions and Definitions about Spiritual Direction

ACSD holds these assumptions about the practice of spiritual direction:

- God relates with individual people, alone and in community
- This relationship takes place in the context of a person's life and faith experience.
- This relationship is brought to awareness in contemplation and personal reflection.
- Dialogue about this relationship encourages growth.

ACSD's Definition of Spiritual Direction:

Spiritual direction is a pastoral ministry in which one person helps another to:

- Pay attention to God's personal communication to him/her
- Respond to and grow in intimacy with God
- Live out the consequences of this relationship

Spiritual direction requires a commitment to minister to a person love and respect for his or her dignity, value and destiny.

Members of the Association:

- Are people from many denominations and faith communities throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, engaged in the ministry of intentional, contracted spiritual direction
- Have satisfied the executive of the Association that they have had adequate training and have current supervised practice as a spiritual director
- Accept the need for regular:
    - Personal spiritual direction
    - Supervision of their spiritual direction work
    - Ongoing formation and training
- Require the highest ethical and professional standards of one another and have signed a covenant of ethics and standards of practice with the Association.

Membership Categories – Associate and Full

In 2023 The Executive simplified our Categories of membership along with creating a pathway for Spiritual Direction Graduates to be part of the association, in Oct 26 this was further adjusted by increasing agreed hours and timeframe for Full Membership.

The following assumptions were made in accordance with the ACSD Covenant:

Spiritual Direction is usually a contracted one to one relationship over a period of time involving intentional meeting, although we recognise that Spiritual Direction skills may be involved in other situations.

One of the significant purposes of the ACSD is to recognise the professionalism of, and provide credibility for, those engaged in the ministry of Spiritual Direction. This implies that members of the Association are sufficiently qualified and have an agreed level of experience and competence.

Our agreed simplified categories are:

- **Associate membership** – Post Training for those at the beginning and end of their ministry, and for those whose primary ministry is not necessarily contracted one to one Spiritual Direction including those who are chaplains and those taking retreats
- **Full Accredited Members -** this is for those who have completed at least 80 hours of Supervised Spiritual Direction post training over a period of at least two years. Although on occasion an experienced spiritual director may be admitted directly to Full membership.

Note Emeritus membership – no new members will be admitted to this category after 2023.

Process for joining – STEP ONE - Associate

Applicants who have completed their training can apply for Membership of the ACSD. Their application would proceed as normal: An application form supported by two referees and an interview by two ACSD members, one of whom is from the Executive.

1. Most interviewees are accepted as Associate members.
2. Those applicants who have completed 80 hours supervised Spiritual Direction over a period of at least 2 years may be accepted directly as Full Members.
3. Once Associate members have completed 80 hours of supervised one to one Spiritual Direction post graduation, they will be eligible to apply for full accredited membership of the ACSD.
4. Once you have been accepted for Associate or Full membership, you will be asked to sign a covenant, and pay a membership fee
5. You can then list yourself as a Spiritual Director on our website.

Why become a full member:

- Full members listings on the website come up first in searches
- Full members can vote in General Meetings and stand on Executive

Becoming a Full Member – STEP TWO

Once you have completed 80 hours of Supervised Spiritual Direction (post graduation) over a period of at least two years you are invited to start the process to become a Full Member of ACSD.

At this point there is another application form, and your spiritual director and supervisor are contacted again. This is followed by another interview.

Professional Development - Portfolios agreed at 2026 AGM

A portfolio is a collection of materials (preferably digital) that are compiled over a specified period of time for one's own reflection and presented to another when required, usually as evidence of one's recent learning and points of growth. They are to be discussed intentionally at least once a year with your Supervisor.

What is a Portfolio for?

A portfolio is a key component in quality assurance. It provides a focus for reflection on experience, feedback, new insights, and areas for further development for the member. It indicates a commitment by our members to good standards and to lifelong learning.

The portfolio envisaged is –

- self-directed and readily understood as congruent with SD practice
- personal, and flexible for varied contexts, stages, modes and learning styles
- encourages ongoing reflection, and growth: it is formative
- includes a range of evidence, mostly digital, but hard copies can be presented
- supported by supervision - recommended annual reflection with Supervisor
- sparing of time, effort and cost; regular record-keeping and no extra meetings.

The portfolio is kept and used by the director. They refer to the portfolio often during a year to check they are meeting their commitments to planned learning, training, workshops, reading. The director also adds new material relevant to that year and one's plans for the future.

We are asking that your Portfolio is the focus of a normal supervision session every year or so, for everyone, both Associates, and Full members, whether in very part-time or significant practice. The frequency and timing is agreed in advance with one's supervisor.

What might a Portfolio contain? (see also SAMPLE here)

- **A summary list, providing evidence of engagement with each of the five categories below** (at least one entry in each category is a basic goal, recognising that some members are very part time in SD.)
    - *Professional development /Learning plan (review the last period and plans for next)* essential.
    - *Spiritual development*
    - *Ongoing education & learning from others*
    - *Review of practice (* log of supervision; in-depth reflections, key learnings)
    - *Cultural and diversity understandings and Te Ao Maori*

- **A variety of supporting documents, e.g. an attendance certificate, a card/email from a directee.**

Safeguarding

Safeguarding refers to the actions we take to promote the welfare of children and adults in vulnerable circumstances and to protect any of us from harm.

Policy Recommendations:

- All members of The Association of Christian Spiritual Directors (ACSD) are required to have foundation safeguarding training within the last 4 years, before being admitted to full membership of ACSD. *This is widely available and not necessarily spiritual direction-specific.*

- All members are expected to undertake updated training in safeguarding awareness; as a minimum, every 4 years. *(see also Portfolio policy)*
- That ACSD work with the local TE planning group to offer such a workshop in person during the Training Event, at least every 4 years. ACSD funds are put towards any costs to affirm our commitment to Safeguarding.
- Police checks are mandatory at entry to ACSD membership and every 4 years thereafter or when asked, a police check or Ministry of Justice Check is needed.

Definitions

A child is a person under the age of 18 years. We all have a responsibility to protect children and a duty to report the fact that we know or believe that a child is being abused or is at risk of being abused.

An adult in vulnerable circumstances [previously referred to as a vulnerable adult] is a person over the age of 18 years who is [or who may be at times] unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. Unlike children, anyone over the age of 18 who has mental capacity should consent to action being taken.

Abuse can take many forms, including physical, emotional, sexual, financial, spiritual, neglect and bullying. It may be current, recent or something which happened in the past that the affected person decides to speak about now. The inappropriate use of power and abuse of trust is almost always a key element.

Safeguarding training engages in depth with:

- issues of power, trust and vulnerability;
- the nature and impact of spiritual abuse;
- dealing with disclosures of abuse in the past and their effect;
- responding to current harm or threat of harm, in a victim, or by a perpetrator, in front of us;
- updated legal aspects and contacts for reporting and support.

Read more about Safeguarding and the background to this here

Documenting your practice

We have developed two spreadsheets that can assist in managing your practice, supervision, and professional Development - copy them and make them your own

1. **Version 1**
2. **Version 2**

Foundational Aspects of the Formation and Training of Spiritual Directors

The following foundational aspects of **Formation** for the ministry of spiritual direction are listed as a guide for interviews of applicants for membership of the Association of Christian Spiritual Directors. They will therefore be of interest to those who are in formation for the ministry of Spiritual Direction. If you like Tables - see a summary here

The intention has not been to create an exclusive or exhaustive list of criteria for membership. Rather, interviewers will use those descriptions with discernment, and with awareness that Spiritual Direction is more than simply a set of skills.

Undergirding the following is a commitment to:

- Inclusiveness – Ecumenical, Theological, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Language etc
- Tangata Whenua, Treaty of Waitangi and multicultural awareness
- Respectful and ethical practice
- Contemplative spirituality
- Creating an openness and hospitality within their own interior life
- Willingness to journey into the mystery of life

1. The Development of the following Practical Skills

Basic

- Communication/reflective inquisitive question asking skills
- Capacity to listen empathetically and sensitively
- A Contemplative Stance
- Understanding of Emotions
- Contracting
- Confidentiality, hospitality and mutual respect

Commitment to ongoing skills development, for example

- Dream work
- Interactive Drawing Therapy (IDT)
- Focusing
- Working with images/metaphors
- Guided imagination
- Facilitating ritual

Practicum

- 2-3 ongoing directees
- Monthly supervision
- Use of verbatims, case studies etc.
- Usually over 2 years or 200 contact hours.

2. Evidence of Personal Development

- Significant life experience
- encourage a contemplative attitude with a commitment to prayer
- Ability to reflect on one's own life and ministry
- Understanding of and commitment to the
- process of personal transformation
- Sustained experience of receiving regular spiritual direction.

- Value Supervision

3. Evidence of Professional Development

- Biblical and theological literacy at an informed lay level
- Awareness of varying models of spiritual direction
- Clear grasp of the role of spiritual director and the differences between therapy, counselling, supervision and spiritual direction.
- Appropriate director-directee relationships
- Implementation of professional boundaries, ethical practice and contracting.
- Awareness of psychological aspects of spiritual Direction, including personality differences, (counter-) transference, sexuality, when to refer.
- Adherence to a *Code of Ethics* and Safeguarding principles

4. Exploration of Spirituality and Spiritual Traditions

Familiarity with the traditions of:

- Contemplative spirituality
- Directed Retreats
- Lectio Divina
- Discernment
- Forms of prayer
- Spiritual journey
- Faith Development
- Images of God

Some insights into contemporary Spirituality, e.g.

- Creation spirituality
- Issues of Justice
- Spirituality of Aotearoa

ASCD Code of Ethics

Purpose

This Code of Ethics states the required standard for responsible conduct by Members of the Association of Christian Spiritual Directors Aotearoa New Zealand Inc

Responsibilities of Directors for their Own Training and On-going Formation
The Member commits themselves to:

1. increasing their professional knowledge and insight by:

- on-going study and education in Scripture, Christian faith and teaching, Christian ethics, spirituality and prayer and in the human sciences

2. developing professional competence and accountability by:

- on-going practice of interpersonal skills and exercise of abilities of rapport building and discernment
- an openness to God's grace in their work
- regular supervision of their work by a qualified and competent person, or in a peer group of qualified and competent directors. The focus of such supervision is to be on the director and the integration of their personal development.

3. fostering a healthy growth in their own spiritual life by:

- practicing personal disciplines of prayer love and detachment
- openness to the Holy Spirit
- a contemplative reflection on their own experience
- engaging in regular spiritual direction as a directee
- maintaining a responsible relationship to a faith community

4. Undergoing Professional supervision for your Spiritual Direction Practice

5. Being in regular Spiritual Direction yourself

Responsibilities of Directors to their Directee(s)
The member commits themselves to:

1. **Initiate and establish agreements with directees about the**
   - nature of spiritual direction
   - roles of director and directee
   - length and frequency of direction sessions
   - remuneration to be given to the director
   - procedure for on-going mutual evaluation of the relationship

2. **Respect the directee's**
   - right to confidentiality except where a directee becomes a threat to themselves or to others vulnerability
   - moral, religious and spiritual values – refraining from imposing their own values on the directee
   - privacy - not inappropriately probing any directee for information that they are reluctant to share
   - boundaries – not engaging in inappropriate behaviour of a physical or emotional nature.

3. **Inappropriate behaviour includes:**
   - **spiritual abuse** – use of the director's own spiritual insights and experience to manipulate or control the directee
   - **professional sexual abuse** – sexual gratification of the director or directee through inappropriate contact – verbal, emotional, physical, or other, between them.

4. be sensitive to the need to refer a directee to a qualified counselor or psychotherapist, such instances including when a directee:

- is experiencing a serious psychological or emotional disorder
- needs more time to explore some life issues, e.g. a marital problem
- would benefit from specific therapies, e.g. to aid resolution of earlier experiences such as sexual, physical or emotional abuse

Responsibilities of Directors to Other Members of the Association
The Member commits themselves to:

1. respect and honour other members of the Association

2. encourage them to uphold the required standards of the Association as set out in the Membership Covenant and Code of Ethics.

3. respond to a perceived breach of this Covenant and Code in the spirit of the Christian Gospel by:
   - drawing the perceived breach to the attention of the member concerned
   - referring the matter to the Executive if the perceived breach continues.

Dispute Resolution Procedures ACSD Inc. (from 2025 Constitution)

1. Introduction

1.1 Subject to clause 1.2 below, the Dispute Resolution Procedures set out in this Schedule One are intended to apply to disputes between:

(a) Members of the Association;

(b) Officers of the Association; and/or

(c) the Association itself.

The Dispute Resolution Procedures are intended to resolve disputes between the persons or groups of persons in relation to the Association and its activities.

1.2 Where a complaint is to be made by or against an employee in their capacity as an employee of the Association, then the complaints procedure set out in the employee's employment agreement must be followed.

2. How a Complaint is Made

2.1 A Member or Officer may make a complaint by giving to the Executive a Notice in writing that:

(a) states that the Member or Officer is starting a procedure for resolving a dispute in accordance with the Association's Constitution; and

(b) sets out the allegation to which the dispute relates and whom the allegation is against. This must be enough to ensure the Member or Officer is fairly advised of the allegation concerning them, with sufficient details given to enable them to prepare a response.

2.2 The Association may make a complaint involving an allegation against a Member or an Officer by giving to the Member or Officer a Notice in writing that:

(a) states that the Association is starting a procedure for resolving a dispute in accordance with the Association's Constitution; and

(b) sets out the allegation to which the dispute relates. This must be detailed enough to ensure the Member or Officer is fairly advised of the allegation concerning them, with sufficient details given to enable them to prepare a response.

2.3 The terms dispute and complaint are to be interpreted in accordance with section 38 of the Act.

3. Investigating and Determining a Dispute

3.1 The Executive must, as soon as reasonably practicable after receiving or becoming aware of a complaint made in accordance with this policy, ensure that the dispute is investigated and determined.

3.2 In the interests of resolving disputes in a fair, efficient and effective manner, the most senior member of the Executive with no personal interest in the dispute ("the Elector") will determine how the dispute will be dealt with. This can include:

(a) appoint an external person to investigate and report; or

(b) with the consent of all parties to a complaint, initiate a mediation between the parties and appoint an appropriate mediator; or

(c) appoint an external person to investigate and make a decision; or

(d) appoint an appropriate arbitrator to determine the dispute under the Arbitration Act 1996, including schedules 1 and 2.

3.3 Despite clause 3.2, the Elector may, without hearing from any person, decide not to proceed further with a complaint if:

(a) the complaint is trivial; or

(b) the complaint does not appear to disclose or involve any allegation of the following kind:

(i) that a Member or an Officer has engaged in material misconduct;

(ii) that a Member, an Officer, or the Association has materially breached, or is likely to materially breach, a duty under the Association's constitution or the Act; or

(iii) that a Member's rights or interests or a Member's rights or interests generally have been materially damaged; or

(c) the complaint appears to be without foundation or there is no apparent evidence to support it; or

(d) the person who makes the complaint has an insignificant interest in the matter; or

(e) the conduct, incident, event, or issue giving rise to the complaint has already been investigated and dealt with under the Constitution; or

(f) there has been an undue delay in making the complaint.

3.4 While not binding on the Elector, the Association agrees that the following categories of disputes should be resolved as follows:

(a) where the dispute involves issues of personal animosity or where relationships within the Association have broken down, the dispute should go to mediation;

(b) where the dispute concerns interpretation of the Association's Constitution or the Association's statutory obligations, an independent lawyer should be appointed to investigate and provide a report;

(c) where the dispute concerns matters about the financial operations of the Association, an external person with accounting skills should be appointed to investigate and provide a report; and

(d) where the dispute concerns operational matters, an external person should be appointed to investigate and provide a report.

3.5 Before making a decision under clause 3.2, the Elector may request further information from the Executive, the complainant and/or any person who is the subject of the complaint.

3.6 Where an external party is appointed to provide a report, that report should be provided to the Executive, the complainant and any person who is the subject of the complaint ('the parties"). After reviewing the report, the parties will then meet to discuss whether:

(a) the Association will take any steps in light of the report-writer's findings; and

(b) the parties agree that those steps (if any) will resolve the dispute.

3.7 If the Elector initiates the steps under clause 3.2(a) or 3.2(b) and that is insufficient to resolve the matter, the Elector may then initiate any of the other options under clause 3.2.

3.8 A person may not act as a decision maker in relation to a complaint if the majority of Officers of the Executive consider that there are reasonable grounds to believe that that person may not be impartial or able to consider the matter without a predetermined view.

3.9 An external person appointed under clause 3.2(a) or 3.2(c) may, inter alia:

(a) call for written submissions from all relevant parties;

(b) call for specific evidence from the Association or any relevant party; and/or

(c) prepare an interim report and circulate it to the relevant parties for their comments.

3.10 In addition to the powers under clause 3.9, an external person appointed under clause 3.2(c) may also determine whether to hold an oral hearing involving all relevant parties and (if so) determine whether those parties can be represented by a lawyer.

3.11 A decision reached by an external person appointed under 3.2(c) will not be subject to an appeal to or a review by the courts of New Zealand.

4. Person Who Makes a Complaint Has a Right to be Heard

4.1 A Member or Officer who makes a complaint has a right to be heard before the complaint is resolved or any outcome is determined, subject to clause 3.3.

4.2 If the Association makes a complaint:

(a) the Association has a right to be heard before the complaint is resolved or any outcome is determined; and

(b) an Officer may exercise the right on behalf of the Association.

4.3 Without limiting the manner in which the Member, Officer, or Association may be given the right to be heard, they must be taken to have been given the right if:

(a) they have a reasonable opportunity to be heard in writing or at an oral hearing (if one is held); and

(b) an oral hearing is held if the decision maker considers that an oral hearing is needed to ensure an adequate hearing; and

(c) an oral hearing (if any) is held before the decision maker; and

(d) their written statement or submissions (if any) are considered by the decision maker.

5. Person Who is Subject of a Complaint has a Right to be Heard

5.1 Clauses 5.2 and 5.3 apply if the complaint involves an allegation that a Member, an Officer, or the Association (the “respondent”):

(a) has engaged in misconduct; or

(b) has breached, or is likely to breach, a duty under the Association’s Constitution or the Act; or

(c) has damaged the rights or interests of a Member or the rights or interests of Members generally.

5.2 The respondent has a right to be heard before the complaint is resolved or any outcome is determined. If the respondent is the Association, an Officer may exercise the right on behalf of the Association.

5.3 Without limiting the manner in which a respondent may be given a right to be heard, the respondent must be taken to have been given the right to be heard if:

(a) the respondent is fairly advised of all allegations concerning the respondent, with sufficient details and time given to enable the respondent to prepare a response; and

(b) the respondent has a reasonable opportunity to be heard in writing or at an oral hearing (if one is held); and

(c) an oral hearing is held if the decision maker considers that an oral hearing is needed to ensure an adequate hearing; and

(d) an oral hearing (if any) is held before the decision maker; and

(e) the respondent's written statement or submissions (if any) is considered by the decision maker.

ACSD Constitution – click on link for latest

More Resources

1. Spiritual Directors Record Keeping File

We have developed two spreadsheets that can assist in managing your practice, supervision, and professional Development - copy them and make them your own **Version 1** **Version 2**

2. Facebook Follow us on Facebook and share
3. Website
4. List your self as a Spiritual Director
5. Find a Spiritual Director or Supervisor
6. Regional Groups – all around NZ and online too
7. Charities Details here Registration Number CC24455
8. Bank Account ASSN OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS 06-0501-0572015-00
9. Secretary – all enquiries to Admin@acsd.org.nz or acsdanz1@gmail.com