# Barry & Connolly Description of Accompaniment

We [describe] Christian spiritual direction, then, as help given by one believer to another that enables the latter **to pay attention to God's personal communication** to him or her, to respond to this personally communicating God, **to grow in intimacy with this God**, and **to live out the consequences of the relationship**. (P.8 B&C)

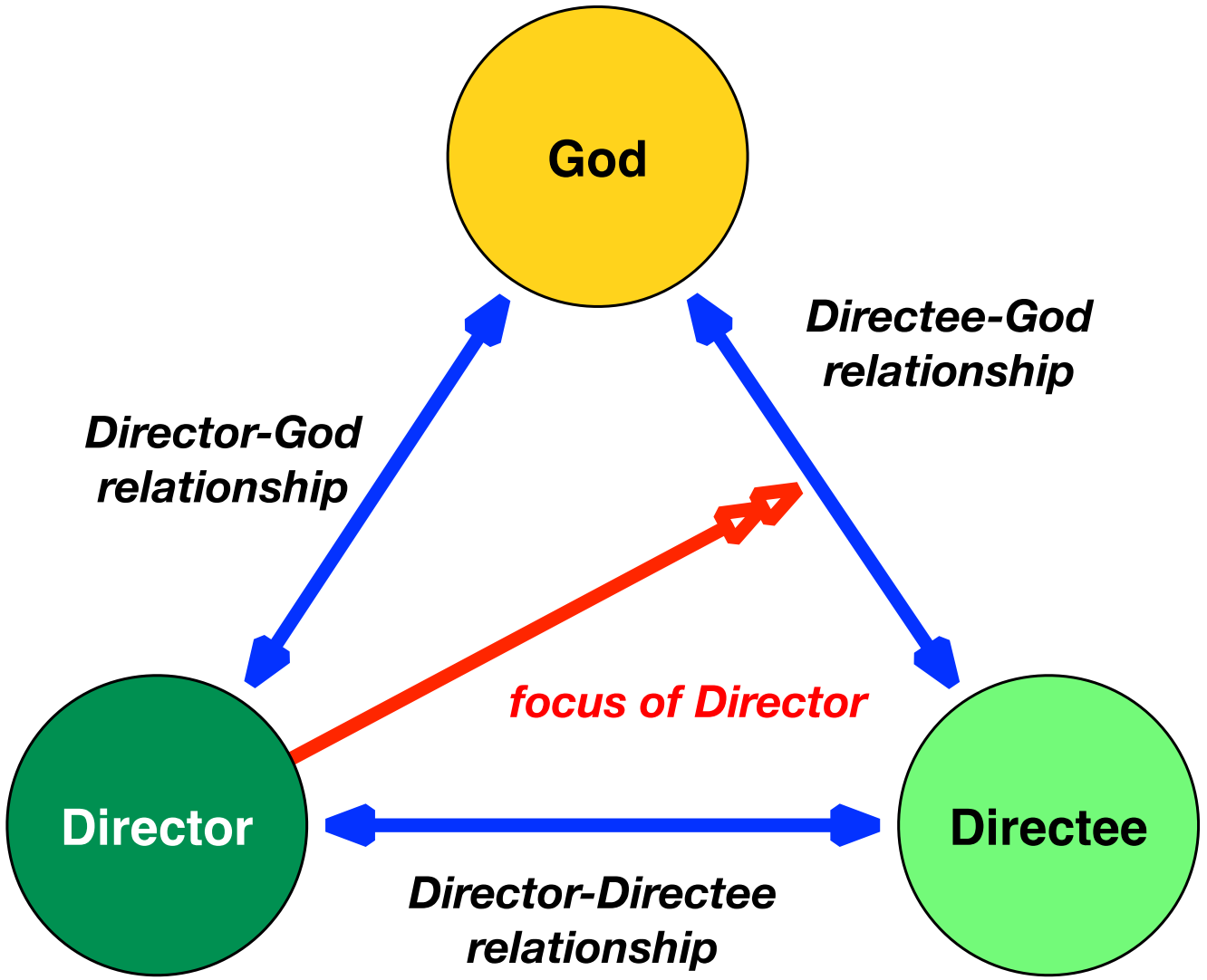
**The contemplative core of prayer and of all Christian life is conscious relationship with God**.

Arising from the above insight the two most fundamental tasks of spiritual direction are:

First: **helping directees pay attention to our self-revealing God.**

Second: **helping directees recognize their reactions and decide on their responses to this God**
[to grow in service and praise of the Lord.]

P.47-48, *The Practice of Spiritual Direction*, Barry & Connolly


God
Directee-God relationship
Director-God relationship
focus of Director
Director
Directee
Director-Directee relationship

# Contemplative, Incarnational Model of Spiritual Accompaniment

**A Model of Contemplative, Incarnational Spiritual Accompaniment -** Adapted from The UK Jesuit Spirituality Team - *Ruth Holgate, Continuing Development for Spiritual Directors 2021*

# Begins with Attuning to Self

***Attune to self***, reminds us that often the most important moment in the session happens before anyone arrives.

In making space within ourselves and deepening our self-awareness of what could impede the hospitality we are about to offer others, we open ourselves and yield to the quiet, unhurried, space which lies before us.

Adapted from Louie Gardiner ‘Moving Bodies’

# Contemplative Attentive Stance

Wherever people are willing to accept the responsibility of staying in God's presence with the intention of assisting those persons in their ongoing discernment, authentic spiritual direction can happen. (Adapted from Rose Mary Dougherty)

Turning the heart and mind towards God. A conscious act at the beginning of each encounter.

A long, loving look at the real, at what is. (Walter Burghardt)

'A contemplative stance is the simple ability to pay attention to something outside of myself because it's there and worth looking at. Let what I am looking at reveal itself to me.' (Kevin Egan)

Listen

Listen More

Listen Deeply

Listen Contemplatively

# Listening

Deep listening is an act of surrender. We risk being changed by what we hear.

When I really want to hear another person's story, I try to leave my preconceptions at the door and draw close to their telling.

I am always partially listening to the thoughts in my own head when others are speaking, so I consciously quiet my thoughts and begin to listen with my senses.

The most critical part of listening is asking *what is at stake* for the other person. I try to understand what matters to them, not what I think matters. Sometimes I start to lose myself in their story. As soon as I notice feeling unmoored, I try to pull myself back into my body, like returning home.

When the story is done, we must return to our skin, our own worldview, and notice how we have been changed by our visit.

***Holy Listening – Courageous Listening*** *- Sikh activist Valarie Kaur*

# Notice

Holding the hope & trusting God IS present.

Where does God seem to be present in this?

## Explore the Experience

Wander around in it

Keep discerning
(Where might God be in this?)

Help implicit movement to become explicit, seen & Known

## Follow a movement

Appreciate the movement from different angles

Relish the experience of God

Let it deepen

## Encourage to go to God

What is their experience of God?

What do they desire?

Help with prayer

# What Next with God?

## Attune to Self

## Contemplative Attentive Stance

## Listen

## Notice

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## What Next with God

We do this by paying attention to the ‘movements’

Listening for Life, aliveness, which may be very subtle, these interior movements may include:

thoughts, imaginings, emotions, memories, daydreams, inclinations, desires, feelings, repulsions, body language, tone of voice, facial expressions, energy levels, attractions, a sense of **consolation or desolation**.

Ignatius of Loyola defines consolation as
"when some interior movement in the soul is caused, through which the soul comes to be inflamed with love of its Creator and Lord."

He defines desolation as the opposite—as the soul being disturbed and agitated, "without hope, without love, when one finds oneself all lazy, tepid, sad, and as if separated from [the] Creator and Lord."

What's important to note is that both consolation and desolation have to do with one's **relationship with God**.
i.e. *There is a spiritual orientation.*

*‘The focus on experience of God means that we do not choose our path according to outcome or destination at all, either where we as directors think the conversation should go, or where the directee wants to end up.*

*Navigation by destination has to give way to something more subtle: finding our way by finding God's way’.*

*Our compass should be what tradition calls the discernment of spirits: sifting experience for its orientation to God’.*

(Rob Marsh, ‘Receiving and Rejecting, On finding a Way in Spiritual Direction’, The Way, 2006).

Attune to Self → Contemplative Stance → Listen → Notice

**Follow a Movement**

Appreciate the movement from different angles

Relish the experience of God

Let it deepen




**Explore the Experience**

Wander around in it

KEEP DISCERNING
(Where might God be in this?)

Help implicit movement to become explicit, seen & Known

**Encourage to go to God**

What do they desire?

Help with prayer

What Next with God

## Some Other Elements of an Incarnational Contemplative Model of Spiritual Accompaniment

- Helping people to pray – different methods, what is right for them at this time
- Accompanying someone making a decision
- Referring people - knowing when you are at the edges of your competence

**For Example**

- Pastoral Supervision
- Counselling
- Practical help
- Information
- Referral to other help

## Some Other Elements of an Incarnational Contemplative Model of Spiritual Accompaniment

- Reflecting on your own experience and life to become more free in your accompaniment

- Supervision – support, accountability, development

- Managing ethics and boundaries

## The skills of this sort of accompaniment include:

- Use of **active listening skills** to help the experience be told and explored
- **Attentive, centred presence (Contemplative Stance)** – engaged and interested, not leading
- **Holding the space** of the conversation – timing, focus, boundaries
- **Awareness of pace** and allowing appropriate, comfortable silences
- **Focussing** on where an experience of God might be
- **Noticing** feelings / thoughts / bodily experiences of the speaker
- When movement towards God tentatively identified, having the confidence and skills to **stay & follow**
- Explore with simple, clear interventions – look at experience from different angles
- Self-awareness, noticing own feelings, thoughts in the listener

# Different aspects of our experience of God which we bring to accompaniment

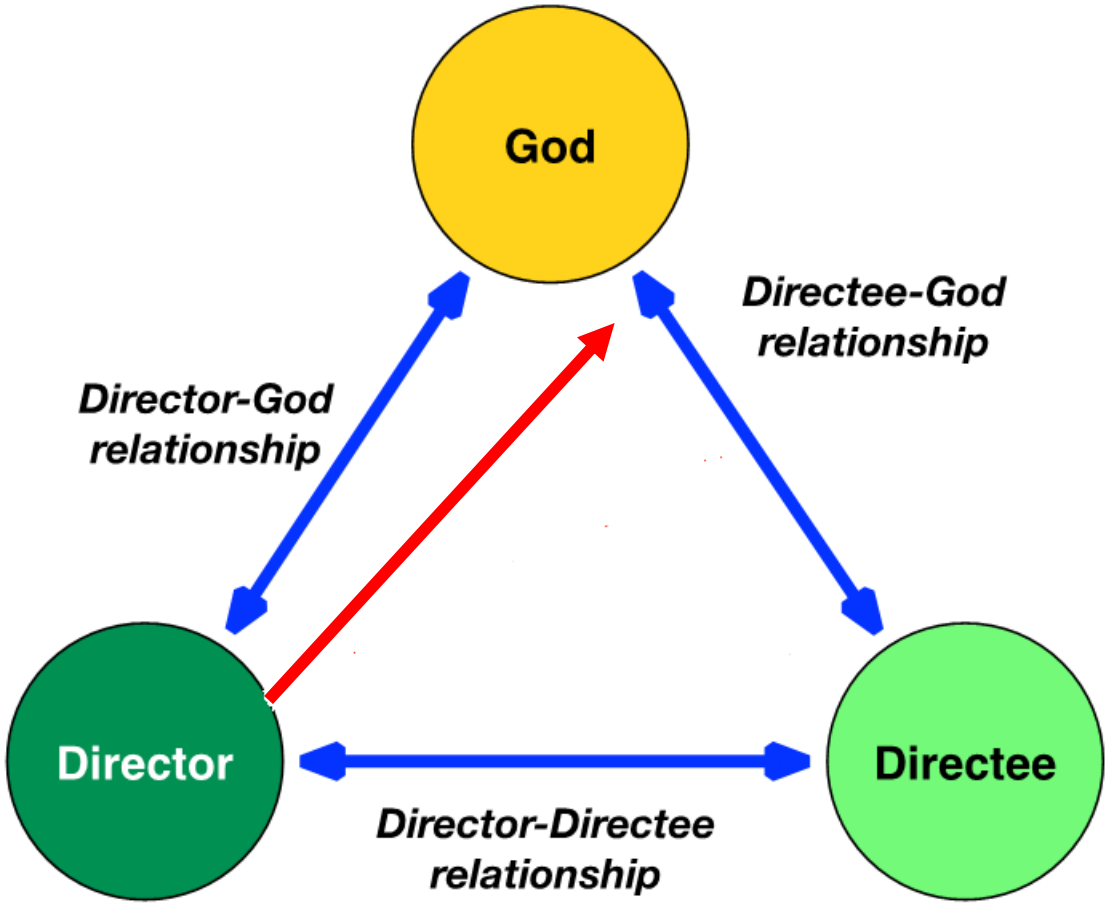
**Implicit experience**

**Explicit Experience**

**Remembered experience**

# Explicit Experience

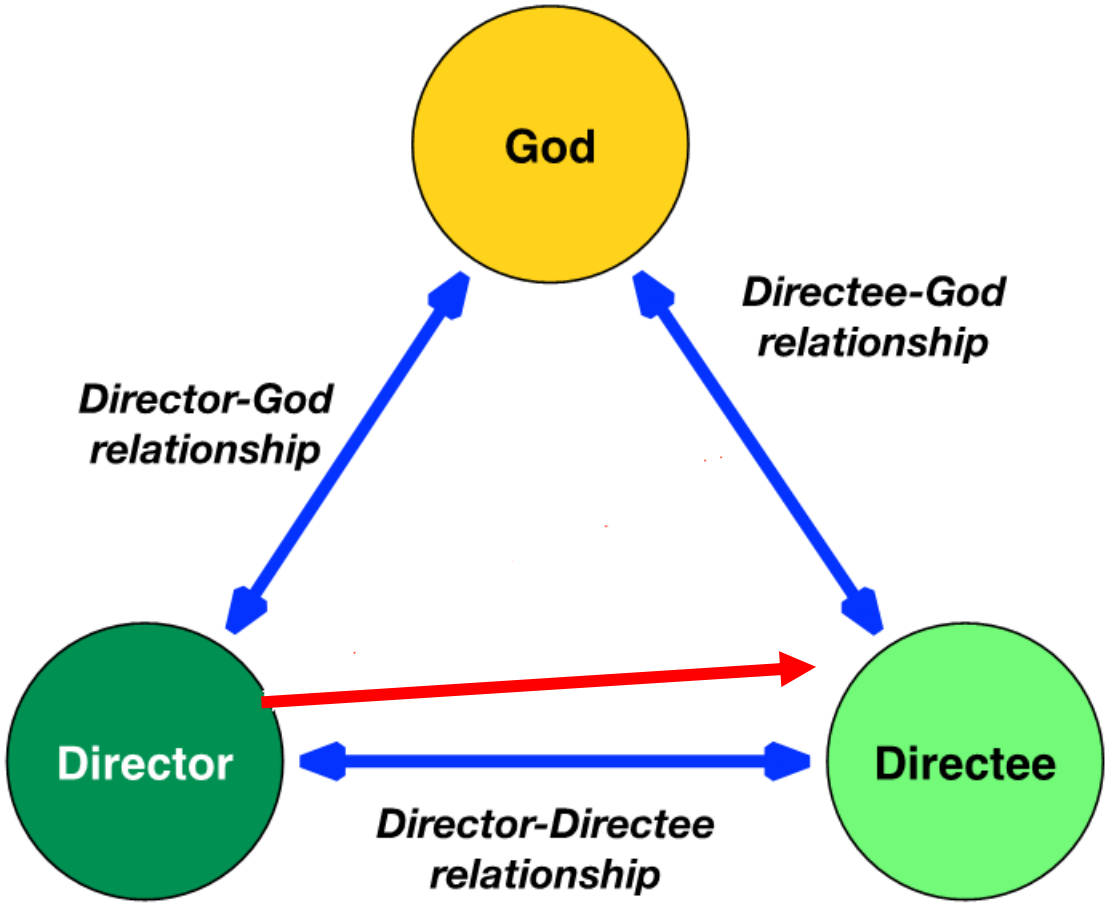
- God is known and responded to in relationship with the directee




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SPIRITUAL ACCOMPANIMENT

# Implicit experience

- God is present, but not recognised / not attended to



## Implicit experience

- God is present, but not recognised / not attended to

**You help a person make an experience explicit by:**

- listening - active, drawing it out, focusing, exploring, allowing space
- avoiding problem-solving or advice giving
- helping them reflect, connect, discern, deepen

## Remembered experience

- God is known, interiorly and ideas about God

**You help a person open up a remembered or living experience by:**

- avoiding early closure – keep staying, exploring

- following movement towards God, where there is life, rather than attending too long to counter-movement

- staying with the experience

## Some Other Elements of an Incarnational Contemplative Model of Spiritual Accompaniment

- Reflecting on your own experience and life to become more free in your accompaniment

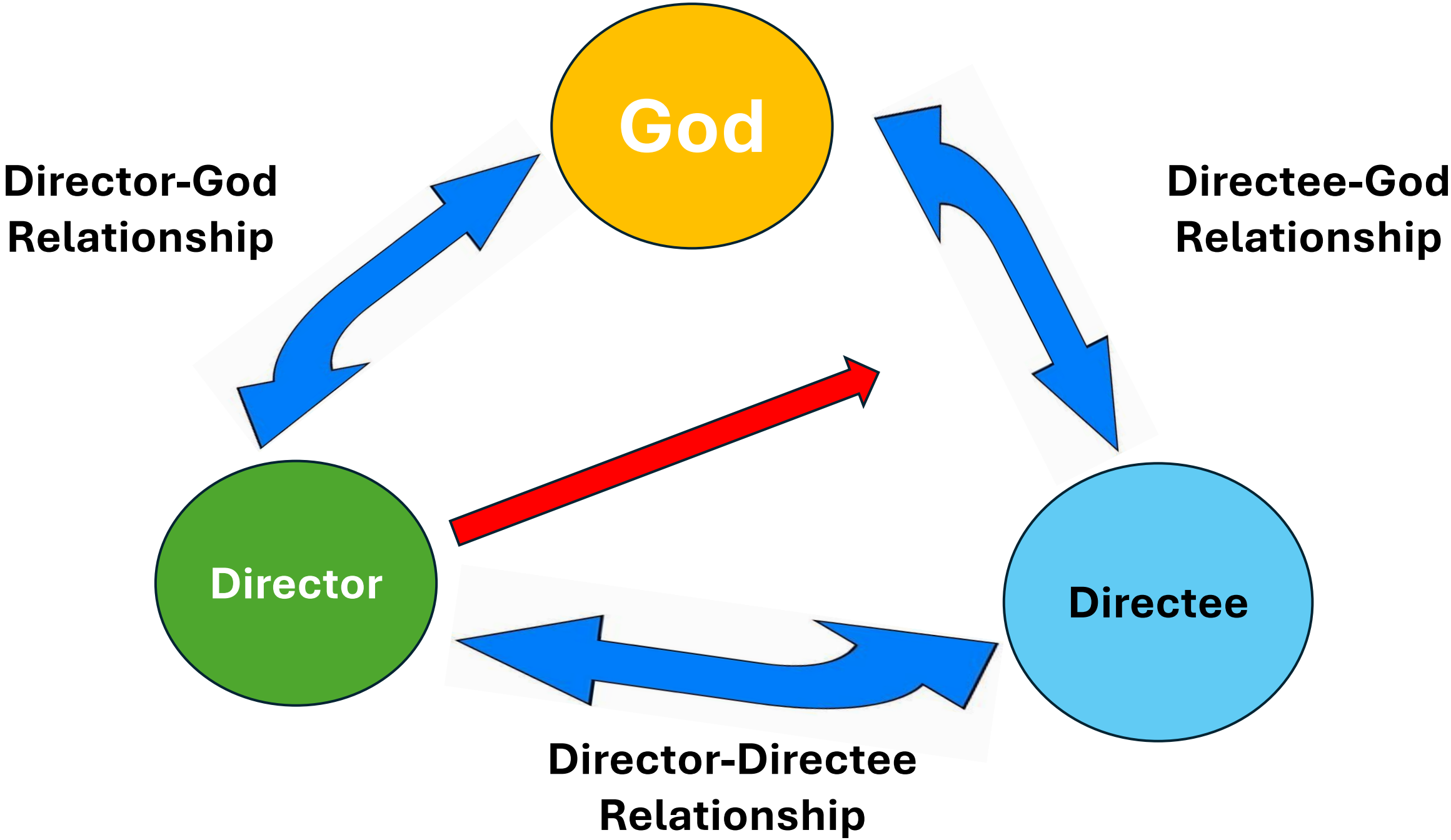
- Supervision – support, accountability, development

- Managing ethics and boundaries

## You foster a person's relationship with God by helping them:

- notice what was unnoticed in an experience and encouraging them to ‘relish’ it
- notice the present details of the experience, allowing the experience to become better known
- notice how their own feelings / thoughts / images emerge and shift
- helping them to respond from their desires

1. Listen to what a person is saying.
2. Notice (and help the person notice) his or her implicit experience of God.
3. Help it become explicit experience of God.
4. Stay with it and deepen it, let it come into the present, let it develop.
5. Encourage it to become ‘conversational’.


God
Director-God Relationship
Directee-God Relationship
Director
Directee
Director-Directee Relationship

**The Discerning Voice**

"Somewhere in every heart there is a discerning voice.

This voice distrusts the status quo.

It sounds out the falsity in things

and encourages dissent from the images things tend to assume.

It underlines the secret crevices

where the surface has become strained.

It advises distance

and opens up a new perspective

through which the concealed meaning of a situation might emerge.

The inner voice makes any complicity uneasy.

Its intention is to keep the heart clean and clear.

This voice is an inner whisper

not obvious or known to others outside.

It receives little attention

and is not usually highlighted among a person's qualities.

Yet so much depends on that small voice.

The truth of its whisper marks the line between honour and egoism, kindness and chaos.

In extreme situations,

which have been emptied of all shelter and tenderness,

that small voice whispers from somewhere beyond

and encourages the heart

to hold out for dignity,

respect,

beauty

and love."

~ John O'Donohue