

The Souljourners Spiritual Formation Program

Mission Statement

Souljourners is an ecumenical formation program for men and women called to the ministry of spiritual direction, holy listening, and companioning for others on a spiritual journey. In a Benedictine monastic setting of peace and beauty, participants are nourished by the deep wells of spiritual treasure found in the Christian contemplative tradition.

The Souljourner Experience

The three year Souljourner Program consists of the following:

1. One year of course work in the "Knowledge of God and the Christian Spiritual Tradition"
2. One year of course work in the "Knowledge of Self and Graced Human Development."
3. One year of practicum

Important components of the program include presentations and reflections, small group process, interaction with other students, and the communal bonds of prayer.

Week-long June Residencies

All Souljourners participate in a week-long residency in June during their first year in the program and again during the second year of the program. Residency weeks take place at the Mount and provide an important opportunity for interaction with Souljourner faculty and fellow students.

Small Group Process

The small group process is an important aspect of Souljourners weekend gatherings. It is through small groups, that students are given the opportunity to develop the necessary skills such as reflective listening, asking good questions and being attentive. Through the small group experience, students establish a level of trust for good learning to take place, receive suggestions and adaptations in their directing, and have the opportunity to watch and learn from one another. Students are assigned to a small group and each group will have two Faculty Advisors. The small group will meet once twice each Souljourner weekend and Group membership will remain the same for that year of the program.

Faculty Advisor

Students will be assigned a faculty advisor at the beginning of each program year and each residency week. The faculty advisor will be one of their small group leaders during that time period. Interaction between the student and faculty advisor will include:

- Students will meet once each weekend and twice during each residency week with their assigned faculty advisor.
- Meeting times (20-30 minutes) will be set up between the faculty advisor and the student at the beginning of the weekend/residency week.
- The purpose of these meetings will be to provide the student an opportunity to reflect on his/her progress in the program, status with assignments, feedback for the faculty/staff, continued experience of call to the ministry of spiritual direction, and other questions or concerns that may arise.
- Students will submit their monthly reflection papers to their faculty advisor. The advisor will read and comment on the papers and return them to the student.

On-going Spiritual Direction

All students will participate in ongoing Spiritual Direction while participating in this program. To meet this program requirement, the student will meet every 4-6 weeks with a Spiritual Director outside of

Souljourners.

Student Requirements

For each of the two years of study, Souljourner students are expected to:

- Participate in a week-long residency in June
- Participate in 7 weekend sessions starting on Friday mid-afternoon and ending at 4:30 pm on Saturday. Students unable to attend one weekend session for pastoral or family emergencies will be expected to make up the weekend either by attending that session when it is available or, in consultation with their advisor, determine an appropriate make-up assignment. With the emphasis placed on small group process and the communal bonds of prayer, only one weekend absence per year is allowed.
- Completion of reading assignments
- Completion of seven (7) Reflection Papers assigned in conjunction with the weekend/residency sessions. All papers are due one month after the session.
- Completion of five (5) Book Reflections
- Complete all of Year I assignments, participation in an overnight discernment retreat and payment of all Year I fees

Pre-Prepracticum Experience

- In September of their second year, students will begin a supervisory experience. They are to meet with one directee each month and bring a verbatim of that session to the Souljourners weekend. These supervisory sessions will begin at 2:00 pm on the regularly scheduled Souljourners weekend. The staff will supervise the students giving them the opportunity to be supervised four times during the year, and observing three times.

For the Practicum Year, Souljourner students are expected to:

- Complete all of Year II assignments and payment of all Year II fees.
- Participate in a three-day silent retreat and a one-day orientation at the beginning of the Practicum Year, all held at the Sophia Center.
- Contract to meet monthly as a Spiritual Director with two directees for a 9 month period.
- Write verbatims from the exchanges with their directees. From these experiences the Practicum student will note their own emotional reaction and how that impacts their own journey of conversion. This information will be shared with a professional supervisor.
- Work with a trained, approved supervisor for professional supervision of their work with their directees. This supervision will consist of 9 monthly meetings with that supervisor. The focus of supervision is always primarily the inner spiritual/emotional experience of the director.
- Meet with other practicum students at Sophia Center for input and practice in the fall and the spring of the Practicum Year
- On-going support during the Practicum
 - o Former faculty advisors are available for assistance during the practicum year
 - o If a student has difficulty completing the required number of supervision sessions within the Practicum Year and upon recommendation of the faculty, the student may be granted a one-time extension for a total period of 24 months to complete the Practicum.

Program Entry

Individuals interested in joining the Souljourner Program must complete an application process with required three references. The applicant will be notified of acceptance into the program.

Program Fees

Payment Schedule

Payment of fees can be paid in full at the beginning of the year or can be paid, month by month. These arrangements can be made with Sister Eleanor Suther, OSB, Director of Sophia Center.

Scholarships

Through generous donations, we have established **The Sister Julia Wilkinson Scholarship Fund** in memory of Sr. Julia who was a Benedictine Sister on the faculty of Souljourners and a much loved Spiritual Director.

Certificate of Completion

Upon successful completion of the three year Souljourners Program as described above, Souljourners will be issued a Certificate of Completion. The Graduation celebration with the presentation of Certificates takes place at the Sophia Center on Sunday, the first day of the June Residency.