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## Agreements

Respect

Restraint

Confidentiality

Turn off ringers and beepers

Participate – stretch zone

Enjoy

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## Aims of the day

Thinking about God

Back to SD basics: what are we about?

Courage of presence / holding the space

Courage to bring God present

Questions we could ask

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## Living in troubling times

Feeling frightened and lost

Crisis

*“Political language becomes increasingly dominated by the marketing of slogans, sound bites, and the calculation of short-term advantage, in a way that effectively removes politics from considerations about the transformation of human culture.”*

(Rowan Williams, *Lost Icons*, p. 9)

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## Living in troubling times (cont)

Loss of 'story' / 'icons' / meaning and purpose

*“When a person can't find a deep sense of meaning, they distract themselves with pleasure.”* (Victor Frankl)

Spiritual direction as the space of uncertainty

Exhortation

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## Proposal

God is here, always present to those who attend

We serve our directees best when we

bring ourselves as present to God as we can (free of anxious self-concern)

help them to bring themselves as present to God as they can

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## Proposal (cont)

The primary place to do this is in the spiritual direction

This is a vulnerable place for all concerned:

*"In every consulting room there ought to be two rather frightened people. ...  
If there are not, one wonders why they are bothering to find out what everyone knows."*

(Bion, in Patrick Casement: *On Learning from the Patient*)

## Prayer

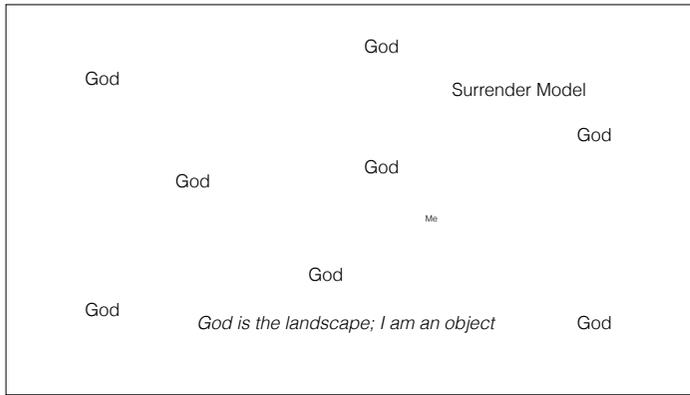
God

Requirement Model

What must I do for God?  
What is required by God?  
How do I come close to God?

Me

*God is an object on my landscape*




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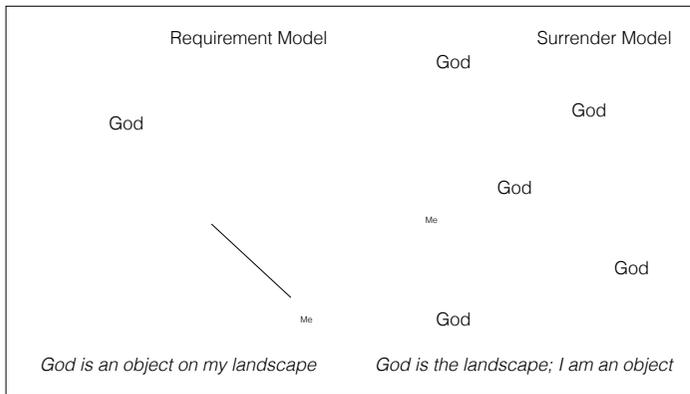
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Where is God in all this? (1)

The process of spiritual direction

- empathy
- awareness
- God

Well-being = relationship with God

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*One of the great temptations of religious living is the urge to intrude between God and other people.*

(Rowan Williams, *Silence and Honey Cakes*, p.25)

*My job is not to solve people's problems or make them happy, but to help them see the grace operating in their lives.*

(Eugene Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*, pp.5-6)

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Where is God in all this? (2)

Why not "Where is God in all this?"

God in all things

What if God is not in this?

Seeing grace operating

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Where is God in all this? (3)

What's the 'real' question?

*Examen* → discernment → consolation

When is there an increase of love for, and trust in, God?

The here and now encounter with God

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## Practising Presence (1)

*“For any self to be free to enable another’s freedom means that it must be in some way aware of the actuality, not only the possibility, of a **regard beyond desire** – and so of its own being as a proper cause of joy, as a gift.”*

(Rowan Williams, *Lost Icons*, p. 161)

## Practising Presence (2)

Our primary focus is God

Our agenda is the relationship with God

Experiment

What stops you being fully present?

*“Before anything or anyone is in relation with anything or anyone else, it’s in relation to God. ...*

*My neighbour is also always somebody who is already in a relation with God before they’re in a relation with me.*

*That means there’s a very serious limit on my freedom to make of my neighbour what I choose,*

*because, to put it very bluntly, they don’t belong to me,*

*and their relation to me is not all that is true of them, or even the most important thing that is true of them.*

*That is true of everything in the world...”*

(Rowan Williams, *Being Human*, p.36–37)

## God and the directee (2)

stop talking *about* God, and start talking *with* God

It's the relationship

It's scary

Our presence

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## God and the directee (3)

stop talking *about* God, and start talking *with* God

Spiritual Direction

Transparency

*"What God is waiting for is not a right conclusion about a matter but for our suppleness in falling into his hands for him to work in us."*

(Benedicta Ward, *Discernment – A Rare Bird*)

Discernment: Consolation

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## God and the directee (4)

stop talking *about* God, and start talking *with* God

James Finley on spiritual direction with Thomas Merton

1. How's it going?

*...bearing witness to the incarnational preciousness of the ordinary life*

2. How's it going in surrendering to God?

*...the intimacy of the avoidance of the consummation that we long for*

3. How's it going in discovering the depth of 2. percolating up through the details of 1.?

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*How's it going in surrendering yourself to the Mystery that has intimately accessed your heart and has brought you to this place that it might translate you into itself?*

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## God and the directee (5)

stop talking *about* God, and start talking *with* God

Relationship with God in the here and now, e.g.

What happens when you tell/show this to God?

What happens if you sit down and look at this with God?  
- drawing / mind map / chair work

What do you want to say to God about all this? What does God say back? How do you feel about this? (and so on)

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## God and the directee (6)

stop talking *about* God, and start talking *with* God

Ask about *Consolation*

What is most significant in what you have said?

Increased sense of trust and love for God

a situation or self-insight that has brought a greater desire to draw near to God

feelings of gratitude and generosity

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# God and the directee (7)

stop talking *about* God, and start talking *with* God

Ask about *desire*

What do you want?

What do you want from God?

What does God want for you?

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[www.thisbody.info/guildford](http://www.thisbody.info/guildford)

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