The Renewal Circle

Purpose

This circle exists to renew the Training Program for its new launch in September 2027, in continuity with the more than forty years of formation that came before. Our work is to review what currently exists, to discern what the program needs to form spiritual directors well, to prepare it for that relaunch, and to help ready the teachers who will carry it forward.

Objectives

1. Clarify the formation the program exists to accomplish.

Name, as clearly as we can, what a person should be formed into by the end. Spiritual directors who are fully formed and healthy, willing to go deep with the people they sit with. From there, name the competencies that form them and the markers by which we would know a student is developing them. This becomes the spine everything else hangs on, and every structural and content decision gets tested against it.

2. Take stock of what exists.

Inventory the current outline, the Google Classroom materials, the competency guidelines from the Institute for Spiritual Leadership by way of Lucy Abbott Tucker, and teaching materials that earlier generations of teachers have kept and are willing to share. For each, name what is strong and worth keeping, what has drifted, and what is missing. This is the honest audit the rebuild stands on. This audit is also how we learn how much of the program needs rebuilding and how much needs only tending.

3. Bring the program's pedagogy in line with sound adult education practice.

Look at how the program teaches, not only what it covers. Use established adult education models as a guide, so the program forms directors through practice and experience, in the way adults actually learn.

4. Rebuild structure and content around that formation.

With the spine clear, rebuild the shape and content of the program so it forms directors of that depth. Decide how fully the curriculum should be built out and how much is left to the teachers who carry it. Build out content for at least the program's first phase.

5. Explore how our wider community can be part of the program.

Consider ways for our directors and the broader community to be involved in the program and engaged with students, beyond the supervision relationships already in place. Our vision is a program that belongs to our whole community of directors.

6. Tend the program's front door and its standing as our cornerstone program.

Shape how the program presents itself to those encountering it for the first time, and present it clearly as the central program the Spiritual Life Center offers, the one that carries our formation work forward. This includes what the program is called.

There may also be a role for this group in helping identify and vet the teachers who will carry the program forward, and in shaping how we select them. I am still discerning that, and it may depend on who among you wishes to take that up. I would welcome your thoughts.

Desired outcomes

- A clear competency spine the whole program hangs on.
- A rebuilt two year outline, semester by semester.

- A read on where our structure aligns with, or could learn from, current adult education practice.
- Content and materials for at least the first phase, ready to hand to teachers.
- Concrete ways for the wider community to be involved with the program and its students.
- A shared sense of the program's public voice and face.
- A body ready to carry forward into the Open Hand Council once the build is done.

A note on how we will work

The work of this circle is a recommendation. It comes to me and to the board, who carry final responsibility for the program and its teachers. That is not a limit on your voice. It is what lets me hold this with a truly open hand, trusting you to shape the work while the accountability stays where it belongs. In time this group carries forward into the Open Hand Council.

The question I am bringing to you

Given these objectives, what do you think you would need, in tasks, in people, and in time, to accomplish them well? That includes how often this circle should meet and when. I will convene us and keep us moving. Weekdays and evenings are open to us. A longer first gathering would help us get grounded together, and I want to know what would actually be possible for you. I would rather we find a rhythm that fits your lives than one I set from the outside.