

ONESPIRIT INTERFAITH FOUNDATION

The Willow Pathway

Year One Curriculum Guide

Ministry Training & Spiritual Development

The Willow Path · 2026 to 2028



OneSpirit
Interfaith Foundation

2026 to 2028

What This Guide Contains

This guide sets out what actually happens in the first year of the Willow Pathway: the shape of each gateway, the texts and voices you will meet, the frameworks you will be given, and what each stage of the journey asks of you.

We publish it because a two-year formation is a serious undertaking, and you deserve to be able to picture it before you commit to it. What we cannot put on paper is what will happen in you as you move through it. That part is yours.

Why the First Year Is About You

The same sentence, five times

How We Understand Learning

The Spiral of Sacred Becoming, and what an experiential approach means in practice

The Conscious Communication Framework

Five principles, and the sacred between

How a Gateway Works

The rhythm of each gateway, and inside a small group

Spiritual Accompaniment Groups

The practice strand, and the voices you will meet in Year One

1 Sacred Welcome *October to November 2026*

2 Sacred Encounter *November to December 2026*

3 Sacred Worth *February to March 2027*

4 Sacred Responsibility *April to May 2027*

5 Sacred Listening *June to July 2027*

The Gap Between the Years

What this training asks of you, confidentiality, and your time

Why the First Year Is About You

You are probably reading this because you want to serve other people. Then you find that the whole of Year One looks inward, at your own worth, your own hidden places, your own way of being present, and something stalls.

It is a fair thing to stall at, so here is the reason.

Ministry is a giving, and you cannot give what you have never received.

That is not a phrase we added afterwards to justify the structure. It is the structure. Look at what each gateway is actually doing:

- ◆ **Sacred Welcome.** You can't offer anyone a welcome you've never had.
- ◆ **Sacred Encounter.** You can't meet someone in their shadow if you've never gone into your own.
- ◆ **Sacred Worth.** You can't tell a child they're sacred if you've never believed it about yourself.
- ◆ **Sacred Responsibility.** You can't hold power gently if you've never admitted you have any.
- ◆ **Sacred Listening.** You can't make someone feel heard if you've never felt it yourself.

Five gateways, and the same sentence five times.

So Year One is not preparation for ministry. It is the receiving that makes ministry possible. Year Two turns outward, to ceremony and to accompanying other people, and by then you will have something real to hold them with.

How We Understand Learning

Ministry is not something you do. It is someone you become. That belief shapes everything about how this curriculum is built.

Learning here is not mainly about acquiring knowledge. You will read, and think, and be given frameworks, but the aim is formation rather than information. So we do not start with a concept and then look for experiences to illustrate it. We start with the experience and let the language arrive afterwards, to help you hold what you have already found.

The Spiral of Sacred Becoming

The curriculum moves through four linked movements that repeat at greater depth. This is our own framework, drawn from experiential, transformative, contemplative and embodied traditions of adult education, and it sits underneath every gateway.

Sensing. You meet something, a text, a story, a poem, a recording, a practice, as a living presence rather than as material to get through. The invitation is to feel your way into it rather than to think about it. Discomfort and resistance are welcome as information, because what we push against usually has something to tell us. Confusion is not failure here. It is often where something starts.

Reflecting. You bring what stirred into a small group, and meaning gets made together. We gather not to resolve confusion but to go further into it in good company. Personal stories are shared and received without advice or analysis. Certainties are allowed to soften. Questions form that you could not have asked before.

Integrating. The whole class gathers and what emerged in the separate circles is woven together. We look for confluence rather than consensus, streams meeting without being forced to merge. Patterns surface that nobody could have seen alone.

Languaging. Only now do frameworks and vocabulary arrive, offered as provisional maps rather than settled truths. You put words to what you have lived, and the act of articulating it deepens the learning again.

These movements form a spiral rather than a circle. Each turn lifts you to a new level. You meet difference with more steadiness and more curiosity. You can sit in ambiguity for longer without reaching for a conclusion. The words you find become more textured, rooted in felt sense rather than in abstraction. The same five gateways return in Year Two because the point is not to cover them once but to travel them again, deeper.

What an Experiential Approach Means in Practice

Teaching is not delivered at you. You meet the material before the live session, so that time together can be spent exploring, practising and reflecting rather than receiving. Live sessions are workshops, not lectures.

Your experience is the curriculum. Your questions, your resistances, your body's responses and your history are not preliminaries to the real content. They are the content.

There are several ways in. The four movements are interdependent rather than sequential, so you can step onto the spiral wherever your energy is strongest. Some students arrive full of sensory curiosity. Others come alive in group reflection, or in synthesis, or in the work of finding words. Each entry point is valid, and the spiral soon carries you through all four.

Different rhythms are held. Some people move through all four movements quickly. Others stay in sensing or reflecting for weeks before momentum builds. The structure flexes to hold both.

Traditions are not harmonised. Each spiritual tradition comes from its own complete way of knowing. We work to avoid the pattern where Western academic frameworks quietly become the standard against which everything else is measured, and where oral, embodied and indigenous wisdom gets treated as a lesser or more exotic kind of knowledge. This matters more than it might sound. An approach meant to bridge difference contradicts itself if it treats its own worldview as the default.

There are no grades or rankings. We practise what we call assessment as sacred witnessing, which means recognising and naming change through dialogue, feedback and mutual reflection, with tutors, peers and you all contributing. Progress is measured by depth of engagement, growing self-awareness, and your capacity to serve with presence and ethical responsibility. That does not make readiness a formality. The people we ordain will serve real families at real thresholds, and discerning readiness is a responsibility we hold on their behalf. What changes is how that discernment is reached.

The Conscious Communication Framework

Running through the whole training is our own framework, and it is the most distinctive thing we teach.

Conscious Communication is our understanding of communication itself as a spiritual practice, as essential to a life of service as prayer or meditation. Its centre is Martin Buber's account of what happens when two people meet. We can meet another person as *It*, an object to be categorised, managed, solved or used, or as *Thou*, a presence encountered in its own mystery. Buber wrote that spirit is not in the I, but between I and You. That *between*, the living space of a relationship which both people inhabit and neither owns, is where real meeting happens, and it is what the framework is actually about.

Five principles give the practice its form, and Year One is built so that each gateway brings one of them forward in turn.

Embodied Presence as Foundation (*Gateway 1*). The way of arriving. Awareness of your own state as the condition of honest meeting: what the head is rehearsing, what the heart walked in with, what the body is doing with the breath.

Multiple Literacies as Gateways (*Gateway 2*). Attention turned outward. Fluency across the emotional, somatic, spiritual and cultural registers in which people communicate far more than they say.

Developmental Awareness as Compassion (*Gateway 3*). Meeting another person's becoming without measuring it. Responsiveness without appraisal.

Systems Consciousness as Sacred Ecology (*Gateway 4*). Seeing the invisible systems, and above all the power, at work in every exchange.

Transformative Intent as Ministry (*Gateway 5*). Not a fifth capacity but the intention beneath the other four. What the whole practice is for.

The order is not accidental. You begin with how you arrive, because everything that follows depends on it. Attention then turns outward to how other people communicate, then to meeting their becoming without ranking it, then to the systems and the power at work between you, and finally to what the whole practice is for.

They are not a checklist or a hierarchy, and the sequence is a way in rather than a ladder. They work more like a mandala, each one containing and reflecting the others, none complete alone. All five are present in every gateway. One is simply brought to the front. And all five return in Year Two at greater depth.

Two things are worth saying plainly. The framework is a medium rather than a tool, the water you learn to swim in and carry away rather than an instrument you pick up and apply. You will be on the receiving end of this kind of communication from your tutors long before anyone asks you to practise it.

And the ground is not the framework. The framework is our best current articulation of a practice. What it stands on is the belief in the unearned worth of every person, and the sacred between where meeting

happens. Once a framework starts being treated as the thing itself rather than a way towards it, what it describes has already been lost.

Each principle also carries a guard against its own misuse, mostly against spiritual bypassing, which is the use of beautiful spiritual language to step around the harder work a moment is asking for. You will meet those guards throughout the year.

How a Gateway Works

Year One moves through five gateways. Each spans five Tuesday evenings, 6:00 to 9:00pm UK time, and each follows the same rhythm. That rhythm is the spiral made practical, because every stage is one of the four movements.

Enquiry Hub Post (*Sensing*). Before you gather, resources appear in the online classroom: a reading, a poem, a recording, a short practice, a set of questions. You spend time with them in your own way and at your own pace. You are not asked to arrive with answers, only to notice what stirs.

Small Group Session (*Reflecting*). Around ten of you, held by two associate tutors. This is where the theme moves from something you have read into something you have lived. Dialogue is facilitated, not taught. The small group takes the first part of the evening. The second part belongs to your spiritual accompaniment group, described below.

Wisdom Council (*Integrating*). The whole class gathers. Each small group brings the themes and questions that came up in its circle, so that patterns can surface which no single group could have seen.

Articulation Hub Post (*Languageing*). Frameworks and language are then offered, deliberately after the experience rather than before it. You have already met the territory. Now you are given words for it.

Threshold Ceremony. Each gateway closes ceremonially, with the same intention it was opened with.

Gateways 2 to 5 run this rhythm twice, as two cycles, with the second cycle deepening or turning the enquiry of the first. Gateway 1, as an arrival, has its own shape.

Inside a Small Group

Small groups are the intimate heart of the year.

Sessions open with a check-in and a short spiritual practice: a candle lit, a reading, a few breaths taken together. The central hour begins with a prompt that brings every voice into the room early, often something like *what landed in your body as you engaged with this week's enquiry?* A word or a short sentence is enough. Hesitancy and uncertainty are welcome. From there the dialogue widens, guided by Socratic questions.

Socratic facilitation is our house style, and it means something specific. Real questions, asked from wonder rather than from wanting a particular answer, followed by enough silence for something true to arrive. Your tutors are trained to ask and then wait. They follow threads rather than individuals, so that no one person becomes the focus of the group's attention. They are not there to teach, interpret, diagnose or resolve. They are there to hold a steady field in which you can notice what is yours to notice.

Sessions close with each person naming what they are taking away, and a short closing practice.

Spiritual Accompaniment Groups

The second half of each small-group evening is given to spiritual accompaniment.

Where the small group is about understanding the gateway's theme together, accompaniment groups are about practising the thing itself. In smaller, consistent groupings you take turns to speak and to be accompanied, and to sit as witness while others do the same. What is asked of you is not expertise but presence: staying with another person's unfolding without steering it, advising, or tidying it away.

This is the strand where the year's ideas become a practised capacity. Everything the gateways open, welcome, encounter, worth, responsibility, listening, has to become something you can actually offer another human being, in real time, when you are tired and unsure and nobody has given you a script. Accompaniment groups are where that starts. It is also why Gateway 5's naming of spiritual accompaniment describes work you will already have been doing rather than a new idea introduced at the end of the year.

The groups run alongside the gateways throughout Year One and deepen considerably in Year Two, where accompaniment becomes a central focus of the training.

The detailed shape of these groups is being finalised for the Willow Path, and full particulars will be confirmed before the year begins.

The Voices You Will Meet in Year One

We train interfaith ministers, and the interfaith work of this year is not a survey of world religions conducted from a safe distance. You meet particular texts, teachers and living people from particular traditions, and you let them work on you.

In Year One these include Robin Wall Kimmerer carrying the Haudenosaunee story of Skywoman, the Sufi poet Rumi, the *Tao Te Ching*, Yoruba traditions of the praise poem shared by a member of our own team, Thich Nhat Hanh, Krister Stendahl, Henri Nouwen, and the Celtic understanding of the *anam cara*, the soul friend.

You will also meet ministers and ordinands from within our own community, speaking on camera about their journeys, and people whose faith and culture differ from your own, telling their own life stories in their own words. Alongside them come thinkers from outside the religious traditions altogether: Jung on shadow, Wendell Berry, Parker Palmer, Otto Scharmer, Hedy Schleifer, the Johari Window.

Traditions are held side by side without being harmonised. One of the disciplines of this year is learning to say, honestly, *I do not fully understand this, and I do not need to in order to honour it.*

GATEWAY ONE

Sacred Welcome

Weeks 1–5 • 6 October to 3 November 2026

Conscious Communication principle: *Embodied Presence as Foundation*

You can't offer anyone a welcome you've never had.

Every journey begins with an arrival. Gateway 1 is a threshold crossing. You move from being an applicant to being part of a learning community that will hold you for two years. Its work is to establish the ground everything else stands on: how this community listens, what it means to be witnessed here, and how a group of strangers becomes a circle capable of holding difficult and beautiful things.

You are witnessed in this gateway not for what you know but for who you are.

This gateway brings forward **Embodied Presence as Foundation**, the first principle of the Conscious Communication Framework. Before a word is spoken your state has already arrived: the rhythm of the breath, the set of the shoulders, the openness or guardedness of the body. Other people receive it, mostly without knowing they are receiving anything. So the first discipline of conscious communication is not a way of speaking at all. It is a way of arriving, and this is where you begin learning it on yourself, in a room full of strangers becoming a community.

WHAT THIS GATEWAY ASKS OF YOU

- ♦ To enter a learning community as a rite rather than an enrolment
- ♦ To begin feeling your own body and voice within a relational field
- ♦ To try giving and receiving feedback that carries no evaluation
- ♦ To find out, in practice, that being seen and heard is a spiritual act

HOW IT UNFOLDS

The gateway opens with a ceremonial arrival as the Willow Path, followed by a session in which the group builds its own agreements about how it will work together. Resources on welcome are then released in the online classroom, drawn on in your first small group, harvested in a Wisdom Council, given language in an Articulation Hub post, and closed ceremonially.

WHAT YOU WILL BE WORKING WITH

Chapter 1 of Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*, where Skywoman falls and a world gathers to receive her. Rumi's *The Guest House*, with its invitation to welcome everything that arrives at the door,

including what we would rather turn away. Chapter 16 of the *Tao Te Ching*, where arrival is also a returning and emptiness is something to be attained rather than filled.

Two frameworks are introduced and will stay with you throughout the training: the **Conscious Communication Framework**, our own articulation of communication as spiritual practice, and the **Johari Window**, a way of working with what is known and unknown to ourselves and to others.

A QUESTION FROM THIS GATEWAY

You have crossed the threshold carrying all of who you are, welcomed and unwelcomed parts, certainties and uncertainties, hopes and sorrows. If this training were to offer you the kind of welcome Rumi describes, welcoming all of what you have brought, what would that make possible?



GATEWAY TWO

Sacred Encounter

17 November to 15 December 2026

Conscious Communication principle: *Multiple Literacies as Gateways*

You can't meet someone in their shadow if you've never gone into your own.

Gateway 1 was arrival. Gateway 2 is settling in, and the moment the focus turns. Having been welcomed, you begin to ask a harder question. Not what am I getting from this relationship, but what am I bringing to it?

This gateway works with difference, self-reflection, feedback and spiritual responsibility. It takes seriously the idea that the parts of ourselves we have learned to keep hidden, what Jung called shadow, do not disappear. They show up in how we meet other people.

It brings forward **Multiple Literacies as Gateways**, the second principle of the framework. Having begun to attend to your own arriving, attention now turns outward, to the emotional, somatic, spiritual and cultural registers in which people communicate far more than they ever put into words. Learning to read those registers also means learning how much of what you take to be perception of another person is your own unattended state, thrown outward and mistaken for theirs.

WHAT THIS GATEWAY ASKS OF YOU

- ◆ To meet yourself and others with curiosity, enjoyment and discomfort, all held as information rather than as problems
- ◆ To sit with the question of who the other is, and how othering and unconscious bias work in you
- ◆ To learn tools for reflection, including the practice of Practising the Pause
- ◆ To connect what you notice inwardly to your actual impact on other people
- ◆ To begin speaking and listening as acts of ethical care

HOW IT UNFOLDS

Cycle 1, what others see that we cannot. The enquiry turns inward. What have you learned to keep small or hidden, and where did you learn it was unacceptable?

Cycle 2, the mirror in the forest. The enquiry turns outward again, not as an escape from the inner work but as its extension. What arises between you and another person, irritation, admiration, protectiveness, discomfort, becomes a doorway into what you cannot yet see in yourself. The gateway closes with a threshold ceremony.

WHAT YOU WILL BE WORKING WITH

Wendell Berry's poetry, and the proposition that the dark has its own life and its own gifts rather than being merely an absence. Jung's account of shadow, held as invitation rather than diagnosis. Parker Palmer's image of waiting quietly for the wild animal of the soul rather than crashing through the woods after it. The Johari Window, met in Gateway 1, is welcomed back here and put to work: a way of holding what is known and unknown, seen and unseen, in yourself and to others.

A QUESTION FROM THIS GATEWAY

When someone provokes a strong reaction in you, irritation, admiration, or discomfort, what might they be reflecting back that you cannot yet see in yourself? What feels true about that possibility, and what feels uncomfortable?



GATEWAY THREE

Sacred Worth

9 February to 9 March 2027

Conscious Communication principle: *Developmental Awareness as Compassion*

You can't tell a child they're sacred if you've never believed it about yourself.

Gateway 3 turns to the question underneath all the others. What makes you sacred, before you do anything to earn it?

This is where ceremony work begins, and the ordering is deliberate. Before you can stand in ceremony and affirm the worth of another person, you need to have met the worth that was always yours. Before you can bless, you need some taste of what it is to be blessed.

It brings forward **Developmental Awareness as Compassion**, the recognition that growth is not linear, that access to a sense of worth comes and goes, and that finding it hard to feel worthy is part of development rather than a failure of it.

WHAT THIS GATEWAY ASKS OF YOU

- ♦ To recognise, in your body and not only in your understanding, that worth is inherent rather than earned, and to name the conditioning that has obscured that
- ♦ To hold other people in reverence regardless of belief or background
- ♦ To understand that capacities fluctuate, that people are always becoming, and that meeting others where they actually are is a ministerial practice rooted in self-compassion
- ♦ To design and share a baby blessing as a creative act of ministry

HOW IT UNFOLDS

Cycle 1, worth before words. Not analysis but memory, sensation and imagination. You are invited to consider a time before your identity was shaped by praise or criticism, and to notice what happens in your body when you hear the words *you are worthy, exactly as you are*. Softening, resistance, grief, scepticism, or a voice that says yes but. All of it is the curriculum.

Cycle 2, from recognition to reclamation. You begin experimenting with welcoming the self you once rejected, and with how extending worth inward reshapes how you meet other people. Ceremonial language starts to emerge: blessing the newborn self, naming sacred qualities, speaking dignity aloud. From here you design your baby blessing.

WHAT YOU WILL BE WORKING WITH

Yoruba traditions around the birth of a child, and the praise poem, its effect on the child who receives it and on the adult that child becomes, shared with us by a member of the OneSpirit team. Contemplative video and sound resources on sacredness and on the world before language. Your own earliest messages about where worth comes from.

A QUESTION FROM THIS GATEWAY

If your capacity to feel your own worth fluctuates, some days stronger, some days harder to reach, what does that tell you about meeting other people in their own fluctuating capacities?



GATEWAY FOUR

Sacred Responsibility

6 April to 4 May 2027

Conscious Communication principle: *Systems Consciousness as Sacred Ecology*

You can't hold power gently if you've never admitted you have any.

Gateway 4 marks an expansion. Having explored welcome, encounter and worth, you turn outward to a question that will follow you through your whole ministry. Where am I located within the systems that shape me, and how do my actions ripple through them?

It brings forward **Systems Consciousness as Sacred Ecology**, the recognition that we exist within webs of mutual influence, and that ministry requires accountability to patterns larger than any single encounter.

WHAT THIS GATEWAY ASKS OF YOU

- ♦ To meet the question, what is my power, and how does it affect other people
- ♦ To feel, and not only understand, that you exist within interconnected systems and that your actions have effects beyond what you can see
- ♦ To notice how power operates in groups, and to name the difference between wielding power unconsciously and holding it with responsibility
- ♦ To approach other traditions with humility, and to explore interfaith encounter as an ethical responsibility rather than a courtesy
- ♦ To begin sensing how ethical frameworks emerge from lived experience rather than from abstract principle

HOW IT UNFOLDS

Cycle 1, power in nature, power in relationship. The cycle does not begin with theory. It begins with imagery and sensation: water that shapes a valley not by fighting rock but by meeting it, again and again. You are invited to place a hand on your belly, take three breaths, and notice what arises when you hear the words *you hold power*. Recognition, resistance, a voice that says not me. All of it is information. The Johari Window returns, now through a lens of power, disclosure and consent.

Cycle 2, sacred responsibility in encounter. From recognition towards responsibility. If I am interconnected with all things, what does that ask of me? The gateway closes with a threshold ceremony.

WHAT YOU WILL BE WORKING WITH

Passages from the *Tao Te Ching* on water and power. A short film on the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone and how it changed the course of rivers. Thich Nhat Hanh's poem *Please Call Me By My True Names*, offered not as a lesson in non-dual philosophy but as something to receive and notice.

Stendahl's Three Rules for Religious Understanding, articulated by Krister Stendahl. When trying to understand another religion, ask its adherents rather than its critics. Compare your best to their best, not your best to their worst. And leave room for holy envy, the capacity to be genuinely moved by what you find in another tradition.

And the **Principle of Reciprocity** across wisdom traditions, a name we have chosen deliberately in place of the Golden Rule, because that phrase emerged from a Christian context and can suggest that expressions of reciprocity across traditions are more unified than they actually are. Each tradition articulates it differently, and those differences matter. Choosing the name is itself an application of Stendahl's invitation: let traditions speak for themselves rather than fitting them into convenient categories.

A QUESTION FROM THIS GATEWAY

Where might you have compared your best to another tradition's worst, without realising it?



GATEWAY FIVE

Sacred Listening

8 June to 6 July 2027

Conscious Communication principle: *Transformative Intent as Ministry*

You can't make someone feel heard if you've never felt it yourself.

Gateway 5 completes the first year. Having moved through welcome, encounter, worth and responsibility, you turn towards the practice that carries all of them into ministry. Listening.

Before a minister speaks, blesses, accompanies or leads, they listen. When you later sit with the bereaved, accompany someone in doubt, or hold space in ceremony, the quality of your ministry will rest on whether you learned, here, to listen in a way that genuinely meets another person rather than trying to lead, fix or shape their experience.

This gateway brings forward **Transformative Intent as Ministry**, the fifth principle of the framework, and its meaning is more precise and more demanding than it first sounds. Transformative intent is not the intent to transform the other person. It is not even, quite, offering them a space in which they might change while we look on, because that still leaves us standing outside, working on them. What is transformed, when listening is real, is the relationship itself, the space between two people. The listener is inside that space and is changed within it as surely as the one being heard.

WHAT THIS GATEWAY ASKS OF YOU

The standard here is contact, not competence. We are not asking you to become an accomplished listener in five weeks. We are asking you to begin making real contact with what listening is, and with yourself in the act of it.

- ◆ To attend to another person with grounded presence, noticing your own bodily reactions, filters and assumptions
- ◆ To recognise the level from which you are listening, and when it shifts
- ◆ To begin crossing towards another person's world, including across faith and culture, while letting that world remain genuinely theirs
- ◆ To gather welcome, encounter, worth and responsibility into an emerging sense of who you are becoming as a minister

HOW IT UNFOLDS

Cycle 1, what do we put down in order to listen? You meet recordings of trainee ministers and ordinands from our own community, speaking about their journeys towards ordination. You pause first on a still image, the face and the name, before you listen, and notice what arises simply in meeting someone. Then you listen, and attend to what moves in you: the assumptions, the self-critic, the pull to respond or to fix. Drawing lightly on Scharmer's levels of listening, you begin to distinguish listening that merely confirms what you already think from listening that is genuinely open. The discipline at the heart of the gateway is introduced here: to attend, and to ask, in service of the speaker's own deepening rather than your own curiosity.

Cycle 2, crossing towards another's world. Building on Gateway 4's interfaith work, you consider what it is to leave your own world for a while and move towards someone else's. You listen to people whose faith and culture differ from your own, telling their own life stories in their own words, and you notice what assumption or bias stirs, where comfort and discomfort live, and whether accent or language becomes a barrier to your listening. And you meet an honesty this gateway insists on: that you never quite arrive. You do not become the other person or fully grasp their world, and part of the respect you owe is to let it remain theirs.

Some resources in this cycle carry content notes, and you are free to engage with them in short pieces, to return when you feel able, or not to engage at all.

WHAT YOU WILL BE WORKING WITH

Hedy Schleifer's image of a bridge spanning the space between two people, and of crossing it carrying only curiosity, compassion and open-heartedness, grounded in Martin Buber's conviction that our relationships live in the space between us and that this space is sacred.

Recorded life stories from ministers in training and from people outside our community whose worlds are not yours. Henri Nouwen on hospitality as the creation of free space where a stranger can become a friend, hospitality that changes the host as much as the guest.

WHAT WE ARE FORMING HERE, AND WHAT WE ARE NOT

The capacity this gateway cultivates is closest to what is called **spiritual accompaniment**: deep listening that lets another person's story and spiritual experience unfurl in their own terms, a walking alongside that honours their agency without imposing, diagnosing or directing. This is the listening of the *anam cara*, the soul friend, and it is the form much interfaith ministry actually takes.

It is not counselling or therapy, which work with psychological healing and diagnosis. We are not training counsellors. It is not spiritual direction in the older, hierarchical sense, nor coaching, which is goal-directed. Some of our resources come from the counselling world, including the BACP framework, and we draw on them for transferable insight into listening, not to position you as a counsellor. In a field where these roles blur, and where harm tends to happen exactly where they are confused, the discipline is to know which lane you are in and to stay in it.

A QUESTION FROM THIS GATEWAY

Was there something you could not fully understand? What was it like to stay with it, rather than translating it into something familiar?



The Gap Between the Years

Year One closes, and then the weekly rhythm stops.

Over August you carry a self-directed learning project focused on deep listening practice, formation that travels, sustaining your practice through the break and preparing the ground for Year Two. We also ask that you have one supervision session across the gap.

In Year Two the same five gateways return as familiar thresholds, met again at greater depth, with an increasing focus on ceremony and spiritual accompaniment. The direction of travel reverses. Having spent a year receiving, you begin to give.

What This Training Asks of You

We want to be honest about the nature of this work.

These gateways touch tender territory: early messages about your worth, the parts of yourself you have kept hidden, your relationship with power and authority, your own biases, and the discomfort of genuine difference. Some resources carry content notes, and some come with an explicit invitation to engage in short pieces, to return when you feel able, or not to engage at all.

You are invited to engage at your own depth and pace, always. Nothing needs to be resolved. That invitation sits alongside a set of participation expectations, covering attendance, preparation, and the commitments you make to your group, which are set out in **Your Training Commitment**. The two documents are designed to be read together.

Our tutors are trained to hold structure, equal voice, gentle pacing and somatic grounding, and to follow the collective thread rather than turning any one person's story into the centre of the room. Small groups are spaces for noticing, not for catharsis, confession or therapeutic processing.

Alongside this you have regular one-to-one supervision with an accredited supervisor, a designated tutor, and a wider team. Where something exceeds what formation practice can hold, we will support you towards the right professional help.

Safety, as we understand it, is not the same as comfort. This training will ask you to stay present to discomfort rather than be spared it. What we commit to is that you will not be asked to do that alone.

What Is Held in Confidence

What is shared in a small group stays within that circle. Personal stories and experiences are not repeated outside it in any way that identifies individuals.

Your tutors bring collective themes to the tutor team, and some of these may be reflected back into whole-class sessions to support everyone's learning, but no names or private details are shared without permission. Before each Wisdom Council your group decides together what it wishes to carry forward,

chooses its own spokesperson, and is asked directly whether anything from the evening should not be referenced at all, even thematically.

If we ever became concerned that someone was at risk of harm, we have a duty of care to pass that concern to the tutor team so that appropriate support can be offered.

Your Time Across a Gateway

- ◆ Five live Tuesday evening sessions, 6:00 to 9:00pm UK time, including your spiritual accompaniment group
- ◆ Engagement with Enquiry Hub and Articulation Hub materials, at your own pace
- ◆ Reflective practice and journalling
- ◆ Gateway reflections at the opening and close
- ◆ One supervision session of about an hour, and one tutorial with your designated tutor of about thirty minutes

Around **6 to 8 hours per week** during active teaching periods, including live sessions. Natural pauses and integration periods are built into the year, and elective module blocks fall in January and May.

Year One is titled roots and formation. Its work is inward: presence, self-knowledge, and the capacity to be honestly met. You cannot give a welcome you have never had, and everything you receive here becomes the ground on which Year Two's ministry stands.



OneSpirit
Interfaith Foundation

The Willow Pathway

Year One · Roots & Formation

Applications for the Willow class are open now.
interfaithfoundation.org