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| **Charlotte Spirituality Center** | **Director:** | *Esther Hethcox* | | |
| **Spiritual Direction Verbatim** | **Directee:** | *Mary* | | |
|  | **Date of Session:** | *11/20/2024* | **Session #** | 1 |
| **Session Location:** | *Outdoor coffee shop* | | |

**Introduction:** *This verbatim is a conversation with a parishioner re-imagined for spiritual direction. Identification markers have been changed. Mary is a 28 yea-old woman earning her PhD at UNC. She grew up in Spain, with a Catholic mother and Protestant father, and practiced Catholicism while attending an all-girls Catholic school. She realized she was queer in this time, and for the past 15-20 years, has been deeply wrestling with how be a part of a faith community that she believes will never fully affirm her being. She left the Catholic church and only began attending in the past year through campus Catholic life. She is on the quiet side, warm and joyful, but also cautious. Her friends, who are young adults of my church, encouraged her to talk with me about her journey. We are meeting in an outdoor coffee shop, that has space to talk intimately.*

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| **Dialogue** | **Thoughts of Director** | **Feelings of Director** | **Body Response in Director** | **Body Response in Directee** | **Intuition** |
| SD 1 - Mary, hi! It’s so great to see you! | She looks a lot more at ease than when we first met (at a gathering) | eager | reaches out to touch arm | extends arms for a hug | felt like there was preestablished trust & comfort |
| D 1 - Hi! Thank you so much for meeting me—I’ve been looking forward to it since my friends mentioned you and FPC, it sounds like you do such cool work there. | Nice | affirmed |  |  |  |
| SD 2 – It’s a great gig, and allows me to meet wonderful people! I’m grateful for your openness to meet. | Don’t want this to become about me + ministry small talk |  |  |  |  |
| D 2 - Yes! Aubrey and Jack mentioned that you might be helpful to talk to. I don’t even know where to start… | She’s naming a need/want, it’s a Big Thing | Glad she is direct that she wants to talk, but feeling cautious | leans in, makes eye contact | Also leans in | the pre-existing trust is really helpful for this—but don’t be too comfortable/bold/risky |
| SD 3 - Is there a word that comes to mind when you think of what you’re holding? | Gently guiding | Still cautious |  |  |  |
| D 3 - \*pauses\* paradoxical | Interesting | Curious | moves head, small smile | Smile as well | Okay, ready to talk about something… |
| SD 4 - why that word? |  |  |  |  |  |
| D 4 - I feel like I live two lives…in one I love God and love the church, and in the other I love myself but know that the church and God will never love me. I feel like this love is a paradox—it’s all intertwined with hate. | Ooofff. Gonna let that sit for a minute | Sad | Trying not to tear up |  |  |
| SD 5 - I’m hearing that you don’t believe these two can exist without contradiction | Saying what she said in different words |  |  |  |  |
| D 5 - Yeah, I feel like I have to choose one or the other. | Wow, that is a lot of pressure | Sad | Trying not to nod and have that taken as affirmation that these things are true |  |  |
| SD 6 - (gives a moment of silence) “love intertwined with hate” is an interesting phrase. Help me understand that. | let that sit for a moment. There is a lot of ideas about God from others in her words, but not her own ideas. | Curious | Leaning in still, eye contact | Eye contact | Want to see where we go from here |
| D 6 - I guess…I can’t shake the idea that God hates who I am, that I’m a sin. It just follows me every time I’m in a church. And it sucks because I love the church and love God but God hates me. | Kinda starting to go in a cycle | Sad |  |  |  |
| SD 7 - Hate is a such a strong word. I wonder--have you heard that word from God? | Wanting to pull back from words of others and feelings of unsafety. Use this time to wonder | Hopeful but cautious, not sure if this is too far | Still leaning in | Sits back to think |  |
| D 7 - \*pauses\* like…directly? A voice from heaven like? |  |  |  |  |  |
| SD 8 - sure—or scripture, music, witness, movies, anything. | Really not sure if I’ve wandered into therapy space | Conflicted about going farther |  |  |  |
| D 8 - I guess…just from my family. And other Christians. \*silence for a minute\* but yeah, I guess…not from God himself. |  |  |  |  |  |
| SD 9 – well, you also used the word love several times. Have you heard that word from God? | Still not sure if this is ok | Still conflicted |  |  |  |
| D 9 - Yeah, but not in those direct words. More like in descriptions of God’s love for the world and Jesus saying God loves us. Have you? | Conflicted about sharing or not, but this is a moment to place God’s love next to all the hate that is being remembered | Feel like sharing a little (but not too personal) will be a moment of trust building |  | She’s looking at my intently |  |
| SD 10 - Isaiah 43, verse 4 ends with the clearest I’ve ever heard; “and I love you.” |  |  |  |  |  |
| D 10 – That’s pretty damn clear. | Good reception | A little relieved, never want to force scripture on others |  | Says with a laugh and smile, but eyes start to show tears |  |
| SD 11: I notice that your having a response to that. |  |  |  |  |  |
| D 11: I don’t think I ever have been told that God has said those words packed together. I hear “For God so loved the world” and stuff…but never with the “I” and the “you”  SD 12: there is a lot of room between that “I” and “you”—let’s sit for a time in that space, and hold that love in this particular moment. And if something stirs or rises up for you, that can be named. And if silence is what it becomes, that is good too.  D 13: I would like that. | She seems relieved, hopeful | Feeling some hope too |  |  |  |
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*Reflections*

*This was much more difficult to write than I thought it would be. While I changed a lot of identifying facts and cut out a lot of the conversation, everything written was named in this time together, I just adjusted my responses to be a little less pastor-y/responding more and trying to be more quiet and just nudge toward something. It’s hard not to make a space to affirm and offer a theology of healing (which is usually how these conversations end up as they are seeking that) and to just nudge. I believe my struggle lies in the question of how pastors can be spiritual directors. I couldn’t get away from the pastoral part of me (especially in D9/SD10) Do we have to turn off the pastor part of us completely? Just a wondering :)*