



The Expanding Spiritual Ecosystem and Community Spiritual Companions

Since publishing *Transforming Church for North America's Evolving Spiritual Ecosystem* in 2015, the emergence of a new professional and lay ministry role signals an expansion of the Spiritual Ecosystem – the Community Spiritual Companion. The Community Spiritual Companion supports people of any faith or no faith explore life's meaning and purpose in the practical life of the community. Grounded deeply in personal spiritual understanding and practice combined with openness, the Community Spiritual Companion works collaboratively in the community for love, healing and justice. Within the church, the work includes fostering lay leadership growth that links personal spirituality with active life in the wider community.

This developing role reframes church community outreach, reframes the community's understanding of the church's ministry and locates that ministry as arising from within the heart of the community itself. The Community Spiritual Companion may or may not be connected to a church in a recognized professional role. The role may emerge through a church appointment or call, but may also emerge through iterative ministry prototyping from within the community itself, as validated by the signals of change included in the insert. This emerging role is particularly well suited to rural communities.

Signals of change illustrating how this new role is beginning to evolve include Communities in Faith Pastoral Charge in Trail, BC, the English Montreal School Board, and the emerging role of Rev Dr. Therese DesCamp in New Denver, BC.

The Community Spiritual Companion role supports the recombinant church¹ by:



Fostering interest driven collaboration and community.



Cultivating cultures of innovation, information sharing, and continuous learning.



Facilitating experience based religious and spiritual experiences.



Sharing practices that support a variety of pathways toward spiritual growth, partnering beyond the institutional church.



Expanding and intensifying collaborations with unaffiliated people to heal the world and enact love and justice.



Treating the spiritual journey as a shared community asset among many spiritual guides, community traditions and cultural contexts.

¹This phrase and much of the discussion of socio-cultural changes derive from KnowledgeWorks' ten-year forecast on the future of learning, *Recombinant Education: Regenerating the Learning Ecosystem* (2012). © 2018 Creative Commons License Attribution Share Alike 4.0 International, George Meier and Katherine Prince. Some rights reserved. To view a copy of this license, visit [creativecommons.org](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).

Exploring the Emerging Community Spiritual Companion Role

Communities In Faith Pastoral Charge is authorized to search for a minister that includes one-quarter time as Community Spiritual Companion



Communities in Faith understands its ministry as community spiritual companions ready in new ways to walk with its communities to deepen just and loving relationships and support spiritual growth and formation.

Duties require working collaboratively in the community to promote spiritual well-being, which includes love and justice and empowering others to do the work of theological reflection in their own lives to find meaning, purpose and hope for the future.

Position created after leadership team completed courses of study and considered the New Denver, BC work, and the English Montreal Board of Education Spiritual Community Animator program in relation to the CIF context.

Building upon community relationships, Rev Dr. Therese DesCamp emerges through prototype ministries as a Community Spiritual Companion



Spiritual Director, Communion celebrant for local United Church, retreat leader, responder in community crises, school resource on religious traditions, and co-facilitator with Buddhist CSC for Practices for Living Deeply classes.

Collaboration with Turner Zion Pastoral Charge in New Denver, BC area to implement its community ministries. <http://www.widespot.ca> <http://www.heartsrest.com>

Contemplative in the Kootenays created as a monthly gathering that practices Centering Prayer, lectio divina, and an open communion table. Broadly and deeply Christian, it draws from more than six communities. <http://www.widespot.ca>

In collaboration with the local United Church, Hospice, Healthy Community and Mountain Film Festival Societies, WideSpot community events include music, food and discussion. Initiated with help and prayers of members of Contemplative in the Kootenays. <http://www.widespot.ca>

With the help of Contemplative group members, a spiritual lending library is created and located in a New Denver shop.

Convergence Writers' Retreat on Social Justice and Spirituality growing out of request by local writers. Convergence draws internationally acclaimed writers as presenters. <http://www.widespot.ca/convergence> - Convergence Chronology

English Montreal School Board Creates Eleven Positions for Spiritual and Community Animation



For all Elementary and Secondary Students of any background. Facilitates students' involvement in community, builds links between the students' spiritual life and community involvement, addresses social justice, and helps students develop personal meaning and purpose.

Provides information to staff, parents, and students with respect to student's needs in terms of spiritual life and community involvement.

Resources supporting this educational approach: Lisa Miller, *The Spiritual Child* 2015; Emily Esfahani Smith, *The Power of Meaning* 2017.