

Spiritual Companion Groups

Spiritual Companion Groups are small groups of 2-4 people who are each committed to experimenting with the Living Spirit in their lives. Each member experiments with allowing the Spirit to guide and shape their daily life attitudes, behaviors, possessions, and decisions, and recording that experiment in a journal or notebook. Each member is changing in their private and public lives.

Companion Groups meet regularly, every 1-3 weeks, to exchange attention, test discernment, and witness how different this experiment manifests in each person's life. Tests of discernment include writing the insights or practices that arise, saying them to others, hearing them reflected back in another's voice, and responding to others' feedback.

Companion Groups meet for 1-2 hours and divide the time equally among the group members. During your turn, in the presence of your companions, do your own work. Take this time to allow yourself to be tendered by Spirit, listen inwardly, release emotion, explore what's rising. Do not try to explain or make sense to others. When you are clear, it's usually quite simple and clear to others, at which point you may ask for reflection back or for feedback.

Go slow so you do not fall into familiar patterns such as sharing spiritual journeys, responding to queries, discussing a passage or text, supportive conversation, and so forth. These may help at any given point, but are not the Companion Group format of turning to Spirit expectantly waiting for guidance, then yielding to it in your life and testing that with others. Practice this format until it becomes normal and natural.

Companions attend to what has arisen in each individual, which then reveals what is true for all the members of the whole group. Several Companion Groups may meet as a community in a local area. At such gatherings, companion groups attend to what has arisen as true for whole companion groups, which then reveals what is true for everyone as a community.

For more information:

Nadine Hoover (New York YM) has recorded a series of video teaching clips from Conscience Studios. You might enjoy many of them here: <https://www.youtube.com/@ConscienceStudio/videos>. But two in particular explain the practice of Spiritual Companion Groups:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B7yrdf_eGX0 **Experiment with the Living Spirit**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-TybVYWaCc&t=4s> **Spiritual Companions**

Companion Group Format

Commit to Experiment with Spirit in Your Life

- **Experiment** with being inwardly guided by Spirit to shape and guide your life. Ask regularly: What do I need to pick up or put down to be completely faithful? Then see what happens when you do that.
- **Keep a log** of tests of guidance, discernment, feedback, insights, and directions. Look back for (and learn from) patterns over time.

Meet with Companions

- **Meet regularly**, every 1-3 weeks for 1-2 hours with 2-4 people.
- **Divide the time equally** giving each person full attention in turn.

Be Good Companions/good listeners who:

- **Stay in Spirit** in yourself, relaxed and non-anxious
- **Remember the Spirit** in the other, that they are good and capable.
- **Share time equally.**

When it is your turn, Experiment and Share:

- **Stop** fully in body and mind. Let go of intentions, thoughts or any need to project an image to your companions. Breathe. Open to the grace of Spirit's presence with you. Ask for guidance.
- **Share** with others the guidance that rises in response to your willingness
- **Receive** the attention of others.
- **Listen inwardly, discharge emotion, and/or speak to your spiritual experience and experiment.**
- **Ask for** and receive reflection and/or feedback.

Test Discernment

- Companions **reflect back** the main words they heard and what they saw happen in the speaker's body or energy flow. (This both serves as a reminder to the speaker (who may not remember what they said) and affirms to the speaker that they've been seen and witnessed as they work.
- If asked, companions also **offer feedback** on whether and where they felt the life and power of Spirit during the sharing. This is offered as information, not judgment. It simply tells the speaker where it was one listener resonated and found it to ring true. This is not to be confused with whether or not they liked, agreed with, or understood it. Or with whether Spirit was truly present. It simply highlights points where the holy shone through for the companion – where real Spirit work seemed to be being done.

Document What has Come

- Take some of each person's time to **log the session's experience** (or save a few minutes after all have spoken to journal simultaneously).