Companions

Who am I? What are my deepest desires? What gives meaning to my life? What is my place in the world? How can I live my life more fully? How can I make a difference? Who are my companions?

Holding Ambiguity and Living Into Unknowing

Successfully navigating tensions in key areas of life is hard work. It is not necessarily fun or enjoyable either. However, such hard work is valuable. Navigating tensions can help us to grow. Most of us have probably experienced what Sharon Parks(1) refers to as “swamp” experiences. They often arise at crossroads in our lives, perhaps when we have to make a significant decision about career or relationships. Swamp moments can also arise when we are confronted with different perspectives about an area of belief to which we have held, which causes us to reconsider our hold on the belief or our perspective of it. Navigating swamp periods is challenging. We experience doubt, insecurity, and instability. Change or clarity often comes painstakingly slow. There is nothing efficient about walking through a swamp. Each step requires a huge expenditure of strength and energy. If we want to make a good decision about a job or a partner, we may have to take the time to fully consider all of the options before rushing into a decision. If we are trying to formulate our own beliefs, we may need to fully understand the spectrum of possible beliefs before resting back into or changing our own. Walking through the swamp often weakens our muscles and wearies our posture. However, just as with any form of intense exercise, the tearing and weakening of the muscle is precisely the act that allows it to grow stronger. We are transformed by the expenditures that we make during challenging times. We often experience intense and deep growth during and after these difficult, foggy periods in our lives. Often, we forego the path of the swamp in favor of the efficient or easy route. To trust the swamp experience allows us to live fully into the unknowing that it brings. To hold ambiguity tenderly allows us the freedom to experience new possibilities that may surface from the depths below the swamp. For example, a senior in college may get stuck into thinking that she either has to commit to her partner and get married after college or follow her dream of going to grad school. Should she take the easy, efficient route, perhaps pressured by application timelines or the engagement ring that sparkles on her finger, she might pick one or the other before undergoing a thorough discernment process. Should she choose the path of the swamp, she might request time of her partner and potential school placements to allow for some reflection, even though such a request puts more pressure on the relationship and adds stress to the application processes. Having taken time to slow down, she might tap into her deep desire to study and also recognize the deep, committed love that her partner has for her. Somewhere, from the depths of the swamps, a third possibility that would allow for both commitments might arise—perhaps her partner would accompany her in her school commitments or perhaps they might agree to hold the wedding off for a year. The beauty of the swamp experience is that something of “the more” often arises to the surface; something of the fullness of life to which we are called may reveal itself. Fortunately, many persons before us have navigated the path of the swamp. Practices and tools exist to support us as we navigate these challenging times.

1 Swamp metaphor comes from Leadership Can Be Taught by Sharon Parks.

At Companions on a Journey, we have begun the process of preparing our bound manuals for broader publication. In addition to the manuals, we expect to publish a narrative account of our story, which will include descriptions of our approach to the work that we do. The selection above is a draft version sneak-peek of our newly forming project. Enjoy!
Companions on a Journey
College of Saint Benedict
St. Joseph, MN  56374
320-363-5939
www.csbsju.edu/journey

Companions newsletters written and compiled by Christine Munger

We invite you to engage in the daily experiences of life's journey through a spiritually dynamic exchange of listening and responding to God, self, and others via accompanied vocational reflection of the whole person in specific contexts.

Updates for alums:
SAVE THE DATE!

Companions on a Journey will host an alumnae focus group in the Twin Cities on Thursday, May 1, from 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Exact location TBA

During this gathering, we hope to collect your suggestions related to materials, programming, and group experiences.

Questions? Contact Christine: cmunger@csbsju.edu or 320-363-5940
RSVP to Jodie: jpeschl@csbsju.edu or 320-363-5939

Event Updates

Trainings:
Companions on a Journey offers Introduction to Group Spiritual Companioning trainings (see dates on the right).

The trainings are a good way to learn more about the process. They also prepare you to join or start a group.

Trainings are not required for all members, but are highly encouraged.

If you cannot attend one of the full-day trainings, we will work with your group to plan a Start-up Training.

Training Dates

Saturday, March 1, 9 a.m.—4 p.m.
Introduction to GSC, TRC Main building, College of Saint Benedict, St. Joseph, MN
(FYI—This event has been CANCELLED.)

Saturday, March 15, 9 a.m.—4 p.m.
Introduction to GSC, Carondelet Center, College of Saint Catherine, St. Paul, MN

Last call for registrations!

https://www.csbsju.edu/journey/everyone/event%20registration.aspx

Other Events—Mark your calendars!

March 27-28, 2008
Women's Spirituality Conference and Workshop, with keynote speaker, Anne E. Patrick, Going After a Life: The Myth and Mystery of Vocation.

April 10-12, 2008
Changing Faces Conference and Workshop Diversity Series, with keynote speaker Shaun Copeland from Boston College.

Monday, April 21, 2008
Closing Banquet, Gorecki Conference and Dining Center, CSB. Time TBA.