

SPIRITUAL COMPANIONSHIP FOR OUR TIMES

We begin SDI's staff meeting each week with moments of meditation and reflection. This week, we shared instances where we had acted as spiritual companions to someone, or they had acted as spiritual companions to us.

Not everyone on the staff are trained spiritual companions, but a range of answers was offered, from counseling a friend with suicidal impulses, to theological conversations that suddenly went quite deep, to helping someone combat loneliness and identify a deeper purpose and meaning in their lives.

This led to a reflection that these were all expressions of spiritual companionship: listening intently, compassionately, and tackling issues of deeper meaning and connection.

In some sense, therefore, we are all spiritual companions from time to time, to our friends, our family, and quite often, to total strangers. Our desire to connect with the beyond, the infinite, God, or however we might refer to the ground of all being, is built into us, and echoes deeply between us all, like a tuning fork resonating to a universal note.

With that in mind, nonetheless, when we speak of

spiritual companions in the SDI context we are referring to individuals who have dedicated significant effort, education, and training to the endeavour. The skills we have acquired are the result of long labours, deep and ongoing contemplation, lifelong learning, deep listening, and abiding ethical groundings. We hold ourselves accountable to those who meet with us, to the communities we serve and are a part of, and to the supervisors who help guide us through various challenges, both professional and personal.

So we are not casual "friends" engaging in idle metaphysical banter, and spiritual companionship is not a hobby, but rather a serious, committed undertaking. It has depth and supportive purpose.

And yet, spiritual companions at SDI come in many guises. We have those we describe as "spiritual directors," terminology that originated as a designation initially reserved for male clergy in the Catholic tradition, but who for quite some time now have encompassed large numbers of lay practitioners, predominantly female, in the larger Christian context. And the key founder of SDI, Sr Mary Ann Scofield, was vowed religious herself, and we are proud to have many nuns in our ranks. Within the Abrahamic tree, we also have a significant constituency of Jewish

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spiritual directors, as well as some within the Sufi strand of Islam. And numerous others who use this designation outside of the Abrahamic family.

Needless to say, all of them are highly valued and esteemed members of the SDI constituency.

Over the last three years, SDI has made significant outreach efforts, in an attempt to broaden the invitation to our public square. Many of these individuals (along with a good number in our original cohorts) prefer the term “spiritual companion” to describe the work that they do. In terms of main-line religious traditions, they encompass Hindus and Buddhists of many stripes, as well as growing numbers across many other faith traditions.

But by far our fastest growing contingent are those who variously describe themselves as “spiritually fluid,” “spiritually independent,” “inter-spiritual” or “multi-spiritual.” Rather than ground themselves in any one particular tradition or spiritual orientation, they glean essential teachings from across a range of sources. As such, they fit no one profile, and are companions to a broad range of individuals, running the gamut from first time seekers and explorers, to the highly experienced and mature, who are looking for additional points of views to add to their wheelhouses.

Our members are also not limited to those who originate from a squarely spiritual starting point. For instance, we have many psychologists, social workers, and health care providers, who all perform their tasks with a spiritual bent. They describe themselves as spiritual companions as well.

In these efforts, there are some constants: a genuine and authentic commitment to deep contemplative practice, however it may manifest; a dedication to attentive, mindful and respectful listening; a profound respect for the agency of those we companion, and for their ability to discern for themselves the spiritual paths that lie ahead; a deep-seated ethical compass and grounding; and a willingness to hold ourselves accountable, especially when we

fall short of our ideals.

In brief, we are constantly striving for spiritual depth and maturity, for those we companion, and for ourselves.

And when we say we are spiritual companions for these highly troubled times, we mean that we come in all sorts of packages and expressions, ages, ethnicities, gender identities, orientations, and outlooks. And that we will walk alongside any of you who come to us, whatever burdens you may be bearing, and however you might manifest your own uniqueness.

You have but to ask.

—Rev. Seifu Anil Singh-Molares



Listen

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We **WELCOME** your feedback on any aspect of this issue of **LISTEN**, or on SDI as a whole. Please send your comments to
LISTEN@SDIWORLD.ORG



The following questions are offered for guidance, journaling, or meditation.

1. Do you see yourself as a spiritual companion? Why or why not?
2. Where might you have served as a spiritual companion to someone?
3. Has someone you know served as a spiritual companion to you?

If anything arises that you would like to share with the community, please tell us at listen@sdiworld.org.



April 23 - 26, 2020 | Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA

REGISTRATIONS OPEN



SPIRITUAL COMPANIONSHIP FOR OUR TIMES IS...

INWARD

We listen deeply to connect with the infinite.

Spiritual Companions access the deepest truths and support the spiritual transformation of self, others, and the world. We cultivate tools and means of traveling along this lifelong practice we call the spiritual journey.



OUTWARD

We work to create freedom, dignity, and spiritual opportunity for all.

Our inward practice drives us towards compassion for a suffering world. We orient ourselves outward; facing and engaged with the work of the world.



TOGETHER

We build community across boundaries of faith or spiritual tradition, practice, culture, race, and class.

We do not journey alone. We are invited into right relationship to ourselves, to one another, to our communities, to our institution, and to the earth.

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30TH ANNIVERSARY

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THE SCATTERING

A sparkling day
sun-glitter on water,
the way it so seldom is
except in our memory.
I hold you in my hands,
blood and bone reduced
to dust,
as ordained from the beginning.
And then I release you.
As the wind takes you,
playfully creating scallops on the sand,
your joy rises,
your homecoming complete
at the place where
sea and shore embrace,
the mystical union
between human and divine.
I watch you cross over,
even while a trace of you remains,
a film on my fingers
and the sparkling shimmer of a tear.
The wind picks up,
carrying music on its wings.
Let the dancing begin.

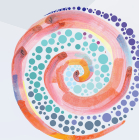
Sue Magrath is a spiritual director, writer, poet, and retreat leader. A retired mental health professional, she loves to work in the liminal space between psychology and spirituality. Author of *Healing the Ravaged Soul: Tending the Spiritual Wounds of Child Sexual Abuse*, Sue lives and works in north central Washington state.

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PENCIL PREACHING

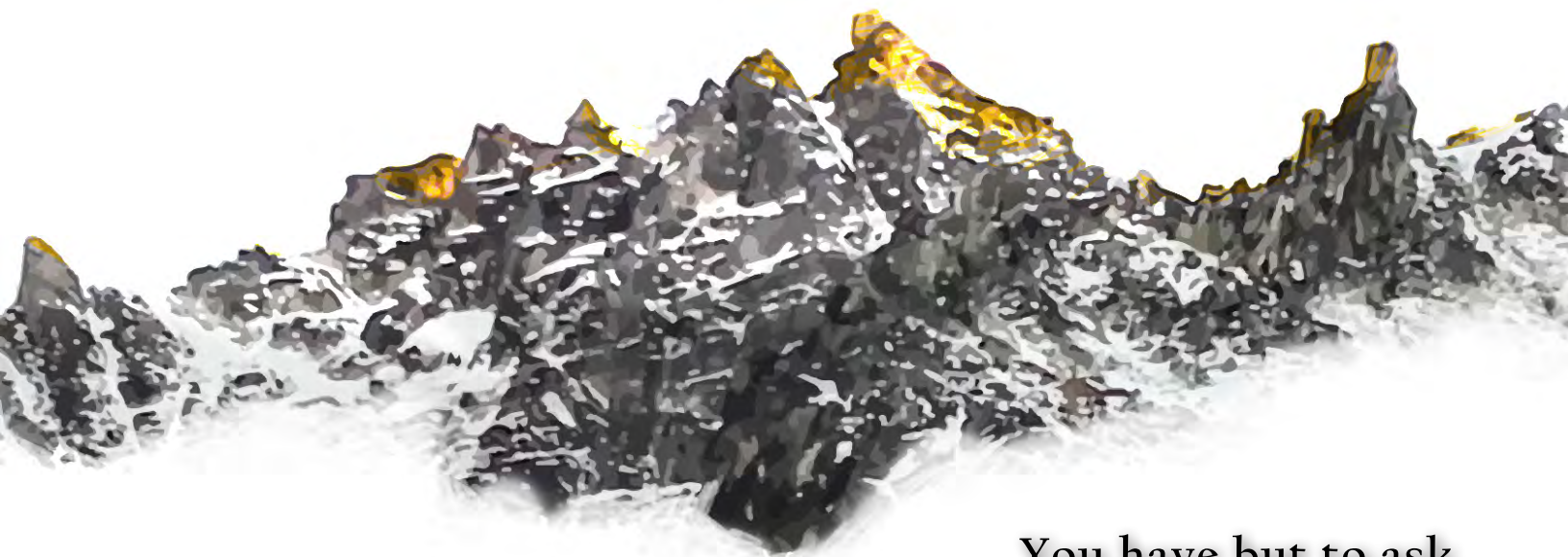
Scripture and sketches meet
in this daily reflection on the Word.

Start reading:
NCRonline.org/pencil

NATIONAL
CATHOLIC **REPORTER**



...we will walk alongside any of you who come to us,
whatever burdens you may be bearing,
and however you might manifest your own uniqueness.



You have but to ask.

ADVENT

The way

A baker dusts a bread board

A sister lights the altar candles

Place your mat upon the earth

Like hands

Kneading moist dough

Reach and root and pour yourself

Into the ancient rite

Dwell on sacred space

Find and press your spine

a singular pearl at a time

Into firm and holy ground

Cradle your hands

Above your longing heart

Listen for silent air to

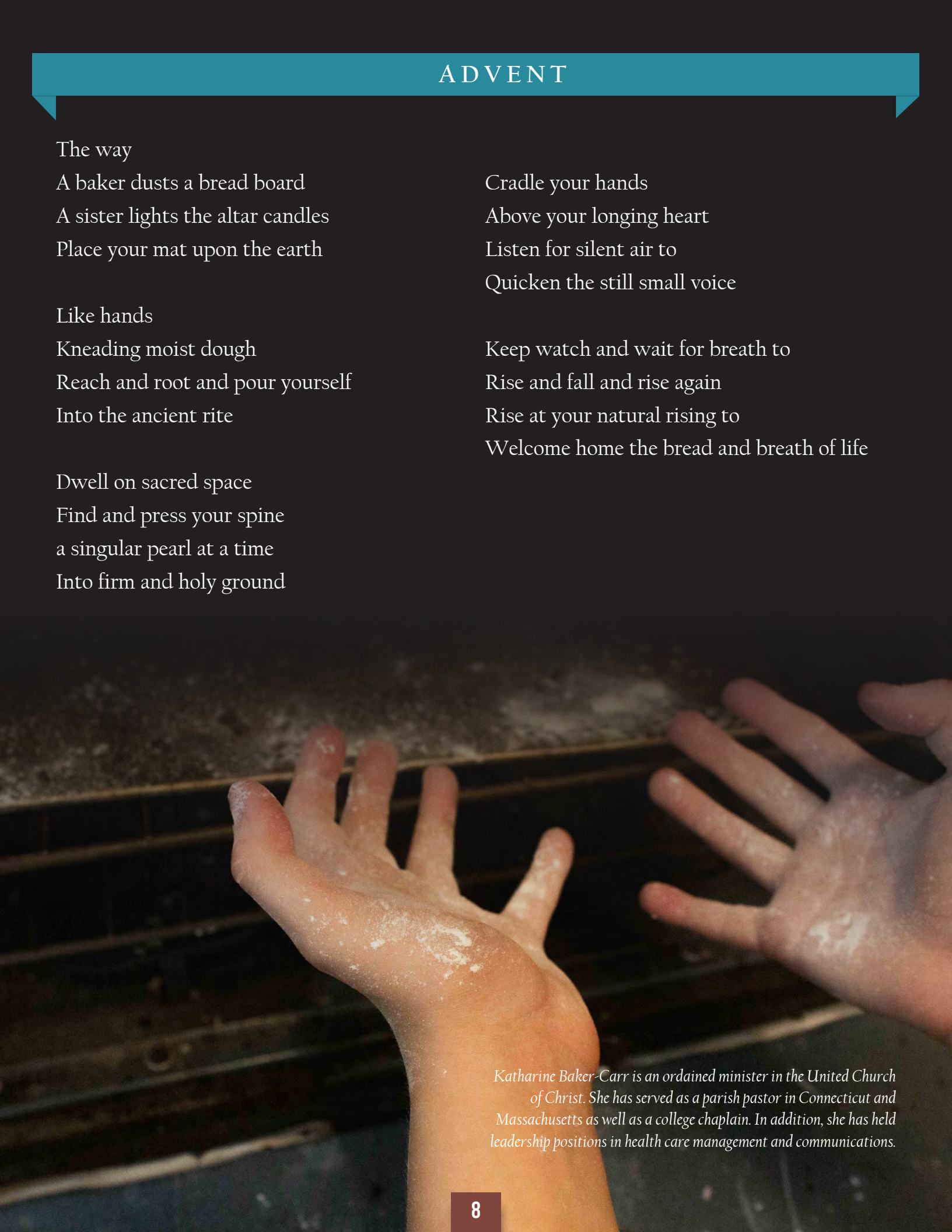
Quicken the still small voice

Keep watch and wait for breath to

Rise and fall and rise again

Rise at your natural rising to

Welcome home the bread and breath of life



Katharine Baker-Carr is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. She has served as a parish pastor in Connecticut and Massachusetts as well as a college chaplain. In addition, she has held leadership positions in health care management and communications.

ADVENT

I saw Him there
In the dark alley of my soul
Sifting with bloody fingers
Through the shards

Of broken altars oft rebuilt
Fragments of false gods
Names of power, lust, greed
Erected and smashed
Only to be built once more

As I try to ignore my need
For a God I can't control
My need to deserve
My need to earn

Patiently He sifts
Through the shattered colors
Crafting my brokenness
Into beauty

*Rob is an Anglican priest and spiritual director in San Antonio, TX.
The stained-glass was an ordination gift crafted by Kerry Little of Lufkin, TX.*

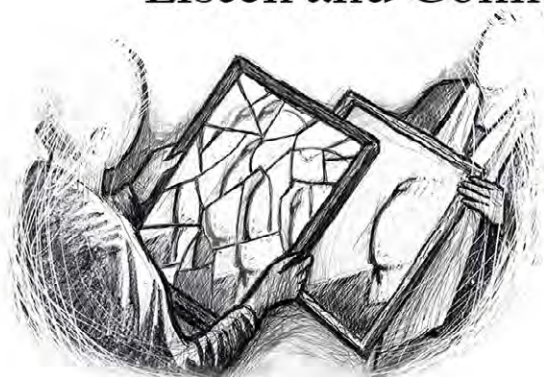


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Spiritual Direction 101: The Basics of Spiritual Guidance by **Teresa Blythe** helps demystify the art of spiritual guidance and prepare you for a meaningful encounter—whether as a seeker or a guide. If you want an easy-to-follow primer, written from years of practical experience training new spiritual guides at the Hesychia School in Tucson, this is the book to add to your library. Published by Apocryphile Press and available on [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com).

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Listen is an outreach publication of Spiritual Directors International. When you visit the SDI website at www.sdiworld.org, you can learn about retreats, programs, conferences, and other educational events related to spiritual companionship. You can read descriptions of the spiritual direction relationship from a variety of spiritual traditions, and discover excellent questions to ask yourself and any potential spiritual directors you choose to interview. To locate a spiritual director or guide, go online to *Seek and Find Guide: A Worldwide Resource of Available Spiritual Directors*. More than 6,000 spiritual directors are listed at www.sdiworld.org.

A Lamp Unto Yourself

Be ye lamps unto yourselves,

be ye a refuge to yourselves.

Betake yourselves to no external refuge.

Hold fast to the Truth as a lamp;

hold fast to the Truth as a refuge.

Look not for a refuge in anyone besides yourselves.

- *Mahaparinabbana sutta*



NB ED – This famous passage reflect the last reported words of the Buddha. It should be understood as an exhortation to never suspend intuitive insight and critical discernment, and to trust the light and the truth within us to validate, or repudiate, what we are told. “Rely on yourself” is another common rendering of the essence of this sutra. Do not mistake the form (the “external refuge”) for the substance, it says, so as not to wrap ourselves in outward forms at the expense of internal wisdom.

SDI ENCOUNTERS

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Diane Millis, Imam Jamal Rahman,
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