

Contemplative Fire Canada – Feu Contemplatif Canada

Governance Charter

Vision and Values

Contemplative Fire seeks to live the mystery of life in Christ by invitation into the spacious stillness of **Contemplative** prayer and by transforming encounter with the **Fire** of God’s Spirit, which equips us for compassionate living.

Travelling Light: Dwelling Deep, our Rhythm of Life, embraces a threefold pattern of ‘Being, Knowing and Doing’; or ‘Prayer, Study and Action’ as symbolised by the Celtic trefoil. This flows from a Trinitarian understanding of the nature of God and is explored through reflection on Scripture.



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Vision and Call

The vision and call of Contemplative Fire is revealed in the phrase ‘Creating a Community of Christ at the Edge’.

Our movement towards community reflects the value that we place on a shared journey, on building relationships within which faith can be explored and deepened. These relationships are characterised by a profound respect for, and honouring of, one another and are explored more fully in the ‘norms’ set out below.

We are a ‘Community of Christ’ because we believe that the risen Christ calls us to journey with him into an ever deepening awareness of what he called ‘the Kingdom of God’. It is a call into a relationship of love with God, the whole of humanity and with the created order. Jesus’ call requires us to ‘travel light’ in simplicity of lifestyle and to ‘dwell deep’ in the presence of God.

We talk of ‘the edge’ because we value and respect such a place as holding potential for transformation. Edges can be geographical but can also be theological, social, ecclesiastical, cultural, spiritual ... To live at ‘the edge’ is to risk encounter with the unknown beyond the threshold, but is also to recognise that God often beckons us to move beyond self-imposed limitations.

Equipping and Sending

The call of God has both an inward and an outward dynamic. In hearing this call Contemplative Fire seeks to enable those who walk with us to discern and respond to its implications for our lives, both as individuals and as a community. This is provided for through our gatherings in small and large groups; through training, retreats and pilgrimages; and through exploration of the challenge presented by the call to compassionate action.

Silence and solitude become precursors to loving and self-giving service. We are drawn to cross new thresholds of mission, culture and our own experience in order to encounter Christ in a new paradigm.

Norms and Values

In our life as a community we are invited to rediscover a deep sense of wonder in approaching the mystery of God and the mysterious dimension of the ‘other’ in each and every person. Therefore:

In our relationships with one another we would consider it the ‘norm’ to expect:

- deep and respectful listening.
- acceptance of difference.
- inclusion of all.

In our speaking we would consider it the ‘norm’ to expect:

- personal authenticity while being sensitive to the needs of others.
- owning our statements without presuming on the position of others (‘I think/I feel’, rather than, ‘we think/we feel’).
- a language of open questioning (I wonder ...?).
- a language which, in reference to God, recognises a depth of mystery and unknowing.
- a generosity of spirit and willingness to learn, in recognition that our language may be unintentionally hurtful to others, and that we also have the capacity to be unintentionally hurt.

In gathering together as community we would consider it the ‘norm’ to expect:

- our journey together to reflect our rootedness in the way of Christ and our continuity with those who have walked this way before us.
- the use of resources from the biblical and contemplative traditions and the invitation to encounter God through sacrament, symbol and service.
- to learn by invitation rather than instruction.
- space for stillness, silence and contemplative practice.
- freedom to explore, question and wrestle with tough issues.
- opportunities to engage our creative imagination.
- use of the body in prayer and the celebration of God's presence with all of our senses.
- meeting together outdoors when opportunity presents, so as to encounter God's presence in the natural world.
- that the profundity of this journey is most certainly also a cause for joyful celebration ... (expect to have fun!).

Introduction to the Governance Charter

This document seeks to outline the basic governance structure of Contemplative Fire Canada and its legal status. These have been structured so that the Vision and Values of Contemplative Fire Canada can be achieved and adhered to faithfully. Financial principles related to income and expenses are presented.

The Contemplative Fire Community comprises those who have committed to the Contemplative Fire Rhythm of 'being, knowing, doing' and are known as Companions on the Way.

1. Governance of the Contemplative Fire Community

The Contemplative Fire Community has two groups that collectively contribute to its governance. These are:

- The Board of Directors
- The Community Life Team

Each of these groups fulfils a complementary, but different role in the governance of the Contemplative Fire Community.

1.1 The Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for the management and administration of Contemplative Fire and meets at least 3 times per year. They receive reports from the Community Leader and the Treasurer and review the progress of Contemplative Fire against its specified goals.

The Board is responsible to ensure that the Vision and Values are understood and applied in all aspects of the governance, administration and ministry of Contemplative Fire Canada. This is accomplished through the oversight function and through development of clear and effective By-Laws and Policies for the organization.

Beyond Community Membership and their being Companions on the Way; Members of Contemplative Fire Canada and elected Directors have taken on formal legal responsibility for the Corporation and its charitable endeavours

All Members and hence Directors of Contemplative Fire Canada are supportive of the vision and values of Contemplative Fire. While it is not mandatory to be a Companions on the Way', it is desirable that those who serve as Directors are, or intend to become, Companions on the Way.

The Board will fulfil its mandate in two significant ways

1. Hiring and management of the Community Leader.

The Community Leader will be provided with a position description and clear goals related to the Strategic Direction of the Organization. The Community Leader will attend all Board Meetings (excused for all performance and compensation reviews) and is ex officio a member of all Board Committees, though is not to function as Chairperson.

2. Committees of the Board

The Board will establish Committees as needed.

The Finance Committee will be a standing committee and take responsibility for record-keeping, financial analysis, budgeting and fund-raising. The Auditors will report to this Committee as will financial personnel within the organization.

1.2 The Community Life Team:

The Community Life Team works with the Community Leader, ensuring the continued growth and nurture of the Contemplative Fire Community, meeting monthly at the Contemplative Fire office. Current practice is that the Community Leader identifies and invites an individual to be on the Community Life Team in consultation with the other members of the Team.

At present, the role of the Community Life Team includes:

- exploring key theological themes and practical issues;
- sharing news from the regions;
- supporting and resourcing the emergent Contemplative Fire presence in differing places;
- planning forthcoming events;

- identifying potential areas of strength, weakness, opportunity and threat for Contemplative Fire;
- collaborating with the Board of Directors, the Program Development Group and small group facilitators

All members of the Community Life Team are to be Companions on the Way.

2. Legal status

Contemplative Fire Canada has been incorporated under the Canada Not-For-Profit Corporations Act. In addition, Contemplative Fire Canada is a registered charity in Canada allowing the issuance of tax receipts to donors. Charitable status is granted in relation to the Articles of Incorporation and the stated purposes of Contemplative Fire.

Contemplative Fire's governing documents are the Articles of Incorporation and the by-Laws of the Corporation. These two documents detail what Contemplative Fire has been set up to do, how it is governed and what the Directors can and cannot do, together with their duties and responsibilities. These can be viewed, by arrangement, at the offices of Contemplative Fire.

2.1 Contemplative Fire Canada and the Board of Directors

One of the most significant points to make is that Companions on the Way are Members of the Contemplative Fire Community, but they are not all Members of Contemplative Fire Canada as set out in the By-Laws of the Corporation.

The Directors of Contemplative Fire Canada are Members along with a limited number of Members who have not been elected to the Board.

The Members of Contemplative Fire Canada are entitled to vote at general meetings of Contemplative Fire Canada.

The Board carries a legal responsibility to protect the assets of the Contemplative Fire community and to ensure adherence to the objectives of the Contemplative Fire charity.

Board Members are elected by Contemplative Fire Canada Members at the Annual General Meeting with the purpose of bringing an appropriate spread of experience and skills to the direction of Contemplative Fire. Board Members are to be active members of the Contemplative Fire Community and to be Companions on the Way.

2.2 The Community Leader

The Community Leader while not a Director is a formal Member of Contemplative Fire Canada and attends and participates in Board meetings.

The Community Leader is answerable to the Contemplative Fire Board of Directors. He/She fulfils this duty by submitting a report to each Board meeting and by seeking continuous guidance from the Directors on all significant matters that affect the Contemplative Fire Community. Currently, the Community Leader, as an ordained Priest in the Diocese of Toronto is accountable to the Toronto Archbishop and Area Bishops.

The Community Leader is supported by the Board, the Community Life Team, Community Members and by Administrative Staff hired by the organization

3. Financing the Community:

Contemplative Fire spends money on the following:

- Salaries & travelling expenses for the Community Leader and Administrator;
- Expenses (travel, phone, occasional subsistence) for Board, Community Life Team
- Publicity materials
- Office running costs
- Costs associated with Ministry Events
- Website Development and Maintenance

Contemplative Fire is a single organic community, not an association of linked groups or communities and Companions join the Contemplative Fire Community, not a single or local group.

3.2 Paid Ministry and Self Supporting Ministry

Matters of employment and remuneration are overseen by the Board. The Community Leader and the Administrator are expected to receive salaries. Currently no other person is expected to be remunerated. However, within Contemplative Fire there is to be no distinction of status between paid and self supporting staff. All members of the staff team are to agree to Terms and Conditions for approval by the Board; duties and hours committed will form part of those terms.

3.3 Income for Contemplative Fire

Contemplative Fire's income will arise from Companions, Donors and appropriate charges for Ministry events.

Companions on the Way are invited and expected to make a regular financial commitment to the Contemplative Fire Community as part of their commitment to the Contemplative Fire Rhythm of Life.