

MAP YOUR COMMUNITY

We all know that we need others to help us in our work and lives, especially when times are stressful. Too often, we don't have communities of support prepared for when stressful times hit, or don't activate those communities when we need them.

And yet, it's an area of life we so often neglect, especially when it comes to our professional wellbeing. We may have a supportive family and loving friends, but often struggle to make meaningful connections within our field — not simply task-oriented, working relationships, but trusted others who walk with us on our life journey, in the place that we often spend most of our waking time.

To buffer against that withdrawal, it can be helpful to have a your current community of support. Here are the categories that we hope serve you in making your present communion of saints more visible.

PERSONAL ROLES

-  Partner/spouse
-  Family (biological and chosen)
-  Friends

ROLES YOU CAN HIRE FOR

-  Counselor or therapist
-  Spiritual director
-  Personal trainer
-  Coach (life or professional)
-  Nutritionist

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PROFESSIONAL ROLES



Partners

People inside your community who understand the ins and outs of it, and are trustworthy to think through that with you, and even to effect change with you. This may be someone in a top role of leadership within your institution (chair of the board, senior warden of the vestry, etc), or someone in a similar role within your denomination (the pastor at the parish two towns over) with relevant experience (a retired pastor, the CEO of another organization), but not necessarily.



Allies

People outside your community who can offer you distance perspective and advice on what you're experiencing. It can be beneficial to have multiple levels of allies. For instance, If you're a pastor at a denominational parish, you might want an ally who is in the same denomination of another parish (an ally in regards to the parish, a partner in the denomination), as well as a pastor of another denomination (an ally in regards to both the parish and the denomination).



Mentors or wise companions

Seek out people with whom you naturally feel connected, resonant, or safe. A sign of a good companion is someone who is not shy about showing delight in you — and similarly open about growth areas and conflicts. Often the start of these relationships is like dating; you have to put yourself in situations where you could meet people and engage the process of assessing natural connection. Don't assume the other person will initiate; ask them out for coffee, determine whether it feels more appropriate to build the relationship slowly over time or to ask more directly for guidance, perhaps even specifying the kind of engagement you want. This could include:

- feedback on your style of relating and/or your style of leadership;
- “case consult” of concerns you're facing;
- studying a book together;
- spiritual nurture, direction, discernment, or prayer;
- unstructured conversation;
- visits to each others' faith communities;
- embarking on a project together and receiving feedback on the choices you make in that project and how you lead.

Boundary-walkers



Somewhere between a partner and an ally. They may occasionally attend your service, volunteer with your ministry, or even do some paid work for you — but they primarily belong to another organization or community. These relationships are particularly valuable in that they are “in” enough to get the complexities of the context, but “out” enough to be able to offer some perspective.

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