

# Making a New Thing: A Future Vision for Rivendell

October 2020

*With gratitude for their ongoing care and stewardship of the land we acknowledge that the Rivendell sites are located on the unceded territory of the Coast Salish people;*

*Xwlíl'xhwm (Bowen Island) is traditonal Squamish territory.*



*I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.  
The wild animals will honour me,  
the jackals and the ostriches;  
for I give water in the wilderness,  
rivers in the desert,  
to give drink to my chosen people,  
the people whom I formed for myself  
so that they might declare my praise.*

-- Isaiah 43:18-21

## **Introduction**

This document describes a vision of Rivendell developed in 2020 and towards which we are moving in 2021 and beyond. It has been informed by over 250 stories and interviews, and by the hard work of thirteen dedicated members of the Rivendell Community who wrestled with the labour of bringing the next generation of Rivendell's life into being. This document is partly descriptive and partly inspirational. It describes some familiar things in new ways and offers new directions, some of which are ambitious, that will help Rivendell secure itself to a future that offers sustainable sacred spaces for retreat and a sustainable and vibrant contemplative community.

## **Why Rivendell Exists: The Thirst of the World**

Aware of the spiritual longings of the world, we offer places of retreat for all who seek spiritual renewal, respite and growth. We are a community rooted in Christian contemplative practice and inspired by the gospel values of Jesus: love, healing and justice.

We live in a world in which injustice and inequality take a spiritual toll on us. Our world requires change-makers whose contemplative practice strengthens their ability to take action on fundamental issues of climate justice, economic justice, racial equity and indigenous rights.



Living in the world is challenging for those who are on the front lines of caring for others and those who are carrying trauma. These people require a place to heal, rest and recover their strength and purpose. They require space for quiet and guidance in practice.

Rivendell is a place for people who are spiritually curious, who want to deepen their spirituality or people who want to discover how to serve Love in the world.

We provide a response to the world's thirst for rest and inner quiet; for a place of deep encounter between people of different backgrounds with the Holy, that crosses the boundaries between faith traditions and churches; and for spiritual strength for those facing the challenges of social injustice.

We believe that creativity and artistic expression are spiritual practices and that this work of the Spirit can be enhanced and supported through mindful retreat time away from the hustle and bustle of regular life.

Rivendell was born out of the generosity of the founding families and is hosted by Companions of The Rivendell Way, a Christian contemplative community centred in the Spirit, rooted in the gospel values of Jesus and the practiced traditions of prayer, silence, simplicity, hospitality and social action.

Rivendell offers five sacred spaces: The Lodge, The Cottage, The Hermitage, The Writers Retreat located on Bowen Island and The Listening Post in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

A particular expression of our commitment to social action is through our principles of generosity and radical accessibility, welcoming people with limited resources, special needs and diverse spiritual traditions.



## The Rivendell Way: The Community of Rivendell

### Mission

The Rivendell Way is a Christian community devoted to nurturing and supporting a contemplative life of prayer and action through spiritual practices and dedicated sacred spaces.

### Core values and practices

Rivendell was founded around four core practices, and these continue to guide the place and the community. To meet the need in the world for spiritual renewal, respite and growth we are focused on the work of **Prayer, Silence, Simplicity, Hospitality** with the added focus on **Social Action**. These are both values and practices.

Our community is grounded in the deep exploration of spirituality through contemplative **prayer** practices. We practice a daily rhythm of prayer and offer leadership for times of gathered prayer. We also practice work as prayer, and everyone who is a part of Rivendell, whether as a member of the community, or

a visiting retreatant undertakes the work of caring for our spaces and each other in some way and leaving a beautiful legacy for those who come after.

We cultivate a quiet atmosphere of **silence**, to allow for a deep focus on transformational inner work and explorations into mysticism. In the stillness, we find the space to experience God and to more deeply to encounter ourselves. This enables us to become open to the transformation that is offered to us all.



We are guided by the **simplicity** that lessens our harmful impacts on our land, sea, and each other and invites us to seek harmony and our right relationship with the natural world. Simplicity reduces noise and busyness and supports our focus inward as well as effective action outward. Simplicity is also connected to our core value of accessibility by reducing unnecessary costs that allow Rivendell to offer a welcoming space to anyone who wants to come, regardless of financial means.

We practice **hospitality**, welcoming the stranger and providing openness and acceptance to all who come to one of the sacred spaces. It is our prayer that all who enter through our doors, return safely home to the places and people among whom they live - renewed, refreshed and enveloped in God's grace.

Our contemplation is given expression in **social action**. We recognize the need for change-makers who are rooted in the contemplative practice of deep listening resulting in more effective action. By providing protected sacred spaces for listening we hope to contribute to a more just and equitable world.

## Principles

Our overarching principle of generosity is expressed through:

1. **Accessibility:** The spaces of Rivendell are accessible to all people regardless of financial means, age, gender, ability, race, religion. Radical welcome means that accessibility does not place a limiting burden of asking for help on those in need. Wheelchair accessibility is provided at The Lodge and The Listening Post.
2. **Availability** of different sacred spaces to individuals and those groups who are drawn to The Rivendell Way.
3. **Ambience:** Protected sacred spaces offering peace, quiet and an invitation to all who come to contribute to maintaining that peaceful atmosphere.
4. **Accountability:** Guests are invited to participate in the physical care of the spaces. Companions of Rivendell commit to being mutually accountable in their contemplative life and their service to one of the sacred sites. All are invited to contribute to the financial sustainability of Rivendell.
5. **Awareness** and openness to the movement of the Spirit.

## The Five Sacred Spaces

The mission of Rivendell includes overseeing and tending five sacred spaces. Four are located on Bowen Island and the fifth in the inner city of Vancouver.

**The Lodge** on Cates Hill offers a place to host groups and individuals for retreat and programming that is aligned with Rivendell's vision. The building has seventeen rooms and is hosted by Companions of the Contemplative Community.



**The Cottage** located beside the lodge offers a place of respite for families and individuals with a particular emphasis on those who are unable to afford other places for a time of renewal and healing.

**The Hermitage** located in the forest on the south-east edge of Bowen Island is a space dedicated to individuals and small groups who are seeking silence and solitude. The space includes five small non-serviced cabins nestled in the forest along with a central house.



**The Writers Retreat** is a quiet space near Snug Cove for authors to enter into the sacred art of creation. This site offers a dedicated space for an extended period of writing work and artistic expression.

**The Listening Post** offers a place for contemplative practice in the downtown eastside of Vancouver at the corner of Main and Hastings and is grounded in the beginnings of Rivendell. It is the only site not located on Bowen Island but is strategically connected to the realities of inner-city life and provides support for contemplative practice in that community and a bridge to retreats on Bowen.

## Structure of Rivendell's Contemplative Community

The Rivendell Community is structured in a way that allows people to participate in the life of the contemplative community in a variety of ways.

### Friends of Rivendell

Those who are drawn to participate and support Rivendell's sacred spaces are invited to become a **Friend** of Rivendell. They commit to their own contemplative practices and offer service to Rivendell in a way that utilizes their gifts of time, talents and/or financial contribution. They will receive communications from Rivendell about ongoing news, events and programs.

### Companions of Rivendell

When a Friend of Rivendell feels drawn to become more involved in The Rivendell Way, they are invited to participate in a discernment retreat. A Companion commits to participation in a Journey Group of about six people.

Companions intentionally attend to each of the five practices that shape our Christian faith and soul life: prayer, silence, simplicity, hospitality and social action. Part of the expression of social action is the support of Rivendell's sacred spaces according to one's gifts and means. Their participation in a Journey Group provides for mutual support, nurturing, and accountability in the contemplative journey.

The Companions commit to:

- Follow Rivendell's rhythm of life.
- Nurture and support each other in a Christian contemplative life.
- Express service/social action according to one's gifts.
- Support Rivendell's places of retreat through one of the forms of service.
- Participate in a Journey Group for a minimum of two years.
- Attend an annual retreat of one's Journey Group (ideally alongside another Journey Group).
- Receive regular spiritual accompaniment.
- Mutual accountability and support.

At the discernment retreat, participants will learn of the commitment expected and further possibilities for service, including hosting but also a variety of other opportunities such as a member of the booking team, communications, gardening, maintenance, spiritual companionship, board member, fundraising and program leadership.



Journey Groups will include diversity in terms of their connections to Rivendell's varied sacred spaces or other involvements. The groups will change their composition every two years to provide the opportunity to journey with others in the broader membership.

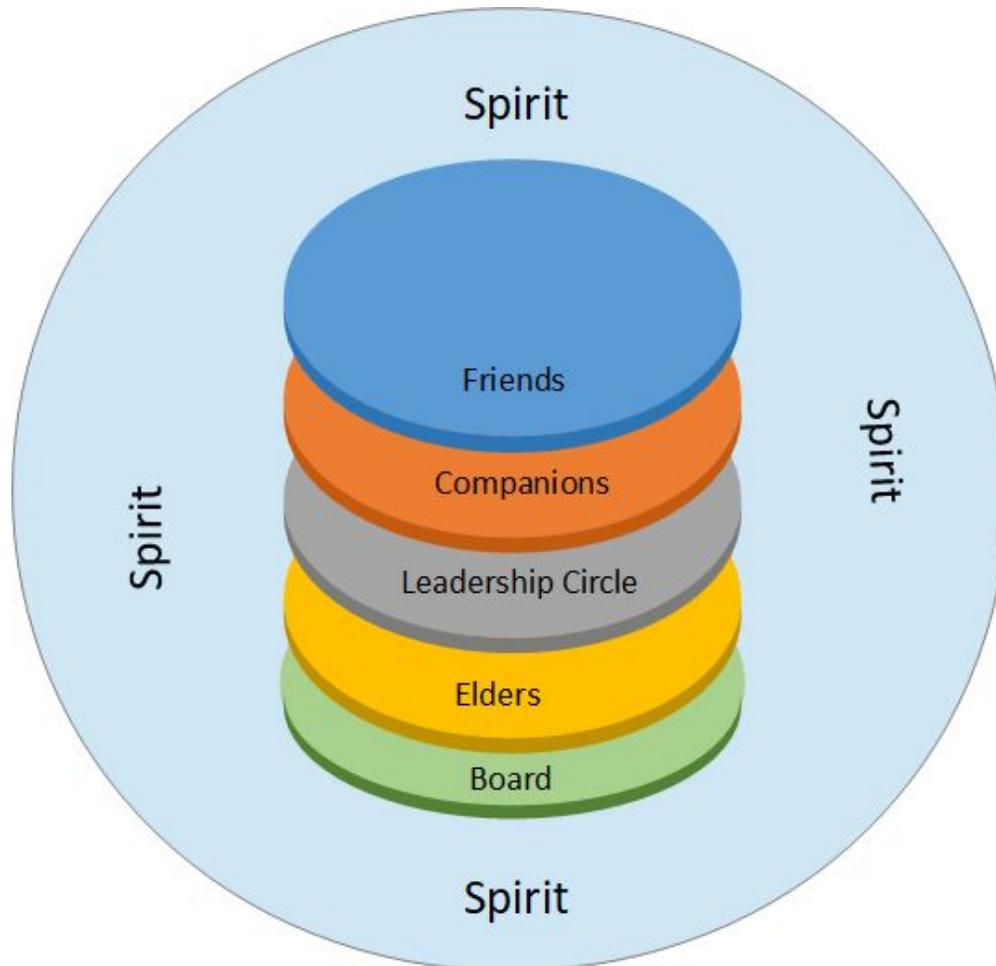
Each Journey Group will have one **Leader** who will participate in Rivendell's Leadership Circle. The Leadership Circle will also develop and offer programming for Rivendell.

### **Elders of Rivendell**

Elders of Rivendell have traditionally been those who have let go of hosting yet remain committed to Rivendell. This circle will now welcome those Companions who discern it is time to step back from active service. A recognition and ritual of naming the Elders among us will take place during our Annual Meeting. Elders are invited but not required to continue participating in a Journey Group. Their wisdom and mentorship will remain a

rich resource within the community. Some Elders may be willing to continue service in ways that suit their energy and skill.

An elder-in-residence at the Lodge will host alongside other hosts and if interested, may offer leadership at 5 o'clock gatherings, provide spiritual accompaniment, general welcoming of retreatants, and support to hosts.



## Tending and Holding the Sacred Spaces of Rivendell

This new vision brings a shift in the focus of involvement with Rivendell from an expectation of watchkeeping and hosting, to support and nourishment of one's contemplative life while remaining in service to Rivendell. Further care and discernment are encouraged for Friends and Companions so that the service of caring for Rivendell's sacred spaces is in congruence with one's time

and energy. This way, those who are committed to Rivendell are invited to give generously within their means of time, energy and skill.

Tending to the spaces remains the work of the Community, but will be held by a number of specific groups and people. The five sacred spaces will be tended by a **Leadership Circle, Booking Team, Communications Team, Hosts** drawn from the Journey Groups, **Friends of Rivendell**, and a **part-time administrator**.

### **1. Leadership Circle drawn from the Journey Groups**

The Leadership Circle will help to strengthen and deepen the contemplative community life of The Rivendell Way. A leader is chosen from each Journey Group and those leaders form what is called the Leadership Circle. Generally, this will be a two-year commitment.

Initially, the Leadership Circle will be formed by members from The Rivendell Visioning Core Team. Responsibilities include:

- Holding the life of the contemplative community
- Organizing community retreats including entry-level, discernment and Journey Groups
- Developing rituals for the places of threshold (joining as a Friend, transitioning to Companion or Elder)
- Establishing norms for the functioning of the Journey Groups
- Developing programs including silent retreats, guest presenters.
- Scheduling and developing the application process for groups aligned with the vision of The Rivendell Way, in communication with the Booking Team
- Meeting regularly to ensure the voice of the larger community is held
- Providing information and communications for our website
- Maintaining contact with the Friends and Elders of Rivendell

Two members of this circle will also be named to the Rivendell Society Board.

## 2. Booking Team.

The Booking Team is an off-site team composed of volunteer Companions. This team ensures that the first contact for retreatants is consistent, sensitive to specific needs and that their options are clearly explained. A unified booking system ensures that all sites are treated according to their mandate. The members of the Booking Team handle bookings for all sites including responding to applications by groups approved by the Leadership Circle; confirming the acceptability of retreats for groups/individuals, and answering emails and processing e-transfers. They will report to the Society Board Representatives on the Leadership Circle.

## 3. Communications Team

The Communications Team is made up of Friends and Companions who will ensure that the life of Rivendell is communicated through a variety of media. They will communicate the uniqueness and unity of the five sacred sites. They will ensure that the website is up to date and that there is a regular newsletter that reaches the greater community.

## 4. Hosts for The Lodge and Cottage, The Hermitage, and The Listening Post

Relieved of administrative duties, Hosts can focus on embodying the five core practices, and assisting retreatants to have a meaningful time at our sacred spaces. Hosts are drawn from Companions. Their responsibilities are:

- Holding the sacred space
- Welcoming and being present to those who come
- Offering Spiritual Companionship
- Leading gathered times of prayer



- Setting up of rooms and tending to the hospitality of the spaces, including laundry where that is needed (with additional help as necessary)

## **5. Administrator**

A part-time Administrator will provide more consistent oversight of the various sites. This is a half-time paid position with scheduled office hours at The Lodge. The administrator will oversee the practical details of all the Rivendell sacred spaces. Specific duties will include:

- Overseeing maintenance, housekeeping and cleaning.
- Ordering supplies.
- Overseeing the contracts for the payment of bills, deposits and bookkeeping.
- Organizing and training volunteers for practical tasks.
- Maintaining the website alongside our provider with input from the Leadership Circle.
- Supporting hosts in managing practical tasks, responding to the complexity of places and people involved.
- Communicating with the Leadership Circle Representatives and reporting to the board.

## **Programming and Retreats**

The Rivendell Way is not simply guidance for the Rivendell Community but is a rich set of practices and principles for Christian contemplative living. We envision that The Rivendell Way will inspire an increase in programming offered by members of the contemplative community, and this is encouraged. This will include offering silent retreats, Easter and Advent retreats and introduction sessions to the contemplative life.

Outside programming and retreats would still have a place at Rivendell, but would now be more closely aligned with Rivendell's values and purpose. The Leadership Circle will be responsible for receiving and approving applications from groups.

There will be set times of the year for these proposals. This process will be further designed and detailed as part of the implementation process. When programs are happening it would not be required to have space held for individual retreatants. This change is to allow programs to fill the space, host the space, and have less disruption for single retreatants. The Hermitage provides space for those seeking solitude and silence and specific times will be set aside at The Lodge for individuals only.

## **Governance**

Clarity in decision making throughout the various parts of Rivendell is a key principle to steward this vision.

### **1. Community led by the Leadership Circle**

Through the Journey Groups, Companions will be supported in their contemplative life. They will have input into the life of Rivendell's sacred sites through their own particular expression of service and through the leader of their group. The leaders of the Journey Groups will form the Leadership Circle and will meet regularly. Two representatives will be appointed to the Rivendell Society Board and will report to the board identifying any items that require attention.

### **2. Rivendell Society**

Membership in the Rivendell Society is open to Friends, Companions, Elders and the current Board of Directors. All members present at the Annual General Meeting have voting privileges.

The Board of Directors of the Society is an oversight board that sets direction and policy in alignment with the principles and values of the Rivendell Community. The Board maintains the Society's legal status for the operation of the five spaces in conjunction with the Rivendell Foundation for The Lodge, The Cottage and The Hermitage, and with the Hawthorne Foundation for The Writers Retreat.

The Society Board's duties include fiduciary responsibility and financial management. It meets a minimum of three times a year plus the Annual General Meeting. An Executive Committee will be composed of the Society Board Chair, Treasurer and Secretary and one Leadership Circle Representatives, in order to deal with important matters between meetings.

The Society Board will establish a Fundraising Committee composed of one Board Member and others outside the board. The Fundraising Committee will coordinate with the Rivendell Foundation in order to maximize and support the efforts and intents of the Society and the Foundation. The Rivendell Society fundraises for operating expenses while The Rivendell Foundation raises funds for the structures and capital costs. The paid half-time Administrator reports to the Society Board on issues involving finances and policy.

The Board's main decisions concern:

- Creating and overseeing a budget
- Receiving reports from the leadership team on operations of all five sacred spaces
- Receiving Fundraising Report – approves fundraising initiatives

The Board will be composed of seven members:

- two members from the Leadership Circle
- one Bowen resident
- one Friend of Rivendell
- three members at large (to ensure the board collectively has skills such as financial experience, communications, organization and fundraising)

The Board will appoint a President, Secretary and Treasurer from its members. The Board will appoint an Executive Committee consisting of the President, the Treasurer and one of the representatives from the Leadership Circle.

### **3. The Rivendell and Hawthorne Foundations**

The Rivendell Foundation is responsible for the upkeep of the property and buildings including The Lodge, The Cottage, and The Hermitage. The charitable purposes of the Rivendell Foundation are carried out by the

Rivendell Society Board through its operation of the sacred spaces on the properties owned by the Rivendell Foundation.

The Hawthorne Foundation is responsible for the upkeep of The Writers Retreat.

## Finances: Overall vision

Generosity is at the heart of the Rivendell Vision. Our spaces are run on a volunteer model supported by Friends, Companions, Elders and a volunteer board with the help of a paid half-time staff Administrator with larger jobs contracted out as necessary or required.



We remain committed to accessibility to all people regardless of their ability to pay. We invite all our members and guests to contribute their gifts of time and/or money to support the accessibility principle and to ensure sustainability.

Rivendell requires a new financial model to sustain it going forward which will include active and ongoing fundraising in addition to revenue generated from retreatants. A fundraising committee will be formed which will report to the society board.

## Summary

In the beginning of 2020, the community of Rivendell sensed a growing need to look for creative ways that could sustainably care for the places of retreat that had been created over the history of Rivendell. In response, we began a seven month discernment and visioning process. God is calling us to a new way of living out the purpose of Rivendell through contemplative community life and five sacred sites. This document represents the birth of a new vision rooted

in our history and drawing on the input of so many who value Rivendell and we trust that we have been guided by the wisdom of the Spirit.

Inspired by the words of Isaiah, our hope and prayer is that a new thing is indeed springing forth - giving water to God's people and providing streams in the desert.