



THE WAY OF LOVE
Practices for Jesus-Centered Life

**Frequently Asked
Questions**

www.episcopalchurch.org/wayoflove

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the Way of Love?

The Way of Love is an intentional commitment to follow Jesus and adopt a set of practices – Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, Rest – that form us and our communities into the likeness of Jesus Christ. It's a way of life, which means it's adaptable and organic; according to local customs, cultures, and identities; and bottom-up (not top-down).

Is the Way of Love a rule of life? What if I'm already observing a rule of life?

A rule of life is an intentional commitment to a set of specific practices that provide guidance, rhythm, and inspiration for living a beautiful, meaningful, and holy life patterned after the life of Jesus. For centuries, monastic communities have designed and lived by such rules, as have monastic associates who sometimes take up related vows beyond the monastic circle. As a set of particular practices designed to shape the lives of the followers of Jesus, the Way of Love is a rule of life.

The goal of the Way of Love is neither to have everyone adopt the same lived practices, nor to replace a rule of life that you are already observing. Rather, the goal is for every Episcopalian to engage in a whole-life commitment to follow Jesus. This link, episcopalchurch.org/wayoflove, provides resources for crafting a rule of life and exploring each practice in the Way of Love.

Where did the Way of Love come from? Why do we need something like this as a Church?

Presiding Bishop Michael Curry gathered a Strategic Cabinet of 12 people in December 2017 in Atlanta and posed this question: How can we shift Episcopal culture, so that Episcopalians are centered on Jesus and able to embrace evangelism? The Strategic Cabinet concluded that a new program was not the answer. Episcopalians needed to return to ancient practices that shape us into the likeness of Jesus. We needed a rule of life that would be available to the whole Church, with a generous invitation from our Presiding Bishop and lots of room for local and individual adaptation. We needed a Way of Love.

The Strategic Cabinet was especially moved by the “**What We Are Learning**” report from RenewalWorks, a ministry of Forward Movement, about the spiritual vitality of The Episcopal Church. By comparing data from hundreds of Episcopal churches, RenewalWorks found the following:

The need is urgent. We contend with complacency and low expectations. We are an older denomination, with membership numbers in decline. Spiritual practices and embrace of beliefs are low relative to other denominations. Leaders often feel depleted, even defeated. At the same time, there is hope, as we can identify specific, quantifiable actions that can be taken, catalysts which can build cultures of discipleship and help The Episcopal Church grow spiritually.

The Way of Love welcomes Episcopalians and anyone else to take up catalytic actions and reorganize our lives around those actions, not for the sake of saving our churches but to center our lives on the God we know in Jesus Christ.

Here is another way of understanding it. The Way of Love helps us to seek and satisfy some of the most basic human longings: How can I experience true freedom? How can I experience abundant life?

How on earth do I live in the real world with love at the center of my life? The only way we know is with Jesus: abiding in his love, following his way.

How does the Way of Love relate to the Baptismal Covenant and the Five Marks of Mission?

The Strategic Cabinet reflected and prayed with the Baptismal Covenant and the Five Marks of Mission, along with rules of life from several monastic communities and Martin Luther King Jr.'s 10 Commandments for the Nonviolent Movement. The pattern of the Way of Love seeks to heed the wisdom of these important cornerstones of faith and action.

The Way of Love and the Baptismal Covenant

The Way of Love is a natural companion to our Baptismal Covenant. When entering the Baptismal Covenant, we say “yes” to Jesus. The covenant begins with renouncing evil and turning toward Jesus Christ, continues to proclaim all that God has done for us through Jesus Christ, and concludes with five baptismal promises.

The Way of Love is crafted to provide a simple and flexible framework for identifying practices that help us continue to reorient our lives toward Jesus and grow as disciples and evangelists. A helpful exercise is to map the Way of Love to the baptismal promises. The resonances will run very deep, by design.

The Way of Love and the Five Marks of Mission

The same mapping exercise works with the Anglican Communion's Five Marks of Mission. While many see them as a way to understand the mission of the Church, the Five Marks also describe the shape of a life organized around Jesus. In fact, the Way of Love is tied to a wider Anglican Communion effort known as Jesus-Shaped Life, a comprehensive campaign to grow discipleship among Anglicans.

If you walk through the Five Marks of Mission, you may notice links such as these:

- To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom reflects the practices of LEARN and BLESS.
- To teach, baptize, and nurture new believers reflects the practices of LEARN, PRAY, and WORSHIP.
- To respond to human need by loving service reflects the practices of TURN and BLESS.
- To seek to transform unjust structures of society reflects the practice of GO.
- To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth reflects the practices of BLESS and GO.

The **Commitment Card with the 10 Commandments for the Nonviolent Movement**, a pledge composed by Martin Luther King Jr., is a rule of life for people who seek the countercultural way of Jesus and the dream of God. You will notice echoes of this pledge in the Way of Love:

I hereby pledge myself – my person and body – to the nonviolent movement. Therefore I will keep the following 10 commandments:

1. Meditate daily on the teachings and life of Jesus.
2. Remember always that the nonviolent movement seeks justice and reconciliation – not victory.
3. Walk and talk in the manner of love, for God is love.
4. Pray daily to be used by God in order that all men might be free.

5. Sacrifice personal wishes in order that all men might be free.
6. Observe with both friend and foe the ordinary rules of courtesy.
7. Seek to perform regular service for others and for the world.
8. Refrain from the violence of fist, tongue, or heart.
9. Strive to be in good spiritual and bodily health.
10. Follow the directions of the movement and of the captain on a demonstration.

I sign this pledge, having seriously considered what I do and with the determination and will to persevere.

Each of these covenants is an example of a commitment that we make with God, with each other, and with ourselves, and that we live out in community. The specifics differ, but the same call emerges: love God, love neighbor, and love creation; grow in love through repentance, meditation on scripture, prayer, worship, service, self-giving, and justice; and abide with God.

Who produced the Way of Love resources?

A core set of resources has been produced by the Way of Love Working Group, a team comprised of members of the Presiding Bishop's staff and volunteers from key groups dedicated to Christian formation, leadership development, and publishing. By early 2019, the Way of Love Working Group had created the following:

- Wallet cards
- Brochures
- Tokens
- Introductory video
- "Getting Started" reflection guide
- Foundational nine-session small group curriculum
- Advent curriculum and calendar
- Lent curriculum and quiet-day retreat guide
- One-day retreat guide and liturgical resources

Featured resources are available at www.episcopalchurch.org/wayoflove/featured. The group also has curated and distributed resources created across the Church.

Because the Way of Love is not a new program, but rather an amplification of longstanding and ancient Christian practices, many materials already exist that support the Way of Love. See materials organized by practice at episcopalchurch.org/wayoflove, as well as resources from **Church Publishing** and **Forward Movement**.

Since the launch of the Way of Love, formation leaders, clergy, and lay leaders in local churches, dioceses, ministries, and organizations have been producing numerous resources that are open-source and available as open-source materials. Submit your own resources here: dfms.formstack.com/forms/wayoflove_submit.

What are we supposed to do with the Way of Love resources?

Individuals and communities are invited to take what has been created and use it in their own context as is, or to adapt it locally. You also are encouraged to create your own resources for following the Way of Love. Feel free to send resources using the link above or emailing them to

wayoflove@episcopalchurch.org, and post them on social media with [#wayoflove](https://twitter.com/wayoflove). We'd love to celebrate and spread the word about your good work.

How do I follow the Way of Love? Is there an order?

To begin following the Way of Love, we invite you to take a look at this brief “**Getting Started**” reflection guide. You can launch the Way of Love journey on your own, form a group, or join an existing group. The Way of Love can be adopted by an entire congregation or by an individual, by a family or by an intentional community. We suggest that, however you choose to begin, you find a journey buddy (like a gym buddy) who also is following the Way of Love.

The Way of Love is not a prescribed set of steps. True, there is a familiar rhythm to the seven practices of Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, and Rest. But the most important rhythm is the one within your own life. There's no beginning or end; they simply are practices meant to be in dynamic relationship with one another. No one takes up one practice apart from all the others. This is about the whole of life.

Is this going to disappear soon? Is it one more Church fad?

The Presiding Bishop is committed to helping the Church live the Way of Love throughout his ministry. It will evolve as congregations and people walk with it. Even when Presiding Bishop Curry's term ends in 2024 and other initiatives emerge, the Way of Love doesn't have to disappear. A path like this is foundational to living as a Christian.

What is the relationship between the Way of Love and the Jesus Movement and Becoming Beloved Community?

The Way of Love, the Jesus Movement, and Becoming Beloved Community are all interrelated.

We are the Episcopal branch of the **Jesus Movement**: the ongoing community of people who follow Jesus into loving, liberating, life-giving relationship with God, each other, and creation. We commit to following Jesus through the **Way of Love**. We follow his way, grow in love with God, and invite him to the center of our lives, thereby discovering a love we never imagined. That love overflows into loving, liberating, life-giving relationships. The Way of Love is a trellis that helps us live into our identity as part of the Jesus Movement.

Central to the Jesus Movement are evangelism, reconciliation, and creation care. The Way of Love supports all three initiatives.

In **evangelism**, we help people grow loving, liberating, life-giving relationship with God. As we grow our own relationship with God in Christ through the Way of Love, it gets easier to practice evangelism: to seek, name, and celebrate Jesus' love in the stories of all the people around us. It gets easier to invite people to discover their own life with God when we've got a vibrant love and life to share. If we live the Way of Love, we will eventually want to share it and welcome others to discover it, too. Episcopalians do this in a variety of beautiful ways. Specific efforts like Episcopal Revivals, evangelism trainings, grants, networks, Evangelism Matters, Forward Movement, and the Episcopal Evangelism Society can help.

By practicing the Way of Love, we are growing relationship with God, ourselves, and others. In **reconciliation**, we grow loving, liberating, life-giving relationship with each other, especially in light of injustice that harms and separates the human family. As we grow in love for God, we see God in

others and respect and serve Christ in others. We yearn to heal whatever systems have disrespected or denied the fullness of God in others.

The practices of the Way of Love naturally invite us to **creation care**. As part of the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement, we know that love for God and each other spreads to cover all of creation. This commitment to loving, liberating, life-giving relationship with the earth is care of creation. In this ministry, we have the opportunity to 1) grow networks of people who publicly proclaim our love for God's good earth, 2) stand in solidarity with vulnerable people seeking protection and freedom from the effects of climate change, and 3) change our own habits to become less selfish and more of a blessing to the earth and all creatures.

What is the relationship between the Way of Love and the Church's commitment to Becoming Beloved Community?

The Church's commitment to **Becoming Beloved Community** fits most meaningfully within the Way of Love framework in the practice of GO. Indeed, in the basic description of GO, we say "[Jesus] sends us beyond our circles and comfort, to witness to the love, justice, and truth of God with our lips and with our lives. ...We go to become Beloved Community, a people reconciled in love with God and one another."

In 2017, after a year of listening following the invitation by General Convention to take up the Jesus movement, Presiding Bishop Curry, House of Deputies President Gay Clark Jennings, and officers of the House of Bishops and House of Deputies invited Episcopalians to study and commit to using *Becoming Beloved Community: The Episcopal Church's Long-term Commitment to Racial Healing, Reconciliation, and Justice*.

Becoming Beloved Community is the specific commitment The Episcopal Church made to dismantle racism and participate in racial reconciliation, justice, and healing. It is a comprehensive, long-term spiritual journey we take up as individuals, congregations, and a whole Church to 1) tell the truth about our churches and race, 2) proclaim God's dream of beloved community, 3) practice the Way of Love in the pattern of Jesus, and 4) repair the breach in institutions and society.

Do I have to be Christian to follow the Way of Love?

No, but we understand the Way of Love to be the way that Jesus lived and invited us into, as part of his own deep union with God. The Way of Love is intended to be adapted to local contexts, but the practices are unashamedly rooted in relation to Jesus and Christian life: turn from selfishness to Jesus, learn Jesus' ways in scripture, pray to God, worship God in community, bless and go as Jesus did, and rest and abide with God.

Do I need financial resources or additional staff to implement the Way of Love?

Many materials for the Way of Love are available free online. You may download and print Way of Love brochures and wallet cards; bulletin inserts; small group forums; and seasonal forums for adults, youth, and children. More resources are being created all the time. Featured resources can be found at www.episcopalchurch.org/wayoflove/featured. To view resources by practice, click here (www.episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love). Use this form to submit your own resource for inclusion, or email it to wayoflove@episcopalchurch.org.

Do I need training to implement the Way of Love?

No training is necessary to begin the Way of Love. If you seek to lead a group or a community in engaging in the Way of Love, we encourage you to become familiar with the Way of Love by looking at the resources on The Episcopal Church website (www.episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love) and inviting a few people into conversation about how best to begin. If you are forming a small group, then it is helpful to have someone involved who has experience in leading small groups. The **Nine-Session Small Group Curriculum** for the Way of Love will help. The best training for small group facilitation is having been a part of a well-functioning small group in the past. You might think of people in your community who have taken part in Education for Ministry or other small groups. Good facilitation isn't about knowing everything about the content, but rather having the ability to facilitate meaningful conversation. Consider the Way of Love as an ongoing journey of Christian formation, and be open to new learnings and ways of following Jesus.

All this emphasis on Jesus doesn't sound very Trinitarian.

The person of Jesus is central to the life of The Episcopal Church and its identity. Just open the Book of Common Prayer or any hymnal. Each week, we hear readings from the gospels, which narrate the life and ministry of Jesus. The Way of Love places Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, as central to our lives, along with the Holy Spirit and our Creator God. The Holy Spirit beckons us to turn, sustains us in prayer, and is whom we join in blessing others.

As Episcopalians, we have always gloried in loving with and following Jesus. Along the way, for different cultural reasons, some of us have distanced ourselves from Jesus in order to avoid sounding intolerant or anti-Semitic. But he is the heart of Christian faith. His Way of Love centers and shapes us. And his face is the face of God made known to us all (John 6:46). At this moment in our culture and history, Jesus needs people who will follow his Way of Love and live as witnesses to it in the world. Will you be one?

Will this grow our numbers? How do I know if it's working?

Presiding Bishop Curry reminds us that the Way of Love has been road-tested by the saints and the prophets. By Esther, by David, by Peter, by Paul, by the Marys, by Jesus! Come down the road and see for yourselves. In Acts 2:46-47, we hear that day by day, the believers grew in number and faith as they read scripture, broke bread, and gathered for prayers. If we live like Jesus, as the apostles did, then we will become more and more like Jesus who gathered crowds.

Jesus turned to God – we TURN. Jesus read scripture – we read and LEARN. Jesus prayed – we PRAY. Jesus worshiped – we WORSHIP. Jesus poured out his life as blessing – we BLESS. Jesus went across boundaries to share love – we GO. Jesus rested and abided with God – we REST. We are called to follow the pattern of Jesus' life through the Way of Love.

The Way of Love will grow the spiritual vitality of not just individuals but also our faith communities. Spiritually vital churches grow both in their lives and in numbers. A survey by **RenewalWorks** affirms what many of us experience in our churches: a declining denomination whose members are often passive and complacent when it comes to life in the Church. Many do not feel nourished in church, and they don't practice their faith outside church. Still, others seek spiritual growth but do not know how to begin. Nearly three-quarters of Episcopalians self-identify as remaining at the early stages of spiritual maturity. There is a hunger for spiritual growth. Three of the catalysts for spiritual growth identified by **RenewalWorks** are engagement with scripture, the transforming power of the Eucharist, and a deeper prayer life – three of the seven practices of the Way of Love.

Congregations need a new way of orienting their individual and corporate lives in ways that help them encounter God. The Way of Love is such a way of living – a rule of life that will grow spiritual vitality – and, as Jesus has promised, when we become followers of Jesus on the Way, we will become catchers of people (Luke 5:10).