



THE WAY OF LOVE
Practices for Jesus-Centered Life

One-Day Retreat Guide

www.episcopalchurch.org/wayoflove

THE WAY OF LOVE

ONE-DAY WAY OF LOVE RETREAT

Designed for use by a leader or leadership team

This one-day retreat for the Way of Love responds to Presiding Bishop Michael Curry's invitation to enter a time of intentional reflection, discernment, and commitment around the practices of Turn, Learn, Pray, Worship, Bless, Go, and Rest. It introduces participants to these seven practices through the witness of experienced individuals and provides an opportunity for participants to practice, reflect, and make a commitment to the Way of Love.

Timeframe: 9 am–3 pm

- As you plan the day, consider allowing ample time for a leisurely lunch (45 min.-1 hour).
- Allow no more than 30 minutes per session, and plan for generous breaks.
- Consider setting up a labyrinth and/or provide art resources for praying in color. Times of retreat can create spaces where deep sorrows and longings arise. Quiet places to pray provide space to process those thoughts and feelings.

Objectives

- Introduce the Way of Love.
- Open space for personal reflection and practice.
- Begin to build a rule of life for following the Way of Love.

Methodology

- It is a day set apart with intention and slower than ordinary life.
- It is a day wrapped in worship, with plenty of time for rest and reflection.
- Each session opens with a three- to five-minute retreat-style reflection on a practice, offered by the retreat leader or volunteers who have prepared well ahead of time.
- Following each brief presentation, participants are invited into a time of conversation and practice. Note that the question prompts included with each session's reflection are designed to guide presenters as they think about their talks.
- The tone of the retreat is intended to be invitational, not obligatory.

Resources to help plan a one-day retreat

- Way of Love brochures provide an overview of the Way of Love.
- "Getting Started" reflection guide offers basic vocabulary and a set of questions for reflection on each practice.
- Way of Love Propers list readings, songs, and collects associated with each practice in the Way of Love.
- Way of Love Lectionary, produced by the Diocese of Washington, offers another set of readings and collects for the Way of Love.
- Way of Love Small Group Guide offers background information on the Way of Love and other resources, including prayers and hymn selections.
- Suggested Music and Liturgical Materials support the worship planner or music leader in your group.

SCHEDULE

Arrival

- Retreats begin when participants depart from “home.” Getting to a retreat should be as straightforward and stress-free as possible. Be sure that the retreat logistics are well communicated and that transportation can be readily arranged.
- Ensure that participants are able to find the retreat gathering easily. Create welcome signage, if necessary.
- Offer a simple hospitality station on arrival, with selective reading materials and refreshments [e.g., fruit, nuts, simple cookies, water, and coffee and tea (with and without caffeine, if possible)]

Orientation and Introductions (20 min.)

- Welcome participants, orienting people to the space and the day’s schedule.
- Invite people to share their name and one to two sentences about themselves, such as city of residence, church or group name, and reasons for attending. (Note that, if the group is larger than 10, introductions will take longer.)
- Provide a brief overview of the Way of Love based on the Way of Love brochures.
- It may be helpful to show the Presiding Bishop’s invitation to the Way of Love video, which can be downloaded from episcopalchurch.org/wayoflove.

Opening Worship (20-40 min.)

- Open with Morning Prayer or Eucharist.
- Select readings, prayers, collects, and songs from the Way of Love liturgical resources, focusing particularly on “Rule of Life.”
- Consider including John 15:1-8 as the reading/Gospel and the basis for your reflection. Use this opportunity to discuss, “What is a rule of life?” For guidance, draw on the “Background for Discussion” in Session I of the Way of Love small group curriculum.

Break (5 min.)

Session I: Turn (30 min.)

Pause, listen, and choose to follow Jesus.

Like the disciples, we are called by Jesus to follow the Way of Love. With God’s help, we can turn from the powers of sin, hatred, fear, injustice, and oppression toward the way of truth, love, hope, justice, and freedom. In turning, we reorient our lives to Jesus Christ, falling in love with Jesus again, again, and again.

- The leader or a volunteer offers a three- to five-minute reflection on his/her own practice of turning, considering questions such as: When have you felt especially close to God in the last year? When have you felt especially distant from God in the last year? What has made the difference and brought you back to God?
- Practice: Invite participants to move to one end of the room where blank paper, pens, and markers are available. Ask them to list or draw on a piece of paper the things (habits, responsibilities, etc.) that distract them from God. Then, have them turn around and walk to the other side of the room with their papers. On that side of the room, ask them to turn their papers over to the blank side and write or draw what they need to turn toward and what one step they can take this week toward the Way of Love.

- Encourage participants to fold their papers and tuck them away in their belongings.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to talk about their experience as a group.
- End the session with a prayer crafted by the leader or a volunteer who has prepared ahead of time, or with this prayer:

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy: Be gracious to all who have gone astray from your ways, and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of your Word, Jesus Christ your Son; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

(A Collect for the Second Sunday of Lent, Book of Common Prayer, p. 218)

Break (5 min.)

Session 2: Learn (30 min.)

Reflect on Scripture each day, especially on Jesus' life and teachings.

- The leader or a volunteer offers a three- to five-minute reflection on his/her own practice of learning about Jesus in scripture, considering questions such as: How have you woven scripture study into your own personal practice? How has this practice shaped the way you see yourself, God, the world, and your place in the world?
- Practice: Engage in a simple Bible study together. Consider methods like African Bible Study, Gospel-Based Discipleship, or Dwelling in the Word, all of which are described in this free guide from Church Publishing: https://www.churchpublishing.org/siteassets/pdf/cultivating-the-missional-church/cultivating_missional_church_study_guide.pdf.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to talk about their experience as a group.
- End the session with a prayer crafted by the leader or a volunteer who has prepared ahead of time, or with this prayer:

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

(A Collect for Proper 28, Book of Common Prayer, p. 236)

Break (5 min.)

Session 3: Rest (30 min.)

Receive the gift of God's grace, peace, and restoration.

- The leader or a volunteer offers a three- to five-minute reflection on the practice of resting, considering questions such as: What helps you to rest in God? What restores your mind, body, and spirit?
- Practice:
 - » If the setting and climate are conducive, invite participants into silence for 10 minutes, encouraging them to go outdoors and repeat to themselves, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).
 - » If the setting or weather does not permit going outside, invite participants into silence for 10 minutes, encouraging them to find a comfortable place to sit where their focus can be on their breathing and on the phrase, "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

- » Use a gentle chime or music to draw people back together at the end of the 10 minutes.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to talk about their experience as a group.
- End the session with a prayer crafted by the leader or a volunteer who has prepared ahead of time, or with this prayer:

O God of peace, who has taught us that in returning and rest we shall be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be our strength: By the might of you Spirit lift us, we pray, to your presence, where we may be still and know that you are God; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(A Prayer For Quiet Confidence, Book of Common Prayer, p. 832)

Break for Lunch (45-60 min.)

Session 4: Pray (30 min.)

Dwell intentionally with God each day.

- The leader or a volunteer offers a three- to five-minute reflection on his/her own practice of praying, considering questions such as: What is your personal prayer practice? What deepens your ability and willingness to pray? What limits it?
- Practice: Invite participants to pray for each other out loud in a circle.
 - » If appropriate, invite the group to stand in a circle with everyone's right hand on the left shoulder of the person to the right.
 - » Going around the circle one at a time, invite each person to name, in a couple of words, a need or hope for which he/she would like prayer.
 - » The next person directly to the left, whose hand is on the speaker's shoulder, offers a prayer in response to that need or hope. Then, the person who has just prayed names his/her own need or hope.
 - » Continue around the circle.
- Provide an opportunity for participants to talk about their experience as a group.
- End the session with a prayer crafted by the leader or a volunteer who has prepared ahead of time, or with this prayer:

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine: Glory to him from generation to generation in the Church, and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.

(Book of Common Prayer, p. 126)

Break (5 min.)

Session 5: Bless (30 min.)

Share faith, and unselfishly give and serve.

- The leader or a volunteer offers a three- to five-minute reflection on his/her own practice of blessing, considering questions such as: When have you felt truly blessed in the last year? When have you been a blessing?
- Practice: Have participants sit or stand in pairs, back to back. Each person in the pair is invited to take a turn quietly naming ways in which he/she has experienced blessing. After both have shared, the partners turn to face each other, and each person names at least one way in which he/she has been a blessing to others. Finally, the partners thank God for each other and bless each other.

- End the session with a prayer crafted by the leader or a volunteer who has prepared ahead of time, or with this prayer:

O God, from whom all good proceeds: Grant that by your inspiration we may think those things that are right, and by your merciful guiding may do them; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

(Proper 5, Book of Common Prayer, p. 229)

Break (5 min.)

Session 6: Go (30 min.)

Cross boundaries, listen deeply, and live like Jesus.

- The leader or a volunteer offers a three- to five-minute reflection on his/her own practice of going, considering questions such as: When have you met God in the context of stretching beyond your community, your context, and your comfort?
- Practice (Preparing to practice the Way of Love): Divide the group in half. Instruct one half to make a circle facing outward. Invite the other half to make a circle around the first circle, facing inward toward a partner.
 - » Two-minute partner conversation: Partners facing each other take turns asking and answering, “What about living the Way of Love will be most challenging for you?”
 - » One circle (outside or inside) moves one person to the right.
 - » With new partners, they ask and answer: “What support do you need to practice the Way of Love?”
 - » Same circle again moves one person to the right.
 - » With new partners, they ask and answer: “What first steps will you take to practice the Way of Love?”

Closing Prayer (20-40 min.)

- Close with Evening Prayer or Eucharist, choosing readings, prayers, collects, and songs from the Way of Love liturgical resources, focusing particularly on “Worship.” Reflect as a community on the readings, thinking about where and when they truly worship.
- Include the Covenant for Those Committing to the Way of Love found in the liturgical resources for the Way of Love.