



# A Common Way

2026

# A Common Way

Coracle is an ecumenical community of fellow-pilgrims pursuing union with God and deeper life in Jesus together for Love's sake in the world. Some in our community desire a rule or rhythm of life by which to live our faith and to engage the world around us in love with the mutual support of others. For these we offer "A Common Way".

A Common Way was developed to offer guidance on a **way of life together that makes the wisdom and practices of the monastic tradition accessible to normal people in the modern world in the concrete circumstances and constraints of our daily lives to which God has called us.**

A Common Way helps us live by discerned, personal expressions of a general, Benedictine-informed "rule of life", and helps encourage and strengthen us to live our lives more fully for God's sake in the world as witness.

Throughout the book of Acts, "the Way" was the first name for the teachings of Jesus and those who sought to follow him together. Like those first followers, empowered by the same Holy Spirit, A Common Way is one way some of us at Coracle express the Christian life together—in order to follow Jesus' teachings, to become more like him, and to be his redemptive presence in the world.

**Most simply, we are a group of disciples of Jesus helping each other go deeper into God and to go further together into the brokenness of the world for the love of others, for Love's sake.**

We invite you to join us.

*"Thus says  
YHWH:  
Stand at the  
crossroads,  
and look,  
and ask for  
the ancient  
paths, where  
the good  
way lies; and  
walk in it,  
and find rest  
for your  
souls."*

*Jeremiah  
6:16*

# Monastic Wisdom and Ancient Practices: Why Today?

Over many centuries, from the times of Desert Fathers and Mothers, St. Benedict, the Celts, St. Francis, and St. Ignatius through to today, followers of Jesus have laid down a well-worn path of learned wisdom and practice. How wonderful that we have these and more examples to glean from—both from Scripture and other accounts we find many who have desired a deeper life with God and sought to offer their lives more fully to God!

Some of those deep, deep lives are found in the monastic communities. They forged ways of earnestly seeking God, individually and in community, while blessing others. Over the centuries certain patterns and common practices emerge, such that the Christian monastic tradition has clear common denominators that can be adapted for us today.

Prominent among the monastic expressions is the Benedictine tradition, based on the Rule of St. Benedict of the 6th century. In response to the beautiful reality of a loving God, this “rule” is a way of life oriented around work, study, and prayer, in community. It is an effort to arrange one’s life so that it is lived in response to the deep reality of God. Classically, there are three basic commitments: stability, obedience, and *conversatio* (constant conversion of life).

In *The Inner Room: A Journey into Lay Monasticism*, Mark Plaiss writes, “The goal is not the reading, nor the [liturgical prayers], nor the meditation, nor some mythical romantic monastic ideal. **God is the goal.**”

Jonathan Wilson Hartgrove observes, “In the midst of society, as people struggled to get by in the world, Benedictine communities were to be islands where people could learn a different way of doing life.” In turn, those communities had a positive impact on those around them.

**There is great value in Christian monastic wisdom, ancient practices, and Benedictine tradition. It is also true that the vast majority Christians are not called by God to live their lives in a monastic cloister. Most Christians are called to pursue intimacy with Jesus and union with God in the concrete circumstances of normal lives lived in a busy, noisy world.**

Thankfully, the value and even experience of the monastic way of life is not for monks only!

As Michael Downey writes in *Trappist*, “Indeed, there is a ‘monkish’ streak in people of different walks of life, even in those who have never visited a monastery or those who, having visited a monastery, would never consider embracing the monastic life in any formal way. Long before the emergence of Christianity, some people were inclined to seek God above all else, to find an environment in which their more solitary nature could flourish. In the Christian tradition, the monk is a man or woman, who simply wants to follow Christ and live the Christian life to the full in a particular manner.”

Plais again, “The monk is in the monastery. The monk is also on Wall Street, on Main Street, and down on the farm....The Holy Spirit is expanding the horizon of what it means to be a monk in order to bring all closer to the ultimate reality—Jesus the Christ.”

**Most simply, A Common Way seeks to make the wisdom and practices of the monastic tradition accessible to normal people in the modern world in the concrete circumstances and constraints of our daily lives to which God has called us.**

While our values and commitments are clear and consistent with ancient monastic traditions and practice, we’ve sought to set the bar realistically with as much flexibility as possible. For anyone feeling drawn to pursue a more ordered, rigorous, deeper life for God’s sake, we hope this resource encourages them (and us!) to take simple steps in that direction, with the help of others of like heart and commitment.

Alone, few of us can do this. Together, many can.



# Personal Expressions of Shared Values

A Common Way pursues a personalized rule of life around certain values, relying on the encouragement of others to help us live what we desire. A “rule of life” is simply a conscientious structure that a person or group puts in place in order to support the living out of one’s values.

Those joining us in A Common Way desire to live the following **8 values** more consistently and deeply, **unified in intent without uniformity in practice**. Each person individually discerns with God—and with others—what is the right current form for her or him to express this rule of life. This is an ongoing process of discernment and refinement.

## **Love**

*Love of God, neighbors, others, and the other*

## **Prayer**

*Cultivating an intimate, interactive relationship with God*

## **Work & Rest**

*Undertaking meaningful tasks while maintaining healthy rhythms of rest*

## **Justice & Mercy**

*“Do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.”*

## **Study**

*Engagement with Scripture, spiritual reading, and other areas of learning as discerned*

## **Community**

*Conscientiously engaging meaningful relationships with others*

## **Hospitality**

*Offering the love of God and life with Christ in a wide variety of forms*

## **Consecration**

*Living a life set apart for God in the world as an offering to God and witness to Jesus*

## Examples of Spiritual Practices

*There is a great variety to the forms that practicing our values can take. The point is not to do all of these things but to discern what practices God may be inviting a person to take on in a particular season.*

### Love

- adoration and worship to God
- an orientation to others and self-sacrifice
- compassion
- forgiveness
- service

### Prayer

- vocal prayer
- silence
- solitude
- petition
- confession and continued repentance (*conversatio*)
- other forms of conversing with God

### Work & Rest

- discerned vocations
- meaningful labor in some form
- rhythms of regular rest and Sabbath

### Justice and Mercy

- taking up the cause and caring for those at the margins or who are subject to injustice
- being meaningfully involved with the marginalized pursuing justice and reconciliation

### Community

- being part of a local church or community
- active relationship with other Christians practicing A Common Way
- spiritual companionship
- spiritual direction (strongly encouraged!)

## Study

- Scripture
- spiritual reading
- contemplation/the contemplative life
- justice
- other topics as discerned

## Hospitality

- having an orientation of welcome and service for others
- offering what we have to others
- offering the life we share with God to others individually and corporately

## Consecration

- worship and celebration
- Eucharist/communion
- living by discernment
- simplicity
- stewardship of one's body



*The goal is not the reading, nor the [liturgical prayers], nor the meditation, nor some mythical romantic monastic ideal. **God is the goal.***

*Mark Plaiss*

## Rhythms + Practices

*To express our values, we invite those joining in A Common Way to commit to the following practices individually and corporately, as they are able. Again, there are a wide variety of ways people can engage these practices together or individually, in person or online.*

### Individual commitments:

- Keeping a “Soft Office” for prayer, etc. (morning/mid-day/end of day)
- Regularly receiving Eucharist/Communion
- An annual personal spiritual retreat
- Review of personal rule of life (quarterly, informed by the liturgical year)
- Some concrete expression of Kingdom action
- Annual discernment regarding participation in A Common Way

### Corporate commitments:

- A monthly gathering in person or online
- A periodical retreat together, at least annually in some form
- Weekly one-hour companioning session with others following A Common Way
- Some study/shared deepening (i.e. teaching, shared reading)

### Expressions of shared values:

- Identify concrete ways to personally express the other shared values (found on page 5)



# Recommended Resources

## Encouraged reading for those embarking on A Common Way:

- The Bible, and especially the Gospels
- *The Love That Is God: An Invitation to Christian Faith* (Frederick Bauerschmidt)
- *Answering the Contemplative Call: First Steps on the Mystical Path* (Carl McColman)
- *Seeking God: Finding Another Kind of Life with St. Ignatius and Dallas Willard* (Trevor Hudson)
- *Spirituality for Everyday Living: An Adaptation of the Rule of St. Benedict* (Brian Taylor)
- *Into Your Hands Father: Abandoning Ourselves to the God Who Loves Us* (Wilfred Stinnisen)
- *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Howard Thurman)
- *A Beautiful Year: 52 Meditations on Faith, Wisdom, and Perseverance* (Diana Butler Bass)

## Optional books for more background (\*\*denotes highly recommended):

### Commentaries on the Rule of St. Benedict itself

- *The Rule of St. Benedict 1980* (The Liturgical Press, Collegeville MN)
- \*\**Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict* (Esther de Waal)
- *A Life-Giving Way: A Commentary on the Rule of St. Benedict* (Esther de Waal)
- *The Wisdom of Benedict* (Rt. Rev. Justin DuVall, OSB)
- *Prayer and Community: The Benedictine Tradition* (Columba Stewart, OSB)
- *Monastic Practices* (Charles Cummings, OCSO)

### On New Monasticism and Lay Monasticism

- \*\**Spirituality for Everyday Living: An Adaptation of the Rule of St. Benedict* (Brian Taylor)
- \*\**The Inner Room: A Journey into Lay Monasticism* (Mark Plaiss)
- \*\**New Monasticism: What It Has to Say to Today's Church* (Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove)
- *School(s) for Conversion: 12 Marks of a New Monasticism* (The Rutba House, ed.)
- *The Universal Monk: The Way of the New Monastics* (John Michael Talbot)
- *The New Friars: The Emerging Movement Serving the World's Poor* (Scott A. Bessenecker)
- *Submerge: Living Deep in a Shallow World* (John Hayes)

### On Hospitality

- *The Paraclete Book of Hospitality* (Paraclete Press, ed.)
- *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Christine D. Pohl)

# About Coracle

## Our Mission

Coracle exists to inspire and enable people to be the presence of God in the brokenness of the world through Spiritual Formation for Kingdom Action.

## Our Vision

Our vision is for people to come fully alive through Christ for the sake of the world.

## Our Values

Inspired by and wanting to be like Jesus, as a ministry and as individuals, Coracle values:

- *Contemplation*—living in touch with God and with the day-to-day realities of our worlds; praying together and listening for God’s voice and responding.
- *Formation*—living as new persons in Jesus Christ, as our true selves in God and in the world.
- *Kingdom Action*—living in and bringing Shalom more fully into the world for the sake of others and all creation, presenting the Gospel, and pursuing beauty, diversity, and justice as hallmarks of the Kingdom of God.
- *Community*—living connected, authentic and meaningful lives with each other; offering hospitality and sharing life with others, especially those whom God leads to us.



Scan to join us at one of our  
upcoming offerings



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# The Coracle Community

Coracle is an ecumenical community committed to contemplation, formation, and Kingdom action. We are fellow pilgrims pursuing union with God and deeper life in Jesus together for Love's sake in the world. All are welcome to be part of our community to the extent they desire to engage, online or in person, through our various offerings.

- **The Coracle Community in Northern Virginia** gathers regularly on Sunday nights at the Coracle Center in Arlington, VA, for companionship, personal deepening, worship, Gospel reading, prayer, and Eucharist.
- **The Coracle Community Online** provides spaces for gathering regularly for conversation, companionship, retreat, and prayer for people across the country and around the world.
- We are in the gathering phase for both **A Common Way** and a short- to mid-term residential **community at Corhaven**, both influenced by Benedictine traditions of work, study, and prayer.

## The Coracle Center of Formation *for Action*

In 2025, we launched an ecumenical Center of Formation *for Action* in the Washington, DC, metro area. At the Coracle Center, we create opportunities for encounters with God and provide ministries of formation, healing, and action.



Scan to read more about Coracle's vision,  
"Building the Fire"



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