

# The Coracle Community: An Invitation



For You | For the World | For God



# *The Coracle Community*

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*A Christian community is evangelized in order to evangelize. A light is lit in order to give light. A candle is not lit to be put under a bushel, said Christ. It is lit and put up high in order to give light. That is what true community is like. A community is a group of men and women who have found truth in Christ and in his gospel, and who follow the truth and join together to follow it more strongly. It is not just an individual conversion, but a community conversion. It is a family that believes, a group that accepts God. In that group, each one finds that the brother or sister is a source of strength and that in moments of weakness they help one another and, by loving one another and believing, they give light and example. The preacher no longer needs to preach, for there are Christians who preach by their own lives.*

Oscar Romero, The Violence of Love

## I. WHAT IS CORACLE?

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. We are a small band of men and women of many ages and backgrounds longing for more of Jesus in our lives and in the broken, yet still beautiful world. Since 2012, we have offered opportunities, spaces, and resources by which Christians can come into a deeper relationship with the God of love, find their lives strengthened and transformed, and move out towards a vibrant, redemptive engagement with the broken parts of the world around them. As Mother Teresa said, “We must be contemplatives in the heart of the world.” She understood that all spiritual formation ultimately flows outward into our lives in the world, and that our actions of love and service to the world are only sustainable when nourished from the well-spring of spiritual formation. We believe— along with Mother Teresa and myriad others through the centuries of the church— that Spiritual Formation and Kingdom Action are like the two wings of a bird: only when both are working together is it possible to soar.

Coracle’s offerings take many and varied forms, including:

- **Retreats, gatherings, fellowships, and resources** that offer access to classic spiritual practices to those who want to celebrate, explore, and experience the unity found in the Great Tradition of Christianity. We help those longing for “More” find it.
- **Spiritual Direction** for those who don’t know where to get it. We maintain a network of more than 20 spiritual directors who serve members of the clergy and leaders of churches, businesses and nonprofits. We help mature the mature.
- **Places to encounter God** for those who need to step out of the hectic rhythms of life for a short time, or who need some guidance on retreat. We help those looking for God to find Him and be found by Him.
- **Kingdom Action initiatives** available locally and around the world, such as peace-making, reconciliation, justice, and creation-care. We help God’s Kingdom come and partner with others who do the same.
- **Opportunities for individuals** to more freely and broadly offer their gifts in the world. We help people become who God has made them to be for the good of the world.

Christ came that we might have life and have it in abundance (John 10.10)! If Coracle might be able to help you towards that full-life in Christ, we hope you will join us on this challenging and joyful journey with God, together.

## II. WHY COMMUNITY?

by Bill Haley

People who are drawn to Coracle have likely been gripped by two realities and are seeking to live out a faithful response to both of them.

**The Reality of the World:** The first reality is that of the world. We live on a planet that is full of immense suffering— globally, domestically, locally, and personally. One way or the other, folks who find themselves at Coracle have touched and been touched by the sufferings of the world in real, profound, and transformative ways. We could be paralyzed by such reality and do nothing in spite of our desires. We could ignore it. We could nod at it, and be limited in our response to charitable donations and periodic service. Or we can engage these sufferings and injustices in the hope that somehow God might use us as agents of grace and redemption. The reality of the world demands a faithful response.

**The Reality of Jesus:** The second undeniable reality that demands a response is not a ‘what’ but a ‘Who’— Jesus Christ, who is God and the Son of God. Most of us at Coracle— whether through simple faith, intellectual conclusions, a deep sense of need, personally experiencing God’s faithfulness, watching Jesus transform and satisfy our lives— have come to agree with the Apostle Peter who said to Jesus, “We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6.69). The reality of Jesus, his love and Lordship, demand of us a faithful response.

**The Faithful Response:** And what then is this faithful response to these two realities? We believe that it is to **radically orient our lives around Jesus: to grow closer to him, to become more like him, and to be his presence in the midst of the pain of the world.** At a quick glance, these goals seem simple enough. And they are simple. But they are not easy, particularly when we grow deeper and deeper into their implications.

Almost nothing in American culture (or any culture for that matter) encourages us to orient our lives around Jesus in a conscientious and costly way. In the strong current of a culture that values accumulation over sacrifice, comfort over justice, consumption over compassion, tolerance over truth, self over service, and an undefined spirituality over Jesus, it is a challenge for those seeking to follow the Way of Jesus to actually follow in his Way. We need help.

If there is another reality that our community is acutely aware of, it is that, **alone, none of us will live the life with Christ that we most deeply desire.** Most likely and in most areas of life, left to our own devices we won’t live the way we want to without intentionality and community.

More personally, I find that Christian community is necessary if I am going to be transformed more and more into the image of Jesus. I can't follow Jesus the way I think Jesus wants me to follow him without the help of others.

That's true for all of us. We need the help of others for a spiritually disciplined and deepening life. Thus we are a community of needy people, and this is nothing to be ashamed of. Rather we celebrate our weakness, realizing that it is in weakness that God's power does its best work.

As Jean Vanier writes in From Brokenness to Community:

***We feel small and weak, but we are gathered together to signify the power of God who transforms death into life. That is our hope, that God is doing the impossible: changing death to life inside each of us, and that perhaps, through our community, each one of us can be agents in the world of this transformation of brokenness into wholeness, and of death to life.***

Not only is community necessary for our own formation, it also creates the possibility of great service to others.

After graduating from seminary in the mid-1990's, I traveled around the world for fifteen months to study and experience three things: urban ministry, Christian community, and ministry to young adults. My search for the most effective ministries in the most broken places in the world took me from places like Amsterdam to London to Switzerland to Israel to Calcutta to Kathmandu to Bangkok to Seoul to Seattle. After seeing so much, I returned convinced of one thing—that **small communities of Christians who are committed to prayer, study, and service are among God's most powerful agents for personal transformation, social impact, and the blessing of others.** I returned home convinced that the world needed more communities like these, and have been working on various forms of it ever since.

I've been formed and inspired by personally engaging communities like the Church of the Savior in Washington DC, the Missionaries of Charity, the Iona Community in Scotland, the ministry of L'Abri around the world, the historical example of the Clapham Sect, and various monastic communities throughout history and now.

These communities have some characteristics in common: they are deeply Christ-centered, reliant on prayer, have some way of doing life together, have a strong social concern, a deep commitment to the ongoing spiritual formation of its members, and a striking degree of intentionality. In each case, a small group of people came together to follow Christ and help

each other follow Christ, leading to transformation for many people and often a great deal of ministry to others, sometimes with remarkable social impact.

These communities and others like them are simply living-out how the church got its start in Acts 2, where the earliest Christians, filled and empowered by the Holy Spirit, “*devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.*” (v42) In this way, there is nothing new at all about seeking to live a life more deeply in Christian community and attempts to do so. It is actually and simply returning to the ancient.

As Richard Niebuhr observed, “*The great Christian revolutions come not by the discovery of something that was not known before. They happen when someone takes radically something that was always there.*”

Every generation of Christians has the opportunity and invitation to experiment with various forms of community for the sake of others and for the sake of their own growth in their own times and context. We need it, our society needs it, the world needs it, and God is glorified by it.

### III. WHY THE CORACLE COMMUNITY?

#### Our Deep Desire and Goals

The desire and purpose of the Coracle Community is to do four things:

- Go deeper into Christ
- Go deeper together
- Enable each other's vocations and
- Move out for the Kingdom together

**We gather to go deeper into Christ**, to pay attention to our own spiritual formation and discipleship. There is all-too-little in our culture that supports our deepening in Christ and maturing into Christ-likeness, but this group of people helps keep our eyes on the goal of growing together in Christ and becoming more like “little Christs.” Coracle exists to enable the spiritual formation of each and anyone, and few things form us as deeply as community.

**We gather to go deeper together**, in community, in fellowship and all that that means. We are a community that bears one another's burdens, rejoices in each others' successes, shares tears, strengthens the other, and prays for one another.

**We gather to enable each other's vocations**, to offer listening companionship that is quick to call out strengths. We help one another listen to God, and support others in whatever it is that God is calling them to do.

**We gather to move out for the Kingdom together**, to be available for God to use us for his purposes as he will, to create a vessel and a people that God can use. Over the years, this may take some form of international or domestic ministry service. We do not gather simply to be for ourselves, but also to be available to God for others as he calls us out into a very broken world. Coracle exists for Kingdom Action, and we never want to lose sight that ultimately all that we do needs to find its way to be for others.

## IV. WHO IS THIS FOR?

The Coracle Community is for anyone who feels drawn to it. Any of these community meetings are open for any who would want to join. While many may have been deeply shaped by Coracle already, for others this may be the way they first encounter Coracle and are drawn more deeply into fellowship with us and with God. In other words, anyone is welcome.

Folks who may especially appreciate this group are those who

- Are yearning for a more meaningful and mature relationship with God and want to walk with others who feel the same way
- Realize the value and need of spending time with others who are earnest about their relationships with God and who also desire to see the world become a more loving, just, and peaceful place
- Have already experienced the unique integration of “Spiritual Formation and Kingdom Action” Coracle embodies and want to continue towards a seamless and integrated vision of the Christian life
- Have struggled a bit to find deeper community in their existing contexts
- Find it difficult to see how their gifts and talents can be used redemptively to serve the world and build-up the Kingdom of God

Our hope is that the Coracle Community will be a space where anyone longing for More can find it, with others.

The Coracle Community is not a church nor does it aspire to be. We see this gathering as a space where those whom may have struggled to find deep and encouraging relationships in their own faith contexts might find them here and return to their local congregations better inspired and equipped to worship and serve there. It may even be that this way of meeting and gathering could be helpfully translated into an existing local congregational context should one be led to do so. For some, it may help them feel connected, supported, and challenged while they wait to find a faith community that can provide a deeper sense of belonging and sharpening.

The Coracle Community gatherings, while open, are particularly for those who are making some commitment to be at them as regularly as possible.



## V. THE WAY WE GATHER

We meet together each month following the basic schedule outlined below. In order to do all that we hope to do in these times, we follow the times pretty religiously.

(Times can be adjusted for a day-time or weekend meeting)

6.00-7.00pm	<b>Optional Gathering:</b> Gathering and eating as people are able to arrive
7.00	<b>Start and Reflection:</b> Brief introductions, recall what we're doing and why we meet, a brief reflection from the evening's leader, and prayer to open our evening.
7.20	<b>Small Groups:</b> Break into small groups for reflections and prayer
8.20	<b>Conversation:</b> Regather for corporate conversation
8.35	<b>For Kingdom Action:</b> Discussion and planning on moving out for the Kingdom together
9.00	<b>Prayer:</b> Corporate prayer together, with a brief final liturgy to close
9.15	<b>Depart:</b> a hard stop to our time together

### **Optional Gathering                      6.00-7.00pm**

This hour is open to bring your dinner or a little something to eat and enjoy it in the company of others who can make it at that time. Show up when you're able and there will be at least a few others there to break bread with you. You don't have to eat during this time, but you are certainly welcome to. It offers a great opportunity to connect with others individually.

### **Start and Reflection                      7.00-7.20**

We'll start together right at 7pm. It's OK if you're a bit late, just know that we'll have begun and try to join quietly. We'll start with short introductions and an overview of why we are gathered. This is followed by a brief reflection or offered experience on the spiritual life from one of our community, concluding with brief prayers.

### **Small Groups                              7.20-8.20**

In that a major purpose of our gathering is to support each other's spiritual lives and vocations, this hour is very important to our time. We will break into groups of no more than 4 people.

These small groups will not be closed, and they'll change from meeting to meeting. Our assumption is that anyone who comes to these community gatherings 1) is safe to be vulnerable with, 2) is serious in their pursuit of Christ and committed to Christlikeness, 3) shares some language already having been somehow drawn or impacted by Coracle, 4) is worth sharing with and getting to know, and 5) has something to offer.

To facilitate our personal reflection and depth in conversation, each person will have written a one page reflection paper that they will read out loud to their small group. There will then be a little time for clarifying questions from the listeners. More about these one page reflections and a couple samples are included in "Appendix A" of this document. After a person's first time to this gathering, it's assumed that they'll come to any meeting after that having written a one-page reflection. Of course, there's always grace if we don't get a chance to write a reflection before the meeting, but some thoughtfulness about where and how we are is really important, and the papers are important for that.

It is critical that all that is shared in these groups be held confidentially. Further, the posture of the group is always 'listening' as opposed to 'fixing'.

There may be time for praying for each other at the end of this time, and this is encouraged and to be hoped for.

If there's someone in the group that you feel drawn to connect with more deeply and individually, there's plenty of opportunity to do that outside these gatherings, simply by reaching out to schedule a time to connect. Similarly, if you're not placed in a group with someone you really wanted to connect with, just reach out for a time for coffee, lunch, or some other to connect.

## **Conversation                      8.20-8.35**

We reconvene to share anything that emerged in our groups or personal reflection that is appropriate and edifying for the larger group.

## **For Kingdom Action              8.35-9.00**

Like any Christian community, this one doesn't ultimately exist for ourselves. A community that only exists for itself atrophies. Further, as George MacLeod observed,

*"Only a demanding common task builds community."*

This section of our time together is devoted to conversation and planning about whatever it is that the Lord might be calling us to do together for the sake of the Kingdom. It is a time to pay attention to what the Lord is calling us to offer together, to consider what is needed to make that happen, and come up with the action items to get that done.

The particular manifestations of Kingdom Action we feel led to take on together will likely change, focus, or expand over time. Initially, we are simply creating the context within which God can speak and call us out into the world.

**Prayer** 9.00-9.15

We will finish our gatherings with time for corporate prayer, praising God and seeking God's help and guidance, and use the short liturgy provided on the next page.

**Close** **9.15pm**

This is a hard stop, as a commitment to one another so we can get home and find rest.

## **A LITURGY TO CLOSE OUR GATHERINGS**

### **A Collect to Close Our Time**

(prayed together)

O Lord God, for the gifts of this time together we thank you. Thank you for the gift of friends and fellow-pilgrims on the way. Thank you for the ways you've met us, individually and together. Thank you for what you're doing in our lives, and once again we offer you our "Yes." Deepen our relationships, deepen our intimacy with you, send us your Holy Spirit to empower our vocations, and Lord God, we are available to you however you would use us. Thank you that you are with us, and that you love us. We love you, and are yours. Send us forth into the world in peace. Amen

### **The Lord's Prayer**

(prayed together)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

### **The Blessing**

(to be offered by the leader or said by all)

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13.14)

## VI. ON WRITTEN REFLECTIONS

The one-page reflection is a powerful tool for spiritual formation and cultivating community. The discipline of writing brings us to deeper clarity about how God is moving in our lives. Sharing that clarity with a small group facilitates deep conversation and connection.

This reflection, offered on a monthly basis, forms the basic structure for helping us be known, the actualities of what is actually going on between us and God, and how we're doing. They help us reflect on what's actually going on in us, and what we're facing and needing support in.

Individually, writing these reflection papers is designed to give us clarity, to confront us, and to slow us down enough to pay attention to what God is doing in us and may be inviting us into.

Responding in writing to questions like some of these can give some focus to our reflection.

“What is God doing in my life?”

“Where do I feel God stirring?”

“What is God saying?”

“How did I do *this* month living the way of life that I want to?

“What is difficult for me right now?”

“What is a place of great joy for me right now?”

“What do I need to be praying about?”

“What do I need help with?”

“What do I need prayer for?”

Sitting down to write these things out forces us to clarity about these all important questions.

If we're taking on some spiritual disciplines that we're seeking to adopt that will enable the way of life that we're seeking, putting down on paper how we're doing in those areas confronts us very personally with our successes as well as the ways we could have done better. If we desire a particular way of living in God and in the world but we just cannot seem to get there, slowing down to write about it begs the question, “What do I need to change in my life so that I can live the way that I most deeply want to?”

One of the benefits of these one page papers is that, having written it, we have wrestled on our own to the point of clarity enough to articulate what we feel like is most deeply pertinent. Offering these reflections to others in our community then is an open window to let them know what's going on with us, in a way that leads to our depths relatively quickly. When we write

specifically about how we are doing in any commitments for which we have asked the help of others, it gives them the clear opportunity to help when we need help.

Finally, offering these reflections to others gives them clear guidance on how to pray for us, either by what they are picking up ‘between the lines’ or by responding specifically to what we have sought prayer for.

So, there is some encouragement and some direction as we sit down each month to write our reflections. To write them in haste and without thought prohibits the reflections from doing what they are designed to do—give us deeper clarity into what is actually going on in our lives off the surface. So, take some time to reflect and to write, for while the greatest purpose is for the person writing, it will also help those hearing them read to respond even better.

See Appendix B for a couple of samples of one page reflections.

## VII. JOIN US ON THE DEEPER JOURNEY

Coracle is fundamentally about helping each other say a loud “Yes!” to the invitation to share in the life of Jesus during our brief stay here on earth— to incarnate the Incarnation— and to share the love of Jesus to this beautiful and broken world, for the glory of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit. It is ultimately because Jesus took into himself the whole breadth and scope of a human life that we can be confident that God cares about every aspect of our own lives and the lives of others.

For these and many other reasons, the Coracle Community is one facet of our many-faceted ministry. There are lots of ways for you to get involved in Coracle, and different locations to connect from!

- Come find space at [Corhaven](#)— a retreat home in the Shenandoah Valley for Group and Personal retreats in a variety of formats. We can help guide you towards a structure and resources that may be helpful for you as you intentionally take time away to be with God either by yourself or with others
- Go on a [pilgrimage](#) with us! We travel internationally with mission and intention to Israel/Palestine, Spain, Scotland, Guatemala, Nepal, the US/Mexico border, and more
- Get a [spiritual director](#)— a companion on the journey offering a listening, prayerful presence to another while you walk together with God
- Participate in the [Coracle Fellowship program](#)— with different location options and timelines, you can embark on a process of discovery and formation in community with others seeking more in their relationships with God and in their redemptive engagement in the brokenness that surrounds us all
- Join us in the work toward racial healing through “[An American Lent](#)” from [The Repentance Project](#), pilgrimages, seminars, book and movie discussions in NoVa, and with the Corhaven Graveyard book club virtually
- Visit the [Corhaven Graveyard](#)— holds the final remains of formerly enslaved persons associated with a pre-Civil War plantation and is offered to the public as a space that remembers and honors those who were not shown honor during their lifetimes, and cultivates opportunities that look to the future with hope, peace, and justice for all people
- Join us [in NoVA](#)— to read books and watch movies with us monthly through in-person discussions in NoVA, as well as explore additional retreats and seminars offered around the area [throughout the year](#)
- Join us [in Baltimore](#)— for Advent and Lent retreats every year as well as a 20-month version of the Coracle Fellowship program
- Connect [in the Shenandoah Valley](#)— a growing body of people connected through diverse local churches and work in the community

- Find out about [Common Good Things](#)— a collection of homemade, handmade and other well-made products sourced locally from the Shenandoah Valley and other areas, offering something tangible that carries a story and represents a collection of people: local businesses and collaborations with like-minded makers, inspired by the goodness of the everyday and sharing it with others

There are many ways of going deeper in the journey, together, being met by God along the way.

Check out our website [www.inthecoracle.org](http://www.inthecoracle.org) and be sure to [sign up for our e-newsletter](#).





## Appendix A: Small Group Leader Guide

Some general guidelines:

1. Apply strictest confidentiality around all sharing of these papers. Reiterate this at the beginning of every small group session.
2. Remind group each time at the beginning (especially if there are new members) of the “listening, not fixing” principle for after the sharing of reflection papers.
3. Accountability requests can be added by the person sharing. Group members should take note of this for follow-up.
4. Listen for promptings from the Holy Spirit and stop for prayer when it feels necessary, wise, or good to do so.
5. People can be encouraged to connect more in-depth outside of the group meeting time by reaching out on an individual basis. One person’s paper should not monopolize the group’s time.

For one hour at every meeting of the Coracle Community, we will have time in our small groups, and one person will be tasked to gently lead the group. When someone shares their paper, use this general format (which can be modified slightly based on the group and your sense as a leader of how it should go):

1. One minute of silence before the paper is read.
2. Person reads their paper (should not be more than a page).
3. One minute of silence after the paper is read.
4. People are able to ask clarifying questions or make observations.
5. As time allows at the end of the time, pray together as a group.

These small groups are not closed, and will change from meeting to meeting. We try to limit the groups to 4 people so that each person has the opportunity to share their reflection paper, should they have prepared one. As time-keeper, the leader will be responsible for moving the group through each reflection paper equally and respectfully, adhering to the one hour time window, as well as also be responsible for gently turning the discussion if it strays away from the guidelines.

All attendees of the group should have already read the Coracle Community document, which describes the expectations of all attendees of Coracle Community Gatherings. Should you discover that someone in your group is not a safe person for other group members for whatever reason, please alert one of Coracle’s leaders.

After a person’s first time to this gathering, it’s assumed that they will come to any meeting after that having written a one-page reflection. There is grace and benefit of the doubt, of course.

## Appendix 2: Sample Written Reflections

### Reflection #1

*Without death there is no resurrection, No change without something to be changed,  
No re-creation without devastation, No new land without waters strange.  
But what to do while waiting for the new? In the in-between times it is time to mourn,  
And trust in God and wait for the debut - Death comes first before the better is born.*

A friend of mine likes to think of years in terms of one word...usually I think she sets this word at the beginning of a year, though I wonder if sometimes the end of a year offers a newer, more accurate word. Either way, by the end of the summer for me it was clear that the word for this past year was “Death.” I remember (I think it was in July) describing to my sister Ruth some of the challenges and disappointments of the year, and she didn’t have a lot to say except to marvel at the long string of very hard losses to bear and wonder what God was doing in it.

Then in late October I began to think (and more importantly, feel) in terms of “Renewal.” And, feeling very much like the deep darkness was passing, watched as the morning sun seemed to climb over the horizon giving just a bit of light behind me and in front. And then ordination...and frankly, without killing my page limit on detail, the sum total of it (at this point) has been more disappointing than anything (with a couple very important exceptions). It too has felt full of loss and death, and what is quite hard to bear about all this is that of all things that have undergone some destruction (or at best, delay), getting ordained felt like the purest, the least prone to somehow being subtly about me or my faults. I’m just now able to articulate what some of those losses are, and that’s good...getting a handle on it.

So yesterday I met with Father James. He confirmed my decision to get ordained, and said (importantly), “The challenges you’re facing confirm your obedience, for this is your way of following Jesus to the cross.” Not particularly bright, but deeply strengthening nonetheless. I bought a little crucifix at the bookshop to put in my car and remind me of his words. There were eyes filled with tears three times in our meeting—first when I mentioned to how painful it was, on top of everything else, for my ordination also to feel like it had led me to place I didn’t want to be... it’s like, “Can I get a break here, God, and especially in this?” Secondly, I asked Father James to pray for me for one thing... that Jesus would show up to me in some powerful and unique way that would offset some of the sense of disappointment and discouragement. And third...when at the end of the meeting he said he was proud of me.

An important comment from him was “Bill, you *are* going somewhere... or actually, you’re being taken somewhere.” I think then this new year’s word will be thus... “Re-creation” or “Re-birth.” It’s deeper than renewal... more radical. Of course, I have no idea what all this looks like, it just seems like something is happening on very deep levels. I really don’t know who I’m becoming, a scary thought with a touch of hope when I think about it. The degree that I believe God has my best in mind (I believe that a lot!) is the degree to which this is comforting and anticipatory.

I will say our group is a really deep encouragement for me...thank you for being in it with me and together.

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## Reflection #2

### “Waiting, Watching, Expecting, Working”

Advent is here... I don’t feel prepared. And yet, still I expect it to be a particularly rich time, and even today feel significantly more engaged with it than yesterday. God gives grace to individuals in the body of Christ when the body of Christ corporately practices the rhythms of the church year. So I am at least beginning to feel swept up into the season, in part because of longing finding expression in at least intent.

My last session with Father James held some profound encouragement as now I, with you, begin to again more conscientiously orient my life around the spiritual disciplines in community. In response to my comments about the distance between my desire and practice, he mentioned that those who conscientiously practice the spiritual disciplines the most are generally those who are most deeply aware of how little time they are giving to God via the disciplines. Specifically, he mentioned that if you really want to know how little attention you’re giving to God, become a Trappist! He went on to say every monk realizes that there’s always more they can be doing. Of course, there wasn’t a shade of legalism in his tone or words... just longing. And the longing for God and life with God keeps us continuing wrestling with the concrete realities of our immediate seasons and circumstance... otherwise we’d probably give up. So, I was encouraged.

And, of course, when I went through the list of the things that I am or have been doing regularly, his response was simply, “See? It sounds like you’ve got some good rhythms already going, more than you realize.” But it is time to go further more thoughtfully.

So, here is the way of life that I’m seeking your accountability in this next season. In light of the spiritual disciplines of a transforming community, with God’s help, I commit to

- 45 minutes each weekday morning with God taking the form of at least 5 minutes of body prayer (yoga), 10 minutes in silence with God, and the rest of the time in Scripture, devotional reading, and prayer. Included in this time I will seek to pray each day the “Prayer to be Filled with the Spirit”.
- Throughout the day I will seek to practice the Sacrament of the Present Moment, with a particular emphasis on remembering the presence of God in the immediate story and the big picture, through ‘spiritual breathing’ and reciting Psalm 70.1 every hour on the hour, and make my last thoughts and prayers before sleep
- Participating in prayer and contemplation on Tuesday nights and Eucharist on Wednesday mornings
- Being faithful to our little group meeting on Sunday afternoons, writing the reflection papers regularly for accountability, and being at StBs corporate worship.

It’s worth mentioning what’s on my screen for further thought and practice in the coming year so I don’t forget it! I’m pretty confident I’m being taken in the direction of Dallas Willard’s works and perhaps also the thoughts of Francis MacNutt/Leann Payne; I hope to adopt more ascetic practices as a way of offering my body to God; and I desire further study and application of the ideas of ‘domestic church’ applied first in our family and supporting Tara in this.

I’ll also mention that this Advent starts a season of greater intentionality for Tara and I together to create space to listen to God, and as of today we’re beginning to live more deeply into that. Happy Advent! It’s a season of waiting, watching, expecting, and working in faith that God is and wants to work in, through, and around me.

## Appendix 3: A Brief History of the Coracle Community

On October 1, 2017, a group of new and old friends met to consider community and deepening our relationships with one another. We had all been blessed through Coracle somehow—whether through the Coracle Fellowship, spiritual direction, a personal retreat at Corhaven, a pilgrimage, a simple conversation, or some other way.

We met at a family home in Arlington, VA to listen, discern and experiment. God, it seemed, had drawn together a beautiful group of people, but we were not yet a group. And it seemed wise to meet more regularly over the coming months to see what would happen if we tried to be in each other's presence, and in the presence of God, with some more intentionality and regularity. And we did it, and it was good. Very good.

On July 8, 2018, now deeper friends, we met again in that same family home to consider the question of if and how we might continue to deepen our fellowship and community. We agreed that we should, that it felt right. And further it felt right to figure out how to invite others into this nascent and beautiful community. In the following weeks even more clarity, language, and ideas emerged.

We affirmed that we enjoy being with one another and that people who like Coracle often end up liking each other and wanting to spend more time together. **Coracle is a place where people with strange integrations in their lives, minds, and hearts find a home and a safe place to dive into Christianity more deeply.** People look to the Coracle Community as a place to be encouraged in holistic spiritual maturation, a place to go deeper into Christ, together, and moving out further for the Kingdom.

We met a couple months later on September 30 to create some structure around this rich gathering so that we all could go deeper and so that others who were drawn in might go deeper with us. We began to meet monthly, and God seemed to meet us every time, and it began to become clear that we should make this beautiful gift more available to more people.

On March 11, 2020, we opened up the Coracle Community more publicly so anyone who felt drawn to it and found out about it could be a part of it. We're excited to see where God leads us, and who God leads to us.

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



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