



September 2025

Feast of Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Dear friends and fellow travelers,

Welcome! I'm so glad you are interested in joining our Coracle Community!

The Coracle Community is an ecumenical group of people committed to contemplation, transformation, and Kingdom engagement, fellow-pilgrims pursuing union with God and deeper life in Jesus together for Love's sake in the world.

As a little background, over the summer of 2025, we hosted a series of conversations around forming this community. The gatherings were rich, full of beautiful people who are inspiring to be with, and thought provoking. And they were deeply helpful for us as we considered a way forward for those who want to join together and begin making this road by walking it. The conversations helped us a lot in charting our initial way, as we began to gather throughout the fall.

Now, we are excited to be gathering regularly **every Sunday**, beginning on **January 4, 2026**, from **5pm-7pm**, at [The Coracle Center of Formation for Action](#) in south Arlington: **5401 7th Road South, Arlington, VA 22204**.

Our meeting includes time for sharing a meal and conversation, and concludes with a simple, shorter service of worship, Word, prayer, and Eucharist, generally following the standard format of the ancient church. Once a quarter, we take one Sunday as an invitation to conscientiously be in God's [first book of creation](#) alone or with family or in groups. You can read more about how we gather [here](#).

Community opportunities in other venues at other times are yet to be determined and will emerge. I'll be interested in your ideas about that, about shared experiences for the whole community and also for smaller groups within it. Also TBD is how we'll provide common resources along the way for our encouragement and edification, and so that we can begin sharing some language and discussing ideas core to this community (ie, that God is love, the contemplative life, God's heart for justice etc). My lean is to be realistic and go slow. If any of you want to go faster into certain topics, let's talk about that, there is no shortage of resources!

A few things became evident because of our three conversations that were especially helpful:

1. Many are intrigued and curious by the notion of a community like this, and quite a few are very hesitant around the notion of “planting a church”.
2. Of course, everyone is busy and few folks are seeking to add on “another thing”, and some are quite happy in their current church contexts.
3. Each person who came to these conversations is passionate about God and Jesus and deeply genuine in our Christian faith, AND there is a legitimate diversity of political views in our community and different interpretations of what is happening in America right now or reactions to certain policies of the current administration.

So, I'll try to respond in brief to each one of these observations:

1. In our first meeting, one person said, “I want to *become* a church, I don't want to plant a church”, and that was well said. *While it's quite possible that in time the Coracle Community will be a formally recognized church (something to be discerned), 'planting a church' is not the goal of forming this community, and that's language I'll avoid for the next season.* For some people, right off the bat this community will be our primary place of belonging, functioning like their church, and for me and Tara it will be our church. Great! For others who want to participate in the community but are wanting to stay connected to their current church, that's OK, there's much freedom to do both as one is able. My guess is that initially, there will be a mix of folks representing each group, and that over time the majority of people in the Coracle Community will see it as their primary place of belonging, even as their church. And this is to be welcomed, even while we welcome folks who are finding value in what we're doing in addition to their primary church. And, from the beginning, you are welcome to invite others to join in. We are curious to see who God will draw.
2. *We want to provide a way for people to participate both meaningfully and regularly, recognizing that with work, family, travel and other existing commitments, some of us will not always be able to participate as much as we'd like.* And that's OK. **It's like prayer...we do what we can, not what we can't.** I'm sure that there are others of us who will be able to participate regularly in most things, and this is lovely. Wherever a person happens to be on a Sunday, we will create a very simple liturgy and prayer practice for folks in the community to use when they are unable to be present in person.
3. **The Coracle Community is [ecumenical](#), meaning we are comfortable with people coming from different views, and expect and welcome that, whether it be in**

matters of faith and practice or politically and culturally. This space is designed to be a place where folks can show up with who they are and what they think and be safe, and so we'll work hard to do that, expecting that sometimes that'll be difficult and awkward. A core conviction in this community is that as followers of Jesus we get to love each other, the Other, and our (perceived) enemies. In other words, as complicated as it might be, we need folks who are different from us as individuals to be "us" as a community. We all have things to learn, and our views can be improved by talking through stuff honestly and respectfully, especially with fellow followers of Jesus with whom we have deep disagreement. So we'll help each other do that, with the help of the same Holy Spirit who we share. Good Christians can disagree about substantive issues. We want to experience Unity because of Jesus, not Uniformity of views.

Please feel free to reach out to me or Wade to talk further about these things, or anything!

For those who want to participate in this, I will be conscientiously available to you and this community as her pastor and as her priest. In other words, without being presumptuous, my posture is to accompany you in whatever way I can be helpful to you, with no expectations or requirements on my part about that. I will also be a fellow pilgrim on the way with you. My deepest desire for all of us is that each of us would be living into and out of who each of us is uniquely in Christ for Love's sake in the world. We'll journey together. And though not intentionally, I will disappoint you, while I'll be doing my best with God's help and grace! My lack of perfection will keep all of our eyes on Jesus as our hope. **Wade Ballou will initially serve as co-pastor.**

As you consider joining in forming this community, you may have questions like "What does Bill actually believe?" or "What are some of his convictions undergirding this initiative at this time?", I would offer two resources:

- The first is "Essential Christianity" which was written in December of 2020 and which Coracle developed into a video course as well. You can view the PDF [here](#), [order a hard copy or Kindle e-book from Amazon](#), or watch [the videos here](#).
- Second, It's been a helpful exercise for me, in the interest of clarity and transparency, to list out some of my current perspectives that are germane to forming something like the Coracle Community at this time. You can read those [here](#). I provide it so that you can know where I and Tara and Wade are coming from. Also, I'd encourage you to begin thinking about what perspectives you're bringing with you as it relates to this community. You may want to consider doing that for yourself, it's a helpful exercise!

If you'd like to join our mailing list to receive our weekly gathering details and reminders, please sign up for our Coracle Community newsletter [here](#).

If you know people who you think would benefit from a community like this, feel free to pass this along and let them know. **And feel free to reach out to me or Wade with any questions or concerns.**

We look forward to seeing you soon!

Bill for Tara and Wade

PS: If you haven't already, I'd deeply encourage you to get a free subscription to my Substack, [Thoughts Along the Way](#). It's where I offer what's currently on my mind or some sort of pastoral encouragement, and is a pretty good sample of how I think and what about, and hopefully is helpful!

PPS: Additionally, we've started a Coracle Community Substack, where I and Wade share pastoral reflections, and others as we move forward together. You can read past letters and sign up [here](#).

PPPS: Join me in praying: *"Oh God, whatever you're doing in this, please keep doing it, and by your grace grant us wisdom and discernment. Amen."*