

The Way of Love

Presiding Bishop Curry has invited the whole church to take up The Way of Love, a rule of life focused on practices for all who want to sing and dance to Jesus' lead. The Adult Forum began this exploration in the fall, and will continue to explore the Way of Love in the winter-spring seasons. We will focus on three of the seven areas that can help us each develop a rule of life: LEARN – TURN – GO. Here's what our Presiding Bishop says about these areas:

- **LEARN** – By reading and reflecting on Scripture, especially the life and teachings of Jesus, we draw near to God and God's word dwells in us. When we open our minds and hearts to Scripture, we learn to see God's story and God's activity in everyday life.
- **TURN** – 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.
- **GO** – As Jesus went to the highways and byways, he 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 listen with humility and to join God in healing a hurting world. We go to become Beloved Community, a people reconciled in love with God and one another.

Here's a calendar of topics that we will engage in the Adult Forum. Please note that on the first Sunday of every month we take a break from the Forum and share an hour of extended coffee hour. It's a time to kindle the bonds that make our community by conversation, sharing experience, and being together in God's friendship. Bring food to share for our First Sunday Brunch.

January 13, 20

LEARN – How to use the Bible for knowledge and spiritual growth. We will begin this season of the Forum with a conversation about the Bible, looking at it as a source of both insight and transformation. Exploring biblical worldview, meditative reading, theological analysis, and sharing experience, we will explore ways to use the scriptures that make more of us individually and as a community. Paul Fromberg convening.

February 10, 17, 24

LEARN – Work to do during the rector's sabbatical. In January 2017 the Forum shared a conversation about the spirituality of resistance. In the following months, our community began to understand that the intersection of our lives in God and our lives in the world were being drawn in a new direction. The spirituality of resistance is the cornerstone of Paul's sabbatical, which will be from May 1 – September 16. While he is on sabbatical, the congregation is invited into the same work: focusing on intersection between spiritual practices and social transformation. Three weeks in February will provide time to talk to each other about the rector's sabbatical.

March 3

The Bishop's Visit – Bishop Marc Andrus will be with us to celebrate the conclusion of our fortieth anniversary year on St. Gregory of Nyssa Sunday, March 3. We will have breakfast together at 9 AM and a single, combined service at 11 AM. Bishop Marc will preach and preside; this is an opportunity for baptism, as well as confirmation and reception. If you are interested in any of these, contact Paul Fromberg.

March 10, 17, 24, 31

TURN – Lenten Practices. During the season of Lent we will look at spiritual practices, all anchored in love, that lead us toward the way of truth (3/10), hope (3/17), justice (3/24), and freedom (3/31). What do you want to see changed in your world? In yourself? In our community? Saint Gregory's clergy will convene these conversations.

May 12, 19, 26

GO – Book Study. Natalie Carnes' *Beauty: A Theological Engagement with Gregory of Nyssa* and Jennifer Harvey's *Dear White Christians*. Kerri Meyer will convene these conversations of texts that Paul will also be studying while on Sabbatical.

Every First Sunday – Brunch!

LEARN

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

Background for Discussion:

By reading and reflecting on Scripture, especially the life and teachings of Jesus, we draw near to God and God's word dwells in us. When we open our minds and hearts to Scripture, we learn to see God's story and God's activity in everyday life.

Starting the Discussion:

- What is your favorite passage of Scripture? What does it mean to you?
- Have you ever tried to read the Bible all the way through? Describe your experience.
- If you could share a meal with any person (other than Jesus) from Scripture, who would it be? What would you ask that person?

Questions for Discussion:

- The Catechism says that "God still speaks to us through the Bible" (*Book of Common Prayer*, p. 853). How has God spoken to you through Scripture? How does God speak to the Church through Scripture?
- What is your favorite story about Jesus? What about it speaks to you?
- How does hearing the stories of God working in the world in Scripture help you spot God working in the world today?
- What is the sermon you have always wanted, but have never heard, preached? What Scripture would you use?
- How has your approach to understanding Scripture changed over time? Has this changed how you relate to God and others?
- What ways of reflecting on Scripture are the most life-giving for you?
- What gets in the way of making time to read and reflect on Scripture during your day? What is one thing you can do to set aside time for Scripture?

Practicing the Way of Love (10 minutes)

Hand out a copy of the "Practicing the Way of Love" worksheet. Ensure that all participants have writing utensils, and encourage them to fill out the worksheet. Give permission to adapt or discard a practice they tried that was not life-giving. This is a work in progress. Instruct participants to add a practice for "Learn" to their Way of Love working rule of life. Gently remind participants that a modest change sustained over time is better than a dramatic but unsustainable change. Participants should begin incorporating this new practice into their Way of Love practices the following day.

Some recommendations for "Learn": Read the scripture from the Daily Office Lectionary found in the *Book of Common Prayer* (p. 934) or online through various websites or apps, take up a Bible reading plan, read a daily devotional, practice lectio divina, or listen to a podcast that includes scripture such as "Pray as you go." (You also might list a practice you are already engaged in that gives life to you.)

Check-out (5 minutes)

Assess the group's experience during this session. Ask one of the following questions:

- When did the group have a lot of energy? When was the energy lacking?
- When did you feel close to God? When did you feel far away from God?
- When did you meet Jesus in your session today?
- When did you see light from the Holy Spirit?
- What did you notice about our time together?
- What will you take away from our conversation today?
- [If short on time] Describe our time together in one word.

TURN

Pause, Listen, and Choose to Follow Jesus

Background for Discussion:

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.

Starting the Discussion:

- Tell a story about a time you got physically lost. How did you find your way again?
- Tell a story about a time you changed your mind. What did it take to change your mind? What happened after you changed your mind?
- What is your experience of Lent? How do you feel about Lent? Why?

Questions for Discussion:

- Tell a story about a time you realized you were spiritually lost and had to find your way back to God. What made you turn back toward God?
- Why do you think the Church sets aside the season of Lent for repentance?
- The *Book of Common Prayer* offers two Rites of Reconciliation (pp. 446-452). (The Rite of Reconciliation is sometimes colloquially called "Confession.") Did you know these rites are available? When do you think they might be helpful?
- Scripture is full of people, from Moses to Matthew, who turn from their old life to a new life in deeper relationship with God. What biblical stories speak to you? How has God called you out of an old life and into the new?
- When everything goes wrong, what practices help you to turn again and again to Jesus Christ and the Way of Love?
- What would it look like in your own life if you turned from the powers of sin, hatred, fear, injustice, and oppression toward the way of truth, love, hope, justice, and freedom? What specifically do you need to turn away from in your own life? What do you need to turn toward?
- What is one step you can take this week on the Way of Love?

Practicing the Way of Love (10 minutes)

Hand out a copy of the "Practicing the Way of Love" worksheet. Ensure that all participants have writing utensils, and encourage them to fill out the worksheet and to add "Turn" to their Way of Love working rule of life. Gently remind participants that a modest change sustained over time is better than a dramatic but unsustainable change. Participants should begin incorporating this new practice into their Way of Love practices the following day.

Some recommendations for "Turn": Pray the Confession found in the *Book of Common Prayer* (p. 79) each day, work on forgiving a wrong, read through Form One or Form Two of Reconciliation of a Penitent (*Book of Common Prayer*, pp. 447, 449), read Psalm 51 each morning or night, or practice the Daily Examen. (You also might list a practice you are already engaged in that gives life to you.)

Check-out (5 minutes)

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- When did you meet Jesus in your session today?
- When did you see light from the Holy Spirit?
- What did you notice about our time together?
- What will you take away from our conversation today?
- [If short on time] Describe our time together in one word.

GO

Cross boundaries, listen deeply, and live like Jesus

Background for Discussion:

As Jesus went to the highways and byways, he 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 listen with humility and to join God in healing a hurting world. We go to become Beloved Community, a people reconciled in love with God and one another.

Starting the Discussion:

- Who is your most unlikely friend? How did you become friends?
- Where do you feel Jesus' absence most keenly in the world?
- Tell a story about a time you went beyond your comfort zone.

Questions for Discussion:

Name a time you experienced reconciliation. What had to happen before the reconciliation could occur? How did that reconciliation change your relationship with others or God?

- Where does reconciliation need to happen in your community? How would reconciliation change your community?
- What would love, justice, and the truth of God look like in your community?
- How could you faithfully discern where reconciliation needs to happen?
- What is one thing you could do this week to heal your world?
- To what new places or communities is the Spirit sending you to witness to the love, justice, and truth of God?
- What needs to change in your own life to make you more open to seeing and engaging with the needs of the world?

Check-out (5 minutes)

Assess the group's experience during this session. Ask one of the following questions:

- When did the group have a lot of energy? When was the energy lacking?
- When did you feel close to God? When did you feel far away from God?
- When did you meet Jesus in your session today?
- When did you see light from the Holy Spirit?
- What did you notice about our time together?
- What will you take away from our conversation today?
- [If short on time] Describe our time together in one word.

Practicing the Way of Love (10 minutes)

Some recommendations for "Go": Identify a community or culture that is unlike your own and learn about them either by attending an event, reading, or speaking to a friend or acquaintance in that group. You might also take a prayerful walk through a neighborhood or space shaped by a community or culture different from your own. (You also might list a practice you are already engaged in that gives life to you.)

Book of Common Prayer 101 PRAY/WORSHIP

What does it mean and why should I care?

September 9, 16, 23 @ 9:45 am

As the Episcopal Church begins a process of revision of our prayer book, people have a lot of questions about what we might gain, what we might lose, and what future God is calling us to embrace. St. Gregory's has a long history of experimenting with the prayer book, and we have discovered an enormous amount in our 40 years about the ways that people are transformed in prayer and worship. Even though you may have to look hard to find a copy of the prayer book, everything we do is profoundly shaped by the text. Bring your wondering hearts to this conversation with Paul Fromberg convening.

Living in intentional community

Where have we been, and where are we going?

September 30 and October 14 @ 9:45 am

Intentional Communities come in many different forms, including co-housing, cooperative houses, and communes. As the cost of living continues to skyrocket in the Bay Area, a group of people at St. Gregory's is considering what it would be like to make their home together. We all bring different experiences and expectations to this conversation. Some of us have lived in monastic communities; some lived in communes in the 1970's. Bring your ideas, dreams, and questions to this conversation convened by St. Gregory's members. Devin Rodgers is the convener on September 30.

Going into Potrero Hill GO

How will we cross boundaries, listen deeply, and live like Jesus?

October 21 @ 9:45 am

St. Gregory's has been a presence in the Potrero Hill neighborhood since the early 1990's – even before our beautiful church building was completed. A part of sharing this part of the city is getting to know our neighbors, their stories, hopes, and plans. Going into the community invites us to step out of our comfort zones to witness to the love, justice, and mercy of God with our words and in our lives. We go to listen with humility and to join God in healing a hurting world. We go to become Beloved Community with those around us, seeking reconciliation in love with God and one another. Bring your curiosity to this conversation with Devin Rodgers convening.

Dancing Saint Festival

What does Emily Dickinson have to teach us for the living of this day?

October 28 @ 9:45 am

Each fall we look to one of our dancing saints to find out more about living in God's friendship with one another. This year we are looking at the life and work of Emily Dickinson, poet and

innovator, who looked beyond the forms and conventions of her own day in order to give meaning to the inchoate stirrings of her soul. We will hear her own words spoken and sung, and join her in the dance that leads us closer to God. Bring your hunger for beauty to this conversation convened by Randy Bowman and Holly Veldhuis.

Singing songs of community and liberation WORSHIP

How does song strengthen us to dwell with God?

November 11 & 18 @ 9:45 am

The one who sings prays twice, is a phrase sometimes attributed to St. Augustine. Somebody with a sense of humor rephrased this venerable saying, *The one who sings WELL prays twice!* Whatever. The fact of the matter is that St. Gregory's sings more than most churches do in their liturgies. We put a premium on singing because it frees and strengthens us in ways that speech alone cannot do. When the congregation shares in song we are transformed, and the community is enriched. We will practice singing, and learn more about basic music theory. Bring your longing and your voices to this conversation with Sanford Dole and Devin Rodgers convening.

Resting in the gift of God's grace, peace, and restoration REST

Can we afford to slow down and be at peace?

November 25 @ 9:45 am

From the beginning of creation, God has established the sacred pattern of going and returning, labor and rest. Especially today, God invites us to dedicate time for restoration and wholeness – within our bodies, minds, and souls, and within our community. By resting we place our trust in God, the primary actor who brings all things to their fullness. Bring your weariness and hope for renewal to this conversation with Paul Fromberg convening.

Vocation: listening for God's call in our everyday lives BLESS

How can our lives bless others and make us more?

December 9 & 16 @ 9:45 am

In his book, *Wishful Thinking*, Fredrick Buechner writes this of vocation: "The place God calls you is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." Each one of us has a vocation in our lives; some of us practice it in church and some of us don't. Regardless, we can find the place where our gladness meets the world's hunger. Knowing that we are loved and gifted is the place we begin to find our vocation and how to commit to it every day and every place we may go, blessing everyone we meet. Bring your deep gladness to this conversation with Paul Fromberg and Devin Rodgers convening.

Advent blessings BLESS

Who can we serve unselfishly at the busiest time of year?

December 23 @ 9:45 am

The 14th-century mystic, Meister Eckhart, wrote these words: "Here in time we make a holiday because the eternal birth which God the Father bore and bears unceasingly in eternity is now born in time, in human nature. This birth is always happening. But if it happens not in me what does it profit me? What matters is that it shall happen in me." At the end of the year we take time to slow down and prepare for something truly beautiful: the birth of God in each of our lives. Regardless of our self-opinion, regardless of our fear, irrespective of our ability to understand, God comes to us. When this happens, when love is born in us, then we are ready to serve and bless everyone. Bring your whole selves to this conversation with Paul Fromberg convening.