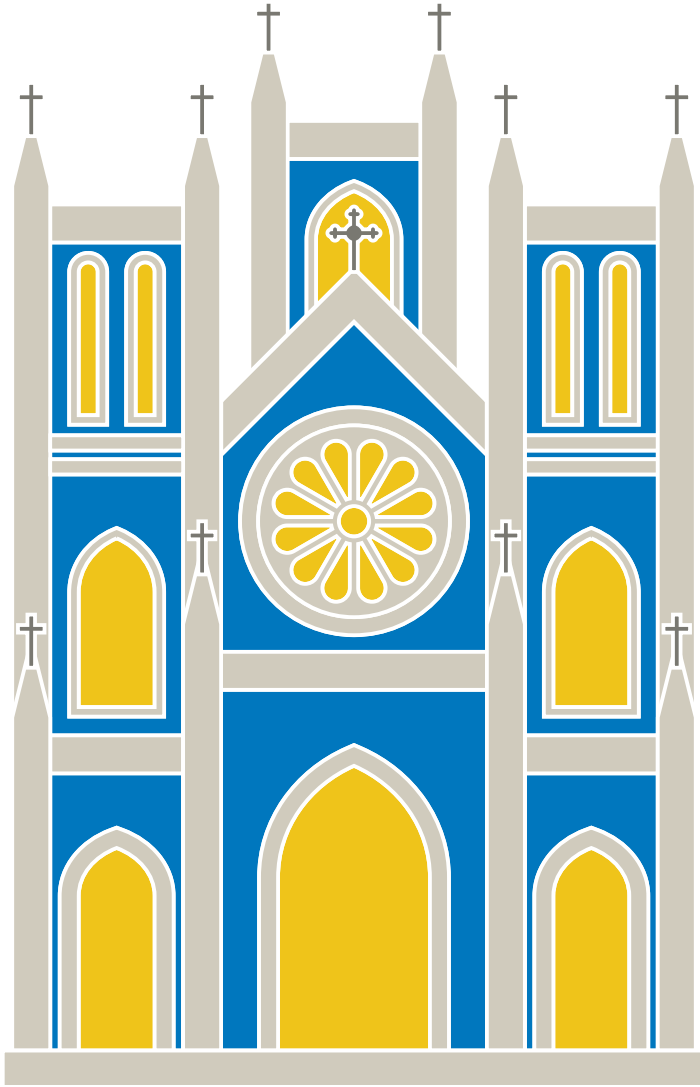


ST. PETER'S

ANGLICAN CATHEDRAL



PARISH RULE OF LIFE

“We thank you for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are made regenerate by the Holy Spirit”

—BCP 2019, pg.168



“...receive the sign of the Cross as a token of your new life in Christ, in which you shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, to fight bravely under his banner against the world, the flesh and the devil, and to continue as his faithful soldier and servant to the end of your days”

—BCP 2019, pg. 169



“We receive you into the fellowship of the Church. Confess the faith of Christ crucified, proclaim his resurrection, and share with us in the royal priesthood of all his people.”

—BCP 2019, pg. 170

The quotations above are all from the liturgy for Baptism in The Book of Common Prayer, 2019. Together, they offer a point of departure for thinking about discipleship. The first quotation (which refers to Romans 6:1-11) describes the whole shape of the Christian life and this shape is cruciform (formed according to the Cross). To be a Christian is not simply to believe things about Jesus but to be conformed to him in his death and resurrection. To be a Christian is to be co-crucified with Christ and co-resurrected with him such that one is even now leaving off the old sin-shaped life and entering into the Christ-shaped life. As Paul puts it in Romans 8:29, being a Christian is a matter of being conformed to Christ and this means taking on the shape of his life, a life marked by perfect obedience and perfect love of God. For Paul, faith leads to conformity to Christ and for this reason he can speak about the “obedience of faith” (Romans 1:5).

The second and third quotations make clear what conformity to Christ means in our daily lives. To be baptized, to be in the process of being conformed to Christ, is to be a public witness for Christ and to share in the common priesthood of Christ's people, the Church. Baptism initiates us into a vocation, that of serving as Christ's witnesses to the world (Acts 1:8) and sharing in the common priesthood of all his people. **Conformity to Christ is inseparable from sharing in the common priesthood of Christ's people, a priesthood which involves service to Christ's people and sharing in God's mission to the world. Through both forms of priesthood (service), we are conformed to Christ.**

The liturgy for Baptism refers to "royal priesthood of all his [Christ's] people." This is an allusion to 1 Peter 2:9 which is itself an allusion to Exodus 19:6. At Mt. Sinai, God consecrates the whole people of Israel to a "royal priesthood". The whole people is to be "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). Later, in Exodus 29, Aaron and his sons are consecrated to serve as priests to the priestly people. Thus, we find a twofold priesthood. There is the common priesthood shared in by all of God's people and there is the ministerial or representative priesthood exercised by Aaron and his sons. The two are integrally related to one another and neither is dispensable. The same order exists in the New Covenant. There is the common priesthood shared by all baptized Christians, who all equally share in the mission of God, and there is the ministerial priesthood exercised by bishops, priests and deacons. Both priesthoods are completely derived from and dependent upon the "great high priest" who is Jesus Christ (Hebrews 4:14).

While discipleship is grounded in the grace of Baptism, it does not happen automatically. Paul makes this clear in the extensive pastoral direction he offers in his letters. A good example of this can be found in Colossians 3:1-17 where he begins with the fact that Christians share in the resurrection life of Christ (Colossians 3:1) and then offers directions for living out life in Christ (Colossians 3:5-17). In thinking about discipleship, we must think about the disciplines which enable us to become disciples. Disciplines open us up to God's grace and so contribute to a life that is fruitful. As Colossians 3:1-17 indicates, the disciplines of discipleship are many.

If discipleship does not happen automatically (without prayer, struggle and suffering), it is essential that we be intentional about it. This is true both of the life of the Church and of our individual lives. The following St. Peter's Rule of Life offers a general pattern of living which can help us to be properly intentional. In following a rule of life, we are not simply following rules but, rather, attempting to order our lives so that they are fruitful.

THE ST. PETER'S PARISH RULE OF LIFE

A fruitful way of developing an intentional approach to discipleship is to adopt a rule of life. The Catechism of the Anglican Church in North America (ACNA) defines a rule of life as “a discipline by which I order my worship, work, and leisure as a pleasing sacrifice to God” (Question 252). A rule of life offers us guidance as we seek to offer the whole of our lives as a “pleasing sacrifice to God” and this is the purpose of St. Peter’s Parish Rule of Life.

THIS RULE OF LIFE CONSISTS OF FOUR COMPONENTS:

- (1) **WORSHIP & PRAYER:** Commit to a daily pattern of prayer (such as the Daily Office) and weekly participation in the parish Eucharist.
- (2) **DISCIPLESHIP:** Commit to the regular reading and study of Holy Scripture both as individuals and as members of a group.
- (3) **COMMUNITY:** Commit to sharing in the common priesthood (service) of St. Peter’s for the purpose of building up Christ’s body in this place.
- (4) **MISSIONS:** Commit to sharing in the common priesthood (service) of St. Peter’s for the purpose of sharing in the mission to which God has called us in the world.

Each of us will live into this rule of life in different ways and at a different pace and the way we live into it will change over time. A rule of life is not something simply to be kept but something which opens us to the grace of Christ and enables us to be conformed to him (Romans 8:29).

Note the relationship between the four components of this rule. The first two components focus on building up while the second two components focus on sending out. Here we have the fundamental dynamic of the life of the Church.



REFLECTING ON A RULE OF LIFE AS A GUIDE TO IDENTITY AND MISSION

From Covenant to Mission

Ephesians 4 – 5:2

Unity in the Body of Christ

⁴I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, ²with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, ³eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. ⁴There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— ⁵one Lord, one faith, one baptism, ⁶one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. ⁷But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. ⁸Therefore it says,

“When he ascended on high he led a host of captives,
and he gave gifts to men.”

⁹(In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? ¹⁰He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.) ¹¹And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

The New Life

¹⁷Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. ¹⁸They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. ¹⁹They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. ²⁰But that is not the way you learned Christ!— ²¹assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, ²²to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, ²³and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, ²⁴and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

²⁵Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

²⁶Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³²Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Walk in Love

5 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. ²And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Commentary

One of the major themes of Ephesians is the phrase “the mystery of Christ” (3:4). It means a great deal but one of its most important meanings is that in Christ, Gentiles are incorporated into the covenant promises made to Israel and, thus, into Israel’s mission (note 2:11-14). As Paul makes clear, the mission of the Church is inseparable from how the community of the Church is ordered. In short, the Church does not proclaim an abstract message known as “the Gospel” but, rather, it embodies the Gospel in the way that its life is ordered.

YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO UTILIZE PAGES 14-15 FOR ANY NOTES YOU HAVE.

1. Read and reflect on Ephesians 4:1-16. Note that 4:1 summarizes everything Paul wants to say and that what follows simply specifies this. What is Paul saying in 4:1? What does he mean by “the calling to which you have been called”? (For some background, note 2:4-10) How does 4:2 begin to specify this? (BTW: Note that 4:4-6 is part of the beginning of the baptismal liturgy on pg. 161 of the Book of Common Prayer 2019)
2. Think carefully about 4:7, 11-13. What does Paul mean by “the grace given to each one of us”? For what purpose is this grace given? Note that in 4:13-14 Paul speaks in the first-person plural. He is not talking about each individual arriving at spiritual maturity alone but about the whole Church arriving at maturity *together*. How might thinking in this way change the way we see the Church and ourselves?
3. Think carefully about 4:15-16. Note that Paul does not think that spiritual maturity is simply something for “serious Christians” but that it is essential for the *whole Church*. Paul seems to think that the mission of the Church is dependent upon its members being a *body* and upon *growing up into the Head of the body*. What might this mean?
4. Look carefully at 4:23-32. What does Paul mean when he says that we are to “put on the new self, created after the likeness of God”? How might this occur? Note that the instructions Paul gives in 4:25-32 are not random bits of ethical advice. Does this section have a common theme? (Hint: It has something to do with community!)
5. Consider 5:1-2. What might it mean to imitate God? How could such a pattern of action be fostered among Christians?
6. In Ephesians, Paul never uses the word “mission”, but the idea is omnipresent. There is a difference of perspective at work here. For many Christians the Church has a mission in addition to a number of other purposes. For Paul *the Church is a mission*. Think about 2:22 as summarizing this mission.

YOUR TURN...

(1) **WORSHIP & PRAYER**

Commitment to a daily pattern of prayer (such as the Daily Office) and weekly participation in the parish Eucharist.

My life today: _____

What might God be calling me to? _____

(2) **DISCIPLESHIP**

Commitment to the regular reading and study of Holy Scripture both as individuals and as members of a group.

My life today: _____

What might God be calling me to? _____

(3) **COMMUNITY**

Commitment to sharing in the common priesthood (service) of St. Peter's for the purpose of building up Christ's body in this place.

My life today: _____

What might God be calling me to? _____

(4) **MISSIONS**

Commitment to sharing in the common priesthood (service) of St. Peter's for the purpose of sharing in the mission to which God has called us in the world.

My life today: _____

What might God be calling me to? _____

WORSHIP & PRAYER

DISCIPLESHIP

COMMUNITY

MISSIONS



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