

A COMMUNITY RULE OF LIFE FOR ST. PAUL'S PARISH

St. Paul's Parish (Episcopal/Anglican)
Riverside, Illinois
<http://www.stpaulsparish.org>

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On Living in Community

Whether it is in the context of our life at our workplace, at home or in the parish, we are called to live in community with other people. Community rules such as municipal laws and apartment building regulations sometimes seem confining, but they have a purpose: to help enhance the quality of life for those who are part of the community.

St. Paul's parishioners include people with families and people without. Many of us work in the world for a living and our daily lives are sometimes a bit too full of the dry, dull, and necessary things that **MUST** be done.

So in what way is St. Paul's a community? St. Paul's Parish is a unique place because geographic convenience is not the primary reason people choose to worship here. People have made a conscious decision to come to St. Paul's. Theological and spiritual intentionality is the root of our community, and we are strengthened by it.

The challenge to St. Paul's parishioners is to live out our Christian life by balancing the spiritual with the worldly in a healthy, rewarding way. A community Rule of Life can help us accomplish this.

What is a Community Rule of Life?

A community Rule of Life is a written set of principles that is designed to guide, direct, and support members of a community in the path they have chosen to follow. It puts into words the priorities of a Christian way of life.

David Vryhof of the Society of St. John the Evangelist has written that a Rule of Life is not meant to be a law that weighs us down, but a guide that helps us on. It helps us stay focused on the quality of life that we want to have. The introduction to the Rule of Life of the Society's Fellowship of St. John puts it this way:

The purpose of the Rule of Life is to strengthen our abiding in Christ by bringing rhythm, discipline, and order to our discipleship. The Rule helps us offer the whole of ourselves to God each day, and keeps us open to God's love and will for us.

Thus, the Rule is not meant to be an end unto itself; rather, it should be understood as a means of strengthening our relationship with God.

The Baptismal Covenant is the community Rule of Life that the historic Christian Church has had continuously since its earliest days. The Acts of the Apostles describes how following Pentecost the community of Jesus' followers gathered and devoted themselves to the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the Eucharist, and to the prayers. Each year at Easter, we rededicate ourselves to following this Rule.

The Baptismal Covenant is manifest in different ways in different denominations and local congregations. Many Christians choose to live out the Covenant as it is expressed in the Canons of the Episcopal Church. Many in our parish family may choose to participate in a Rule of Life specifically related to the life of St. Paul's community.

Why Have a Community Rule of Life?

Christianity is essentially a community experience. One of the first things Jesus did in His ministry was to choose a community of disciples to share in and continue His ministry.

A Rule of Life gives shape to our community. A structured way of life provides a measure of safety and security that gives us the freedom to take risks in our relationship with God, with other people, and with ourselves. The liturgy in the Episcopal Church is structured so that rather than focusing on what is going to "happen" in church, we can focus our attention on God.

The structure of a Rule of Life also provides a necessary correction to the excesses of life. It helps keep our lives from becoming unbalanced and constantly replaces God at the center of our lives.

A clear example of this is the observance of a Sabbath. God rested on the seventh day and commanded us to do the same. Why would God command us to rest? Because work often has a way of overshadowing other parts of people's lives and can make them think they are self-sufficient or indispensable. Resting reminds us that we are dependent on God for all that we have and all that we are.

The Anglican tradition has long held that "we become what we do." As Anglicans, we are called not primarily to profess certain doctrines or seek certain emotional experiences, but to commit ourselves continually to God by living actively and responsibly as members of the Body of Christ.

A Rule of Life, and the community for which it is a framework, help to keep us "on track" when other aspects of our lives may pull us away from our most fundamental commitments.

How Do We Participate in a Community Rule of Life?

Everyone who worships at St. Paul's Church lives in multiple communities, and the parish is only one of these. The terms "family," "friends," "coworkers," "classmates," and "neighbors" all describe members of the various communities to which we belong.

With so many communities competing for our time and attention, there simply are not enough hours in the day to participate as fully as we would like in all of them. Whether we realize it or not, we are always setting priorities and making choices.

There is one community at St. Paul's Parish, but there are different ways to participate in the community. People choose a level of participation consistent with their responsibilities and changing circumstances. For this reason, the St. Paul's Community Rule of Life cannot be "one size fits all." Outlined in this booklet are three distinct but interconnected Rules of Life for the members of St. Paul's worshipping community.

Each of these Rules of Life – the Baptismal Covenant, the Canons of the Episcopal Church, and St. Paul’s Community Rule of Life – can be divided into four focus areas: spiritual formation and development, worship, community life, and mission. The suggestions in each of these focus areas are not meant to be compulsory practices or burdensome "to do" lists. No one could be expected to fulfill, all the elements all the time. Rather, they should be understood as ideals, suggestions, or guidelines for modern Christian life that have arisen from nearly 2,000 years of Christian life and worship.

The Baptismal Covenant

Participation in the Baptismal Covenant is the foundation for Christian community life for all orthodox Christians. We are initiated into the Baptismal Covenant at our own, Baptism, and each Easter we recommit ourselves to that covenant. If, when we are Baptized, we are not old enough to answer for ourselves, our parents and godparents, with the support and help of the believing community, make this commandment on our behalf. Through this sacrament we are reborn into the Kingdom of God and are enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit to begin living out the Covenant. We begin to allow God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – to guide our lives as we "trust in His grace and love."

When we take time to meditate on the words of the Baptismal Covenant, it becomes clear that the commitment one makes at Baptism is quite dramatic. When lived out fully through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Baptismal Covenant runs counter to our society's cultural norms. Although we often fall short of the expectations of the Covenant, we uphold it as our vision of what life should be.

The Baptismal Covenant undergirds our life as a Christian community. In fact, the Baptismal Covenant cannot be fulfilled apart from a community of believers. Practicing Christians must live out their Baptismal Covenant in the context of a specific community of Christians, such as a parish church.

The Canons of the Episcopal Church

One community in which many people choose to live out the Baptismal Covenant is the Episcopal Church. In addition, the Diocese of Chicago has its own Rule of Life, as outlined in the diocesan canonical requirements for Adult Membership in Good Standing.

Just as the Baptismal Covenant is our link with all worshipping Christians, so the canonical requirements are our link to the worldwide Anglican Communion, the Episcopal Church in the United States, and our own diocese of Chicago. Regarding our bond as Baptized Christians with the greater Church, Michael Ramsey, the 100th Archbishop of Canterbury, observed that "the fellowship between Christians is included within every act of communion, for the Eucharistic Body and the Body of the Church are utterly one."

When we follow the canonical requirements of the Episcopal Church we are making a number of commitments as individuals. But because these commitments take place within the context of a worshipping community, and are centered in the shared experience of the Eucharist, they are best understood as the elements of an Episcopal community Rule of Life.

St. Paul's Community Rule of Life

Finally, persons may choose to assume a spiritual discipline and a servant leadership that is specific to St. Paul's Parish. This discipline of the St. Paul's Community Rule of Life is unique because it has not been imported to show people what they ought to be doing. Rather, it has arisen from within St. Paul's Parish and reflects what people here are already doing and aspire to do.

The practical result of these different levels of participation is that our life together reflects both the unity of our Catholic understanding of Christian worship and the diversity of our participation in the broader life of St. Paul's Parish.

As with "Rules" for other religious communities, the elements outlined in St. Paul's Community Rule of We should not be seen as ends in themselves; instead, they should serve as means to strengthen our relationship with God and with our neighbors. Each of us has a unique vocation, and different people will be attracted to different portions of the Rule.

The Rule is a way to develop our strengths and challenge our weaknesses. By intentionally cultivating the Christian life both as individuals and as a community, we can experience the richness of life that God intends for us.

Spiritual Formation and Development

The Baptismal Covenant

The Baptismal Covenant is the foundation of Christian community life. It calls us to:

- continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship;
- repent and return to the Lord whenever we fall into sin, and
- have a growing relationship with the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Canons of the Episcopal Church

Persons may also choose to live out the Baptismal Covenant by following a more specifically focused Rule of Life as Adult Members in Good Standing of the Episcopal Church. Those who add this Rule of Life will:

- receive the Sacrament of Confirmation, and
- practice public and private prayer.

St. Paul's Community Rule of Life

Those Christians who choose to live out the Baptismal Covenant as expressed through the Episcopal Canons may participate in a Rule of Life that is specific to St. Paul's Parish. Spiritual Formation is an integral part of that Rule.

In the Anglican tradition, God's gift of Salvation is understood to be the result of a process or a journey, rather than as an event or a transaction. As we continue on our journey as a community, there are three "classic" ways that we can develop our spirituality by integrating God into our daily personal lives.

Develop an Individual Rule of Life

A corporate Rule of Life provides a framework and guidelines for community life. Each person in the community can tailor these guidelines to fit their personal style and needs by adopting an individual Rule of Life. Whether we recognize it or not, each of us already follows a "Rule of Life" that reflects what we believe is important. Consciously formulating an individual Rule of Life for spiritual development gives us an opportunity to set specific goals that will help us to put into practice what we believe.

Work with a Spiritual Director

Because we are human, it is easy for us to rationalize that we are better or worse than we really are, or put off doing what is best for us. On an everyday basis, we may use informal "spiritual directors" such as spouses, friends, family, coworkers, or neighbors to help us sort out life.

However, some people are specifically trained to provide spiritually oriented counsel and can provide insight and support to us as we develop and practice a Rule of Life. Often, we are unrealistic in our expectations or may become discouraged or lost on our journey. A good Spiritual Director does not try to give us "answers," but walks with us on our path and shares wisdom from years of training and experience. He or she can also provide accountability to keep us on track.

Use a Confessor

A Confessor is a priest from whom we regularly receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Using a Confessor may initially make many of us uncomfortable, especially since many Episcopalians today are accustomed to confessing in such a way that no one but God has to know of our shortcomings. However, having a Confessor with whom we have developed an ongoing relationship can help us to become more aware of the patterns of sinfulness in our lives and help us to overcome them. Regular sacramental Confession and Absolution are important to our continued spiritual, emotional, and physical health.

Other Helpful Practices to Consider

In addition to the three "classic" ways to enhance our spiritual formation, the following suggestions are meant to stimulate us to develop our own spiritual discipline or Rule of Life. Together, they can provide cohesion and direction to the spiritual formation of both individuals and the community. Each person should feel free to use any combination of these practices and to experiment. A spiritual friend or director can be beneficial in helping to decide which methods are most appropriate. A yearly or periodic spiritual assessment can be done alone or with a spiritual friend or director evaluating our progress, successes, and failures can help us to recognize milestones on our spiritual journey and help us to make positive changes when needed.

- A periodic or annual retreat can be used for assessment, growth, refreshment, healing, and guidance.
- Regular reading of Holy Scripture can edify, comfort, strengthen, and renew us; it also has a way of opening us to the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Regular times of prayer, meditation, and contemplation are opportunities for us to be quiet and listen to God, as well as to talk to Him "In Your presence there is fullness of joy." (Ps. 16.11)
- Periods of silence, spent either alone or in groups, can teach us to listen to God without being distracted by unnecessary words or thoughts.
- Spiritual reading, done either individually or in a group, and systematic spiritual formation in more formal settings such as Education For Ministry (EFM), Catechesis training, Adult Theology Class, or other Christian education can foster growth in the Spirit, broaden our understanding of ministry, and provide the necessary tools.
- Chronicling our individual spiritual journeys, either verbally or in writing, can provide us with perspective and can encourage us and those with whom we share.
- Experiential learning – serving or ministering to others and then reflecting on our actions – can help us to grow spiritually and to do some tangible good at the same time.
- A pilgrimage has often been a favorite way to gather new and fresh insight, whether one journeys far or near, alone or with a group. Visiting a holy place and truly experiencing the culture and environment can deepen our understanding and appreciation for God's work in other places and throughout time.

- A spiritual friend or companion can provide encouragement, friendship, and accountability.

Worship

The Baptismal Covenant

The Baptismal Covenant is the foundation of Christian community life.

It calls us to:

- continue in celebrating the Eucharist and in the life of prayer, and
- have a living relationship with the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

The Canons of the Episcopal Church

Persons may also choose to follow a more specifically focused Rule of Life as Adult Members in Good Standing of the Episcopal Church. Those who adopt this Rule of Life will:

- attend the Eucharist each Sunday and each of the weekday Holy Days of Obligation (Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension Day, All Saints);
- hear the Word of God read and taught each Sunday;
- fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and abstain from eating meat on the Fridays of Lent;
- receive Holy Communion at least on Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost if he or she is a Communicant member, always making an intentional preparation before receiving the Blessed Sacrament; and
- refrain as much as possible from conducting business on Sunday.

St. Paul's Community Rule of Life

Those Christians who choose to live out the Baptismal Covenant as expressed through the Episcopal Canons may participate in the Rule of Life that is specific to St. Paul's Parish. Worship is the very center of the community's life.

Those who adopt a Rule of Life specific to St. Paul's Parish should take responsibility in and for the corporate liturgical life of the community and should be active participants (both physically and spiritually) at the principal Eucharist on Sundays and Principal weekday Holy Days at St. Paul's.

The Triduum – Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday – is the center of life and worship at St. Paul’s Parish, and all members must participate with the community here unless it is impossible. At all times, those who follow St. Paul’s Community Rule of Life should model appropriate behavior at the Eucharist.

Worship is an active and familiar way to keep us connected with God and with others in St. Paul’s Parish, the Anglican Communion, and the body of all faithful Christians. Worship can come in many forms, including private meditation, recitation of the Daily Office, participation in the community's principal Eucharist of the week, or worship with others outside the community.

No activity or relationship is stimulating and positive all the time and spiritual life has the same ebb and flow as temporal life. One of the most important features of community life is that when individuals are unable to participate fully in the Christian life – for whatever reason – the rest of the community can "carry" those people spiritually.

A common example from the worship setting is when a person's mind wanders. When this happens, the community's worship continues, which can help draw the person's mind back toward God. Thus, if a person is preoccupied with a personal problem, he or she can ask God for peace and strength to do well what should be done.

How can we integrate worship into our lives? There are a wide variety of resources available, ranging from the very structured to the unstructured and including both individual and corporate worship.

As Individuals

Reading or reciting the Daily Office from the Book of Common Prayer is good for a number of reasons. Beginning each day with Morning Prayer and stopping in the middle of the day, the evening, and just before bed to recite the Offices will help keep us connected to God.

It also provides a structured way to read Holy Scripture. During the course of one month all of the Psalms are recited, and within two years nearly all of the Bible is read systematically. Through it, we can remain connected to the body of God's faithful. We renew our connection to our Judaic predecessors through the Psalter and Old Testament readings, and to the larger catholic Christian Church through the New Testament readings.

The structure of the Office keeps us connected to our Anglican roots.

The Offices can be flexible to meet community members' various needs. For example, they may be read alone or recited with others. The rubrics of the Book of Common Prayer also provide the flexibility of structure in the Office such that it may be adapted to meet an individual's needs.

Members of the community may also wish to pause seven times a day to give thanks to God. As humans, we need to stop frequently to consider God's plan and how God works in the world. This also provides opportunities to quiet down and remain open to God's will for us.

An ideal would be for community members to set aside time each day (up to an hour) for quiet reflection, meditation or individual prayer. Setting aside this time to focus on God and the things of God could become almost like a vacation and a source of quiet strength and renewal.

Members also may wish to adopt a Rule about attendance at weekday Eucharists and establish a specific personal Advent and/or Lenten disciplines.

As Family Members

Community members are encouraged to establish a structure of worship within their nuclear families. This is a practical as well as a spiritual matter. Having the family involved will make setting aside time to worship easier. It can become a natural part of the day rather than something done only in church once a week. And, as the family builds a stronger relationship with God, so, too, will the family members' relationships with one another grow stronger.

As Parish Group Members

Many groups at St. Paul's Parish have found that beginning and ending a meeting with some form of worship centers the committee members, reminds them that they are people gathered to do God's work, and affects the tone of the meeting in a positive way. The form of the worship should be decided by the committee and be appropriate to the circumstances. The ideal is for the meeting itself to become a form of worship.

As Community Members

Although liturgical ministries are not limited to those who adopt St. Paul's Community Rule of Life, those who adopt the Rule should exercise some form of liturgical ministry. Exercising a liturgical ministry can help members grow spiritually and remain intentional about their participation in the life of the community.

With Others Outside the Community

Occasionally experiencing other forms of worship can keep our own worship lives fresh. Obviously, some expressions of worship will be more meaningful to some people than to others. Community members are encouraged to remain grounded in our own tradition, but to be open to truth wherever they may find it.

Participating with others outside the parish and/or outside the Anglican Communion can give us new insights into Christian living and keep the community from focusing only inward. We can also learn from non-Christian religions. If there are opportunities to experience a different faith's expression of worship, parishioners should not feel restricted about attending or participating if they wish to do so.

Community Life*The Baptismal Covenant*

The Baptismal Covenant is the foundation of Christian community life. It calls us to:

- seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving our neighbors as ourselves, and
- respect the dignity of every human being.

The Canons of the Episcopal Church

Persons also may choose to live out the Baptismal Covenant by following a more specifically focused Rule of Life as Adult Members in Good Standing of the Episcopal Church. Those who adopt this Rule of Life will:

- normally attend the services of the Church in the Parish, and
- take part in exercises of devotion and acts of charity.

St. Paul's Community Rule of Life

Those Christians who choose to live out the Baptismal Covenant as expressed through the Episcopal Canons may participate in a Rule of Life that is specific to St. Paul's Parish. Community life is an integral part of that Rule.

Those persons who choose to adopt this Rule of Life should participate abundantly in the life of the community. Coming together as members of the Body of Christ on earth can be deeply moving and rewarding – gathering as a community is integral to our celebration of the Eucharist. As a community, we are reconciled, strengthened, supported, and renewed.

Every person in the parish has different expectations, needs, and levels of comfort in their relationships with other members. However, those who choose to follow a Rule of Life specific to St. Paul's can expect to take certain responsibilities in building relationships with other members of our worshiping community. These responsibilities include:

- getting to know each person in the community;
- maintaining some regular contact with each person in the community;
- being concerned with the well-being of each person, and acting out that care;
- being honest and authentic in all relationships with other members of the community; and
- modeling appropriate behavior in all of our lives.

The Community Life Expectations of St. Paul's Parish also are worth re-examining. This list of expectations, adopted by St. Paul's Vestry in 1984, includes elements that are vitally necessary for a healthy community:

- the acceptance of Christ and His life as the standard for members;
- the ability to know oneself and accept oneself;
- having respect for other people's vulnerabilities
- building confidentiality and trust in all relationships with the members of the community; and being mindful of each individual's right to privacy.

Mission

The Baptismal Covenant

The Baptismal Covenant is the foundation of Christian community life. It calls us to:

- persevere in resisting evil;
- proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ; and
- strive for justice and peace among all people.

The Canons of the Episcopal Church

Persons may also choose to follow a more specifically focused Rule of Life as Adult Members in Good Standing of the Episcopal Church. Those who adopt this Rule of Life will:

- be faithful in working, praying and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God, with the tithe of time, talent, and treasure as the minimum standard of giving.

St. Paul's Community Rule of Life

In addition, those Christians who choose to live out the Baptismal Covenant as expressed through the Episcopal Canons may participate in a Rule of Life that is specific to St. Paul's Parish. Mission is an integral part of that Rule. Those persons who choose to adopt this Rule of Life must seek to discover and live out God's intention for them as a member of the community. St. James the Apostle, writing in his Epistle, reminds us that faith without works is dead. Mission is our response to the free and unearned gift of God's grace which we have already received.

The mission that the Church corporately, and each individual member personally, has received from our Lord is to continue His work in the world by being the Body of Christ here on earth. Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, Christ has empowered His Church for this mission, and it is the responsibility of each unit of the Church to equip God's people for this ministry.

The specific mission of St. Paul's Parish is "Evangelization, the lifelong process of helping people grow into the fullness of their God-given vocation" by "providing educational and spiritual development and ongoing support so that people, through their unique ministries, can in turn reach out to help others within and beyond the community grow in their own relationships with God."

St. Paul's affirms the doctrine and practice of the Early Christian Church, now explicitly adopted by the Episcopal Church, that all Baptized members, both clergy and laity, are co-equal ministers of the Church.

Mission must be understood as ministry – it is an integral and inseparable part of adult Christian life along with worship, spiritual formation, and community life. It is not volunteerism or simply another activity in which we participate. Those who adopt the Rule of Life specific to St. Paul's Parish, therefore, make the commitment to assume an active and responsible role in the mission of the parish and to discern the individual vocation, within that corporate mission, to which God is calling them. In so doing they can expect the active support of the community in the development of their God-given vocation.

Some Final Thoughts

Although this is the final page of our community Rule of Life, it is not the final word. A Rule of Life must be a living document that is an authentic reflection of the life of the community it serves. Over time, the nature and vision of our parish community will evolve, and we hope that the community's Rule of Life will evolve along with it.

As noted elsewhere, this Rule is designed to describe the characteristics and vision of our parish community. The Rule can also be used as a starting point for persons who wish to establish an individual Rule, and we wholeheartedly support and encourage everyone who is interested in developing such individual guidelines for their personal spiritual journey.

We hope that A Community Rule of Life for St. Paul's Parish will enrich the life of our community and all its members in the years to come.

*St. Paul's Parish Council
Pentecost, 1997*

Summary of the Requirements and Recommendations of A Community Rule of Life for St. Paul's Parish

Requirements of the Baptismal Covenant

(Book of Common Prayer, 1979)

- Believe in God the Father.
- Believe in Jesus Christ the Son of God.
- Believe in God the Holy Spirit.
- Continue in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers.
- Persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord.
- Proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.
- Seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourselves.
- Strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being.

Requirements of the Canons of the Episcopal Church for Adult Members in Good Standing

- Receive the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- Practice public and private prayer.
- Attend the Eucharist each Sunday and each of the weekday Holy Days of Obligation (Christmas, Epiphany, Ascension Day, All Saints)
- Hear the Word of God read and taught each Sunday.
- Fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday and abstain from eating meat on the Fridays of Lent.
- Receive Holy Communion at least on Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost if you are a Communicant member, always making an intentional preparation before receiving the Blessed Sacrament.
- Refrain as much as possible from conducting business on Sunday.
- Normally attend the services of the Church in the Parish.
- Take part in exercises of devotion and acts of charity.
- Be faithful in working, praying and giving for the spread of the Kingdom of God, with the tithe of time, talent, and treasure as the minimum standard of giving.

St. Paul's Community Rule of Life

Full Community members:

- Participate abundantly in the life of the Community
- Take responsibility in and for the corporate liturgical life of the community
- Are active participants at the principal Sunday Eucharist and Principal weekday Holy Days at St. Paul's
- Participate in the Triduum – Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday
- Seek to discover God's intention and act it out in works as a thank-offering for the unearned gift of God's grace
- Get to know each person in the community
- Maintain some regular contact with each person in the community
- Are concerned with the well-being of each person in the community, and act out that care
- Are honest and authentic in all relationships with other members of the community
- Model appropriate behavior in all of our lives
- Accept Christ and His life as the standard for members
- Know and accept themselves
- Have respect for other people's vulnerabilities
- Build confidentiality and trust in all relationships with the members of the community
- Are mindful of each individual's right to privacy

They may employ the following optional helpful practices:

- Read Holy Scripture regularly.
- Read or recite the Daily Office.
- Establish a structure of worship within your nuclear family
- Begin and end group meetings with some form of worship.
- Occasionally experience other forms of worship.
- Develop an individual rule of life.
- Work with a spiritual director.
- Use a confessor.
- Make periodic spiritual assessments.
- Make periodic retreats.
- Set aside regular times for prayer, contemplation and meditation.
- Practice periods of silence – God's voice is very soft.
- Engage in spiritual reading.
- Participate in Christian education.
- Chronicle spiritual journeys.

- Reflect on what you have learned through service or ministry.
- Make a pilgrimage to a holy place.
- Reflect with a spiritual friend or companion.