

The Practices

The community of St. Dunstan's strives to live together as Christians by following intentional spiritual practices based on our baptismal promises...

- Follow Jesus
- Resist & Reconcile
- Pray Daily
- Worship Weekly
- Serve Lovingly
- Study Scripture
- Give Freely
- Strive for Justice
- Share the Message
- Fellowship & Rest

These practices describe how we follow Jesus and live the Christian life as practiced in the ancient Anglican tradition.

What does living a Christian life look like in the Episcopal (Anglican) tradition?

Our "way of life" is contained in the baptismal promises on pgs. 302 –305 in the Book of Common Prayer. Our baptismal covenant contains spiritual practices that serve as a "Rule of Life" or "Way of Life"-- a guide to live out our faith in practical ways. These practices place us in a posture to receive the grace and blessings God has for us and lead to God's peace, joy, and freedom. Each person must prayerfully discern their own unique approach to live out this "way" or "rule" of life according to God's calling in their lives.

1. Follow Jesus

Our first practice is simply to decide to follow Jesus. This means saying "yes" to Jesus, who is "God with us," and whose life, death, and resurrection reveal God's love for us and the world. "Jesus, I am yours and want to follow and obey you as Lord." We put our lives in Jesus' hands, admit our need for God, and acknowledge Christ as the one who saves, heals, forgives, empowers, and loves us. Deciding to follow Jesus is a decision we renew throughout our lives (and even daily), by God's grace. Baptism is the outward sign of the commitment to follow Jesus.

2. Resist & Reconcile

We promise to "resist evil" and "repent and return to the Lord whenever we sin." We resist harmful influences in our lives as well as systemic evil and practice regular self-examination to acknowledge where we have fallen short. Confession to God leads to forgiveness and being 'reconciled' to God and others, knowing that God is faithful and just to forgive us. Stumbling and sin are not reasons for shame, but a prompt to return to God's unfailing mercy. In response, we forgive others "as we have been forgiven." This reconciliatory process leads to spiritual liberation and joy.

3. Pray Daily

In Christ we have the amazing privilege of being able to talk and pray to God anytime and anywhere. Prayer can be simple, spontaneous praise, song, request, or even silence in the Lord's presence. But dedicating time each day for prayer, such as the Daily Office with Morning, Noon, or Evening Prayer from the Book of Common Prayer or other structured prayers, allows us to punctuate our days with reminders of God's presence and follows the monastic pattern that is part of our tradition. However we choose to pray, the habit of praying daily is essential and opens our hearts and lives to God's grace, will, and strength. Prayer has the power to change us and the world!

4. Worship Weekly

While it may not be possible to go to church to worship every week, that is the goal. In worship we gather as a community to offer our praise and thanksgiving to God, receive blessings and strength through God's Spirit, and receive the sacrament of Holy Communion, also known as the Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, or the Mass. In the Eucharist we find Jesus present to us in a special way through the simple form of bread and wine: the "bread of heaven" and "cup of salvation," Christ's body and blood given for us. We commune with God in Christ and with one another in the "breaking of the bread," just as the earliest followers of Jesus, and we are provided strength and grace.

5. Study Scripture

Scripture, also called the Bible, is God's Word and our guidebook. It contains the story of God's relationship with humanity and reveals Jesus as God's Son and his life, teaching, and ministry as handed down to us in the "apostle's teaching." We are "students of the Bible," because it has the power to comfort, challenge, guide, and provide us the insights we need to know God's will and become who God created us to be. Our Book of Common Prayer has Bible lessons appointed for every day of the year in our Daily Office to help guide us in our reading and study of the Scriptures.

6. Serve Lovingly

We commit to “*serve Christ in all persons*” and “*love our neighbor as ourselves.*” Jesus called his followers to follow his example of service and continue his ministry of feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, caring for the marginalized, healing the sick, delivering the spiritually oppressed, and visiting prisoners. The Church does not exist for itself; it exists for the world. Loving service is at the heart of our faith and each of us are called to find a role to serve that utilizes our gifts.

7. Give Freely

We commit to give of our time, talents, and financial resources to benefit others. We do not give grudgingly; we give because it is in giving that we find the deepest joy, freedom from worldly attachments, and discover that it truly is *more blessed to give than to receive!* All of us have ways we can give back to God. We may give “alms” (funds for the poor), to charitable programs, and to the church, usually through an annual commitment or pledge. The amount we give is less important than our commitment and generous spirit.

8. Strive for Justice

We “*strive for justice and peace among all people,*” and renounce all that “*corrupts and destroys the creatures of God*” by actively opposing all forms of oppression, harm, degradation, prejudice, hatred, abuse, and injustice. We listen to the marginalized, neglected, and underrepresented and advocate for peace, justice, mercy, and respect the inherent dignity of all people. We promote the just stewardship of God’s creation.

9. Share the Message

We “*proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ.*” Like the first followers of Jesus, we too invite others to “*come and see*” and meet Jesus. We share the powerful message of the Gospel in many ways: by our merciful and loving actions and service, by recounting our stories of God’s faithfulness, by inviting people to church, or by simply sharing our love and knowledge of God. Jesus welcomed all, especially the needy, outcast, and “sinners” into his fold, so we too practice his far-reaching embrace of drawing all people, “*from every race, language, and nation*” into a loving and transformative relationship with God in Christ.

10. Fellowship and Rest

The Ten Commandments call us to observe regular times of “rest” (Sabbath). This holy rest traditionally includes restorative periods of solitude with God as well fellowship and celebration with community. As God’s people, we are called into community to support, love, and guide one another along our journey of faith. Regular participation within a community for fellowship and celebration is a genuine gift in an increasingly isolated world.

For more information about the beliefs of the Episcopal Church and the Anglican tradition, please see our Catechism on pages 845 – 862 in as well as the ancient Nicene and Apostles’ Creeds on pages 358 and 96 in the Book of Common Prayer.

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Following Jesus: Our Way of Life

St. Dunstan’s Episcopal Church

