



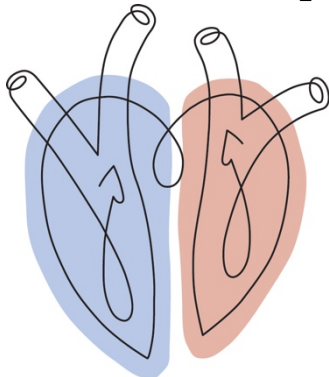
RESTORATION

ANGLICAN CHURCH

*A community captivated and compelled
by the beauty, truth, and goodness of Jesus Christ*

Essentials Devotional

Vision:
Restored Worship



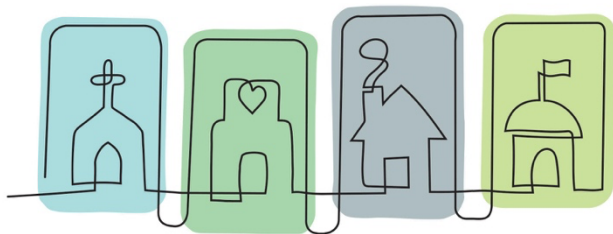
To be a community captivated by the beauty, truth, and goodness of Jesus Christ, such that we are compelled to live for the glory of God, the good of our city, and the joy of the nations.

Values:
Holy Love



Our passion for adoring and obeying Christ in whole-life worship is defined and empowered by holy love.

Mission Paths:
Reconciled Relationship



That passion with all the values of holy love is lived out as we behold and connect to Christ, become and conform to Christ's likeness, belong and commit to Christ's people, and bestow and carry Christ's message.

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Introduction

Total “restoration” is the destiny of all of creation. The word “restoration” implies a story: something was; something happened to that original something for it to be lost or ruined; and then something happened to that lost, ruined something for it to be a *restored* something. This makes “restoration” a very helpful word in capturing the picture of our story as people made in the image of God. The story of humanity is a story of restoration—the true story that God tells us in the Scriptures, which is working itself out in history and our everyday lives. God in Christ by the Holy Spirit is restoring lost humanity to himself (and to itself and to all creation, for that matter). This is the truth and power of the gospel message, and it is why the church exists. The pages that follow are an attempt to tell that “good news” story in such a way that it can guide a community being restored by God in Christ through the power of the Spirit. In fancy terms this could be known as a concise, functional, ecclesiology devotional, but let’s just call it an attempt at naming the vision, values, and mission of our local church. More than anything else, I hope this guide helps us see and love Jesus because, at the core, Christianity is Christ; Christ in all the fullness of beauty, truth, and goodness.

Before we get to it, there is one important distinction we need to make about the kind of “restoration” God has in mind. The restoration that God is doing in Christ is not how we traditionally think of the word. God is “restoring” lost humanity in the sense that he is not just mending us, but making us new. This is embodied and spoken throughout the Bible. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, the Apostle Paul states that “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.” God’s restoration is *new creation* work. He is not trying to get us back to something (Eden) *per se*, but to move us forward in his grace into future glory that is breaking into our lives now. What began “good” is on its way to perfection through the suffering and glory of Christ. Think of it this way. God isn’t just beating-off the rust of our rundown lives like someone restoring an original Benz Patent Automobile (believed to be the first car); instead God is building a totally new life in us (Christ’s very own life); kind of like someone putting a Tesla in place of the Benz Patent. It is still a car, but it runs on different power and would appear impossible to Mr. Carl Benz in 1886. What God is doing in Christ is taking all the original good components of being human and bringing them through death and resurrection into eternal, new creation life. So, when we talk about being “restored” by God we are saying that God is trading our broken humanity and giving us a new one forever. Now, if I haven’t lost you already, the really confusing part is that God is doing this new creation work in the midst of the old one... like putting a Tesla engine in the Benz Patent Automobile while driving it to grandma’s house.

What follows is a picture of what it looks like to have new creation life flowing in and through us—what it looks like to be “in Christ” or “walk by the Spirit” or live “in faith” or

be “renewed in our minds,” which are all ways the Bible describes this restored, new creation reality in the life of the church. We will explore the why, how, and what of the church as God’s new creation community. And we will do so through the analogy of our vascular system—heart (vision), blood (values), and arteries (mission). I hope it is helpful for you as an individual following Christ, but especially for us as a community seeking the shared life God has for us (which cannot be done alone).

By the power of the Spirit and the help of all the saints, the direction of the local church is toward one passion of worship, walked out in holy love, and lived along four paths of our relational identity. To say that for our specific community, Restoration Anglican Church exists as a community with one persistent passion, walked out in the persuasive pathos of holy love, lived along four peculiar paths of our relational-givenness. And, for us, in an Anglican way! If you are really paying attention and wondering why “Anglicanism” is only featured in one of the devotionals, the upfront secret is: this whole devotional is designed as a “mere Anglicanism” approach to walking with Christ. The hope is that you would get to know and enjoy the room and its furniture without needing to know exactly why and how everything got there. Just enjoy the room! You can research more later.

Vision: Restored Worship

To be a community captivated by the beauty, truth, and goodness of Jesus Christ, such that we are compelled to live for the glory of God, the good of our city, and the joy of the nations.

Values: Holy Love

Our passion for adoring and obeying Christ in whole-life worship is defined and empowered by holy love.

Mission Paths: Reconciled Relationships

That passion with all the values of holy love is lived out as we behold and connect to Christ, become and conform to Christ’s likeness, belong and commit to Christ’s people, and bestow and carry Christ’s message.

Some practical directions as we begin:

Devotionals: The basic content of this booklet are thirty-one devotionals for each aspect of the church's vision.

Prayers: Each devotion concludes with a prayer from The Book of Common Prayer (2019).

Bible Readings: These Scripture readings are the roots of all the devotionals, and includes readings from the Old Testament, Psalms, Gospels, and New Testament.

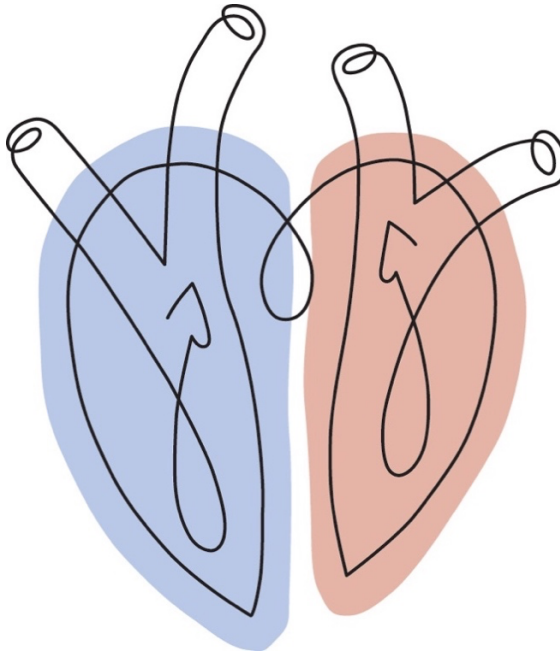
Catechism Questions: Each devotional has a corresponding Catechism Question from the ACNA's *To Be a Christian*. This is something you can work on individually or as a household to further round out the formational impact.

Further Reading: These popular level books are resources for anyone who wants to dig deeper into a particular aspect of the church's vision. You can find a curated and more comprehensive list on our website.

Restoration Principle Questions: Every devotional includes questions intended to help individuals and groups to process and apply each topic within the Good News framework of Scripture. These are best utilized in small group or household discussion. The hope is that repeatedly asking questions in this same framework will begin to provide imaginative furniture that our daily lives and experiences can inhabit, and, therefore, help us make sense of the world and how God is working in it. The titles I have used for these "Restoration Principle" questions are, with some modifications, taken from Christopher Watkin's *Biblical Critical Theory*, and generally follow the traditional "Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration" outline of a Christian worldview but are phrased in a compelling way and add a helpful section of "Patient Waiting" (which seems a sad thing to neglect, since it is our present reality until Christ returns).

Vision: Restored Worship

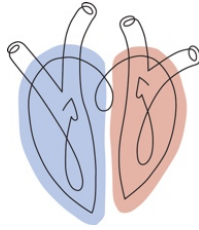
To be a community captivated by the beauty, truth, and goodness of Jesus Christ, such that we are compelled to live for the glory of God, the good of our city, and the joy of the nations.



The vital heart of restored humanity—dynamic worship.

Vision

Restored Worship



Vision offers us the “why.” And the church’s “why” is worship. The church exists for worship. It is one of those obvious things taken for granted at great cost to the life of God’s people. In the simplest terms, worship is to ascribe ultimate value or worth to something. The object of our worship is what we are really living for, what is really getting us out of bed in the morning. Worship is not just an idea; it is a dynamic reality, a movement: a deep breath in and an exhale out, a gathering and a going, a capturing and a compelling, that which consciously and subconsciously propels every aspect of our lives in our thinking, feeling, willing, speaking, and acting. Worship, like our physical hearts, is what drives and sustains our lives.

Our physical hearts exist to *move* blood through our bodies to sustain life. Interestingly, our hearts have two parts, a right and left side, which flow one into the other (one for oxygen-rich blood and the other for oxygen-poor blood, in case you were wondering). If I was going to tie this into a vision, and put it in terms of our lived experience, I would say that worship is being *captivated* and *compelled* by something. Those are the two aspects of worship. We are *captivated* by it in that we fix our attention and affections on it, whether we realize it or not. We are *compelled* by it in that it energizes our lives and becomes what we sacrifice for and what we speak about in daily life. The great challenge of worship is not the act of worship, but the object of worship. The living existence of humanity is worship. So, it is not a matter of “if,” but “what.” What or who do we worship. What or who are we captivated by in our heart of hearts. What or who are we compelled to live for in daily life.

The invitation of the person and work of Jesus Christ is to be restored to the worship we are always made for, which begins the healing of our wayward hearts that worship lesser things that dull and destroy our humanity. This invitation is to find true life in knowing and valuing the living God, finally and fully revealed in Christ, above all else in our affections and lives. This healing of our worship is the “why” of Christ’s church.

O God our King, by the resurrection of your Son Jesus Christ on the first day of the week, you conquered sin, put death to flight, and gave us the hope of everlasting life: Redeem all our days by this victory; forgive our sins, banish our fears, make us bold to praise you and to do your will; and steel us to wait for the consummation of your kingdom on the last great Day; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Jeremiah 2:13; 17:5-8; Psalm 63; 1 John 5:12; John 17:3

Catechism Question #4 from ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

What is the way of death? The way of death is a life without God's love and Holy Spirit, a life controlled by things that cannot bring me eternal joy, leading only to darkness, misery, and eternal condemnation.

Further Reading

A Place for God by Pete Nicolas

Surprised By Doubt by Chatraw and Carson

Restoration Principles of Captivated

Exuberant Creation: What if worship is as central (or more!) to you than eating, drinking, and sleeping?

Painful Loss: Consider times in your life you have lost something valuable (possessions, reputation, relationships, persons). What if our deepest and most painful loss is fellowship with God?

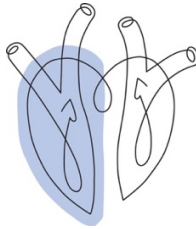
Gracious Rescue: Did Christ come to restore us to worship or offer forgiveness? Are they the same?

Patient Work while Waiting: What if walking with Christ is a lifelong healing and divine treatment of our disease to worship lesser things that dull and destroy us?

Final Triumph: Why do you want to go to heaven? What do you think heaven is about?

Captivated

The Beauty, Truth, and Goodness of Jesus Christ



If humanity exists for worship and the church is God's renewed humanity, then it follows that the object of the church's worship must fulfill our original design and our ultimate destiny. The "something" we worship is meant to be a Someone, the living God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The worship of God is the focus, aim, rest, and passion of the people of God. The singular vision, heart, or "why" of the church is to live in dynamic worship of the living God: to be, first, captivated by the beauty, truth, and goodness of God in Jesus Christ. Naming Christ's "beauty, truth, and goodness" is a way to express the experiential aspects of God's worth, also known as his "glory," which captivates and compels our lives. It is God's glory that shines forth in every revelation and act of God, most clearly in the gospel message—God's cosmic-altering, saving acts in the coming, dying, rising, reigning, and returning of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the exact radiance of the glory of God, who has made the Father known, and the one in whom all the fullness of God is pleased to dwell. The captivating and compelling power of restored worship happens as we fix all our attention on Christ's person and work, emanating in all things and clearly proclaimed in the gospel.

Having given his all and given us all, the church exists to crown Jesus Christ as our all in all. As a community worshipping Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to the glory of the Father, we exist to personally enjoy and publicly proclaim Christ in all of his beauty, truth, and goodness in all things, at all times, and in all places so that the earth would be filled with his glory and we might be found eagerly waiting at his return! Jesus, as the Firstborn from the dead, as the Head over all things to the church, and as our true Prophet, Priest, and King, is, for us, our source and goal, the author and perfecter of our faith—our life, righteousness, joy, peace, strength, wisdom, comfort, satisfaction, and hope now and forever. He is the object of all our captivated faith. Above all and in all we seek that all of Christ in his glorious attractiveness, impressiveness, significance, value, sufficiency, wisdom, and worth would be enjoyed, proclaimed, and displayed as we live for him in all things. This worship and passion for the glory of Christ in all things is the heartbeat of all vital fellowship and fruitfulness, and is, therefore, what we hold most central to our purpose, identity, and

practice (that which both captivates and compels us). In this way the first commandment takes first place in the life of our community as we love him who first loved us!

Heavenly Father, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you: Look with compassion upon the heartfelt desires of your servants, and purify our disordered affections, that we may behold your eternal glory in the face of Christ Jesus; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Isaiah 6; Psalm 27; Colossians 1:15-20; Matthew 17:1-8; 26:6-16

Catechism Question #7 from ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

Why does God save you? Because he loves me, God saves me from sin and judgment, so that I may love and serve him for his glory.

Further Reading

Rejoicing in Christ by Michael Reeves

Restoration Principles of Captivated

Exuberant Creation: Where do you encounter beauty in everyday life? Why and in what ways do you find them beautiful? How might these things be tastes of the person of Christ?

Painful Loss: When you look at the world, how can you see that things we love (perhaps even good things) can be destructive for us and others? What about your own life?

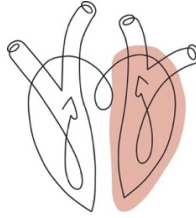
Gracious Rescue: What aspect of the person of Christ witnessed in Scripture do you find most captivating right now (teaching, event, encounter, etc.)? Why?

Patient Work while Waiting: Consider how you are using your time; what does the investment of your time, talents and treasures say about what you value?

Final Triumph: When you think about your future life with God, what comes to mind? What are you most excited about? Confused by? Afraid of?

Compelled

The Glory of God, the Good of the City, and the Joy of the Nations



What I find fascinating about the two-legged, ensouled bodies (or embodied souls) that we humans are is that we are not content to be only captivated by a thing. There is something in our wiring that will not allow us to be captivated with captivation, but must necessarily be relieved in the expression of our enjoyment, otherwise that stream we find so captivating becomes a stagnant bog. If our hearts only had one chamber to collect oxygen-poor blood and did not have a second chamber to expel oxygen-enriched blood, our lives would be very short indeed. The point: what captivates us compels us. If you ardently love cookies and cream ice cream, you inevitably become its prophet: proclaiming its goodness and waging war against all rivals who threaten to eclipse its supremacy as the preeminent dessert of choice! Worship is not a static contemplation. but a compelling reality and movement. And the true worship of God in Christ by the Spirit is this movement redeemed and full-throttle. The glory of God revealed and received in the grace of Christ, must necessarily flow in a life of faith lived for the glory of God and the good of others. Experiencing the love of God in Christ *moves us* to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love our neighbors as ourselves.

Having experienced the transforming glory of Christ's captivating beauty, truth, and goodness in the gospel, his followers work to display his transforming glory in all things, at all times, and in all places. Even while we live as heavenly exiles, Christians are people who prepare for, point to, and proclaim the new creation in Christ in word and deed where they live, work, and play. The three ways Scripture expresses the ultimate goals of our new life of faith is to say that we now live (1) for the glory of God, (2) the good of our city, and (3) the joy of the nations. Revelation 21 and 22 give us a glimpse of a creation reconciled through the death and resurrection of Jesus. What we find in our revealed destiny of the Bible's conclusion is that (1) the glory of God fills and fulfills all things, that (2) the garden of Eden has been cultivated into the heavenly garden-city of the New Jerusalem, and that (3) the joy of all peoples from all cultures is consummated among the manifold praises of all tongues and tribes. This compelling threefold destiny is meant to be the end and exercise of the church's efforts to live as salt, light, and a city on a hill in a dark world. Salty and bright

citizens of the city of God captivated by the glory of King Jesus as we eagerly await his return!

O God, you have made of one blood all the peoples of the earth, and sent your blessed Son to preach peace to those who are far off and to those who are near: Grant that people everywhere may seek after you and find you; bring the nations into your fold; pour out your Spirit upon all flesh; and hasten the coming of your kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Isaiah 49:1-13; Psalm 63; Revelations 21-22; Luke 10:25-37

Catechism Question #92 from ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

What is the Church? The Church is the whole community of faithful Christians in heaven and on earth, called and formed by God into one people. The Church on earth gathers to worship God in Word and Sacrament, to serve God and neighbor, and to proclaim the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Further Reading

Plugged In by Daniel Strange

Simply Christian by N.T. Wright

Restoration Principles of Compelled

Exuberant Creation: What is your primary calling at the moment (student, home, work, etc.), and why do you do it?

Painful Loss: What was your first experience of a broken or lost dream? In what ways do you feel discouraged and disillusioned by your daily labors or goals in life right now?

Gracious Rescue: In what ways is it encouraging to know that everything exists for God's glory? How do you see that in the life of Christ?

Patient Work while Waiting: Have you ever thought about what it really means to "live for the glory of God"? What do you think it means? How do you think God has called you to pursue the good of our city?

Final Triumph: Reflecting on Revelation 21 and 22, what stirs your heart most when hearing the prophetic witness of the new heavens and new earth? Why do you think that is?

Values: Holy Love

*Our passion for whole-life worship,
is defined and driven by love.*



The lifeblood of restored humanity—holy love.

Values

Holy Love



With no blood, a human body is a corpse; so too, the Christian life and the community of the church is a lifeless husk without love. Love is *not* God, but God *is* love. Holy love. Love springs from the very nature of our triune God—as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit eternally live in unceasing, devoted love—and is definitively known to us in the hard wood of the cross as Jesus loved us unto death. God is love, and we are to be imitators of God, who in Christ loved us and gave himself for us.

The love of God is, personally and corporately, our highest meditation, greatest destiny, best motivation and most compelling power. According to Jesus, love is *the* defining mark and value of the church (John 13:31-35). Loving God and neighbor through a life of servanthood is what Christ has set us free to do. Love is the fulfilling of the whole commandments of God. It is what binds together all of our pursuits and interests in a way that is pleasing to God and persuasive to the world, even when it contradicts other “loves” of this age. As God has genuinely loved us and poured out his love into our hearts by the Spirit, we are to let our love be genuine as we pour out our lives in self-sacrificing love for one another’s benefit. In this way we bring the refreshment of God to one another.

Love is the “more excellent way,” which far exceeds the value of talent, recognition, measurable success, and influence. Therefore, love is to be the fragrance, fruit, and focus of our fellowship as God’s beloved church. It is what we constantly beg for in prayer, and proactively seek “more and more” of in our life together. Culturally we are obsessed with love, while we have also narrowed love to refer either to romance or how we feel about our favorite kinds of food. But the true picture of love, given in the Scriptures and demonstrated in Christ, is much more substantive, surprising, sacrificial, and satisfying. While love is not at the exclusion of our emotions, it is most comprehensively understood as an action rooted in the desire to see another person whole and flourishing, therefore what you will find in the next three devotionals is a list of ten *actionable values* taken corresponding to (1) where to find love, (2) what love looks like, and (3) how love responds.

O God, the light of the minds that know you, the life of the souls that love you, and the strength of the wills that serve you: Help us so to know you that we may truly love you, and so to love you that we may fully serve you, whom to serve is perfect freedom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Hosea 11:7-11; Psalm 63; 1 John 4:7-21; John 3:16-21

Catechism Question #260 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

How did Jesus summarize God's Law? Jesus summarized God's Law by saying: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

Further Reading

The Singing God by Sam Storms

Prodigal God by Tim Keller

Restoration Principles of Holy Love

Exuberant Creation: Consider different ways people think the world was made (pagan violence, evolutionary meaninglessness, etc.), what difference does it make trusting the God who is love made everything?

Painful Loss: Do you think the lovelessness in the world and in ourselves, moves us closer or further from the love of God?

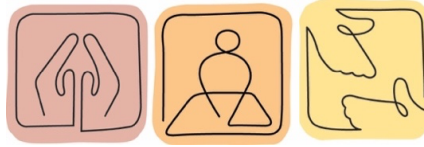
Gracious Rescue: How do you know God loves you?

Patient Work while Waiting: How often do you consider your work "love"? How does it challenge or convict you to make that your primary goal in life?

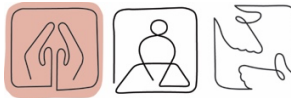
Final Triumph: What is the final victory of the love of God in Christ?

Holy Love: Where to Find It

Pause to Pray, Choose a Place, Move Towards the Poor



Considering the source and substance of holy love (detailed in the previous devotion); where, then, do we begin?



If we want to walk in holy love, we must **pause to pray**. We do not have this love in ourselves. God is the fountain of holy love from whom we have rebelled. In order to love God and others, we *need* God to strengthen and fill us, otherwise it will not happen. Therefore, we pause to pray; asking God, again and again and again and again, for fresh outpourings of his Holy Spirit into our hearts that the love of God would well up among his people and into our community. Holy love pauses to pray because God is the only source of holy love, and he has made every provision for us in Christ.



If we want to walk in holy love, we must **choose a place**. God does not love us abstractly but personally, individually and uniquely. I recently read, “To love everybody in the world equally is to love nobody very much.” God loves us, personally, particularly, and chosen-ly. And God wants us to love the real people in the particular place where he has put us. For Restoration, that is Staunton, Virginia (and the Shenandoah Valley). God has ordained our lives in *this place* with *these people* for the sake of salvation, and we are called to pursue the renewal of this city and the good of the people made in God’s image as we encounter them where we live, work, and play. God is in this place and pursuing these people. We, as his people in this place at this time, follow the lead of his Spirit. Holy love chooses a place.



If we want to walk in holy love, we must **move towards the poor**. The response of the love of God to need and loss is compassion. Always. This is how God has loved us in Christ. God's heart displayed over and over in the Scriptures is to care for the least and marginalized. There are strong warnings in the Bible to the city and nation that neglect the neediest among us. God is with them as their advocate and avenger. His people are called to embody that care. If we want to find and abide in the love of God in daily life, we must find ways to move towards the poor.

O Lord, you have taught us that without love, all our deeds are worth nothing: Send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the true bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whoever lives is counted dead before you; grant this for the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Deuteronomy 6:4-9, 7:6-11; Psalm 36; Ephesians 3:14-21; John 13:1-35

Catechism Question #7 from the ACNA's To Be A Christian:

Why does God save you? Because he loves me, God saves me from sin and judgment, so that I may love and serve him for his glory.

Further Reading

The Practice of the Presence of God by Brother Lawrence

This Is Where You Belong by Melody Warnick

Mother Teresa by Kathryn Spink

Restoration Principles of Holy Love: Where to Find It

Exuberant Creation: What difference does it make for how you treat the cashier at Chick-fil-a if you believe the world is an intentional craftsmanship of a loving triune God rather than an unintended, molecular accident?

Painful Loss: Why is it so important to take ownership of how selfish we are? Is there any way you need to take ownership of how you have hurt others this week?

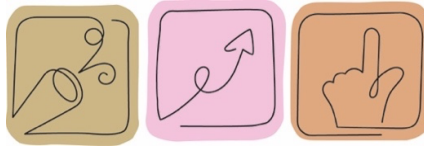
Gracious Rescue: How do we not let our failures crush us? How does your understanding of Christ and the Holy Spirit change your response to your failures?

Patient Work while Waiting: Are there any helpful habits you have developed for remembering to rely on God in prayer throughout your day? How have you seen others moves towards the poor with their lives?

Final Triumph: One day we will perfectly love the way God has loved us. In what particular ways is that comforting for you right now?

Holy Love: What It Looks Like

*Throw a Party, Cultural Fluency and Care, Rise and Rise Again,
and Keep It Simple*



Considering the source and substance of holy love; what, then, does it look like in action?



One of the central activities of holy love is to **throw a party**. Throwing a party gets at the Christian roots of hospitality, honor, and kindness springing from the celebration, abundance, goodness and joy of God in himself, in creation, and in redemption. God is where the party is at! In Christ, God left the party to chase down his pig-pen destitute children to bring us back to the party at his expense (Luke 15:11-32). God's people, restored through the inexhaustible riches of Christ, now love each other and their communities through sacrificially serving meals, opening their homes, celebrating seasons and accomplishments, and loving and lifting up what is good in others. And, as inheritors of the kingdom, we do all of this with as much generosity, gladness, and gusto as we can muster! To walk in holy love is to throw a party.

[icon forthcoming]

In his Word and the Word made flesh, holy God speaks in love to those that are wholly other than him. Exercising **cultural fluency and care**, then, is both the activity and goal of holy love in God. Cross-cultural fluency and care happens in God's care for each individual; it happens in the care of the church as different people with varied stories, ethnicities, and gifts seek a unity of life and faith; and it happens in the work of missions and evangelism to make the gospel known to those who do not yet know Christ. God's highest aim in his love for creation is his glory embodied in a people that reflect his manifold radiance and wisdom, gathered from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation, who carry the riches of their redeemed cultural identities to his throne. With the example and demonstration of the incarnation of the Son of God and the guaranteed future of a manifold, multi-cultural, and unified people under the banner of Christ, the church pursues and abides in holy love by

exercising cross-cultural fluency and care to one another and those they invite into the unified diversity of the love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



Walking in holy love is a call to **rise and rise again**. Knowing that everything is already ours for all eternity, the saints rise again and again to love God and neighbor. Moment by moment. Step by step. Day by day. Until we are completely raised again in the un-cursed, new creation on the last day. For this to happen we need daily renewal in the resurrection power of Christ. In that power we are called to a courageous resiliency in doing seen and unseen deeds with great patience (the old word for patience is “long-suffering”). Here is a call for the endurance of the saints. Don’t give up! Every prayer and action of love in the path of obedience has its fruit, even if we are not aware of it under the cursed veil of this creation. Rise and rise again, beloved. One day all will be raised never to fall again.



A subtler aspect of holy love is to **keep it simple**. Here we are planting ourselves in the reality that to love God and neighbor requires purity and self-control (traits often not understood in their biblical context). While we celebrate and maximize the benefits of efficiency and innovation in modern life, we also acknowledge that we are an over-scheduled and distracted age. If we are going to take the time necessary to live in holy love, we have to become ninjas at simplifying. This is not permission to disengage or be lazy, nor is it a fear of complexity or high capacity; it is an invitation to have humble priorities while being prayerfully selective in regards to what matters most to God and his people. As a church, this means valuing people over programs, not cluttering our spaces and calendars, and staying as light and lean as possible organizationally in order to minimize distractions and maximize our capacity to serve and give to others. Walking in holy love means we keep it simple.

Almighty God, you so loved the world that you gave your only Son, that whoever believes in him would not perish but have eternal life: Pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of love by your Holy Spirit, that we may delight in the inheritance that is ours as your sons and daughters, and live to your praise and glory, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

2 Samuel 9:1-13; Psalm 86; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Luke 15:11-32

Catechism Question #356 the from ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

How can you keep the command to not covet? I can keep this commandment by learning contentment: seeking first the kingdom of God, meditating on God's provision in creation and in my life, cultivating gratitude for what I have and simplicity in what I want, and practicing joyful generosity towards others.

Further Reading

Love Does by Bob Goff

Becoming All Things by Michelle Reyes

Restoration Principles of Holy Love: What It Looks Like

Exuberant Creation: What was the best party you ever went to? Why was it so great?

Painful Loss: What aspect of life right now makes it most difficult to get out of bed, or engage with others? How do you think God wants to meet you in that place?

Gracious Rescue: Is it a paradigm shift for you to think of God as the true, pure, and ultimate party King? And in what ways do you need to receive the Father's embrace and kindness today?

Patient Work while Waiting: What is one way you can move towards simplicity right now?

Final Triumph: In the new creation, these three values are fulfilled and lived full throttle (wedding feast with the King, blessed incorruptible resurrection, and singularity of purpose in whole-life worship); given your present circumstances and feelings right now, in which of these values do you find the most comfort and joy to know that it will one day be fulfilled perfectly? Why?

Holy Love: How It Responds

Assume Positive Intent, Contribute to the Cause, Meet Face to Face



How does holy love respond when it is encountered by actual and perceived wrongs?



When (not if) holy love is encountered by the hurtful actions of others, whether real or perceived, it aims to **assume positive intent** rather than reactively blame. In a scarcity-minded, evolutionary ethic, increasingly shame-based culture, this is swimming upstream. To assume positive intent is to affirm the image-bearing goodness of those around us. It is to learn to live out of the riches of our inheritance in Christ. In scarcity and fear we hide and blame, but holy love seeks to understand and ask questions (God’s response in Genesis 3:8-13). When enticed to blame, get curious. Wonder why people say and do what they say and do. Consider what their story might be, and how their day might be going. Actively try to view things from their angle, and give them the benefit of the doubt. In so doing we take the first step of honoring our shared humanity, we guard against division, and we live into our Lord’s “Golden Rule” teaching (Matthew 7:12).



When holy love does not get its way, or feels wronged by the words and choices of others (whether real or perceived or preferential), it seeks to **contribute to the cause** rather than complain. This does not mean we hide or stuff-away our thoughts and feelings, but even that is done with a “team” mindset of contribution and affection. In this way we keep a healthy check on gossip and proactively work towards unity in Christ’s church. When tempted to disengage or throw a pity party (not every party is a value of holy love), put on the mind of Christ who contributed out of his abundance all the way to the cross. We need everyone’s unique contribution in order to mature into the fullness of the love of God in Christ. Keep a check on what we say, who we say it to, and why we say it. Keep bringing the full offering of our time, talents, and treasures. Contribute to the cause.



The interpersonal reflex of holy love in general, but especially when wronged, is to **meet face to face** rather than avoid or isolate. Our destiny with God through Christ is to live in face to face fellowship with our King who loved us and gave himself for us. This is our aim with one another as citizens in Christ's kingdom—face to face, in person conversation and fellowship (2 John 12). We work towards and maintain this fellowship by meeting in person when wronged by others. When real and perceived sin happens in the church, our call is face to face conversation with the intent of understanding and forgiveness. Sometimes this is not possible, but it is our first choice and persistent aim when living in the holy love of God with fellow broken sinners.

Almighty God, give us the increase of faith, hope, and love; and, that we may obtain what you have promised, make us love what you command; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings:

Exodus 34:4-7, 29-35; Psalm 55; Galatians 5:13-26; Matthew 18:21-35

Catechism Question #199 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

Why should you forgive? I should forgive others because, while I was still a sinner, God forgave me through Jesus Christ. Failing to forgive impedes God's work in my life and gives opportunity to the evil one.

Further Reading: *Caring for One Another* by Ed Welch

Restoration Principles of Holy Love: How It Responds

Exuberant Creation: How does beginning with the goodness of being made in the image of God shape our reactions to the behavior of others?

Painful Loss: Has anyone ever blamed you for something you did not do? How did that feel? How does that inform your own response to others?

Gracious Rescue: Consider how God responds to humanity's willful rebellion in Scripture. Yes, there are consequences for choices and just judgment in unrepentance, but how might God's activity towards us transform our response to others?

Patient Work while Waiting: Have you ever met or observed someone who is super gifted at conflict resolution? What do you remember most about them?

Final Triumph: Is there a particular relationship you are most looking forward to experiencing fully repaired in the new creation?

Mission Paths: Reconciled Relationships

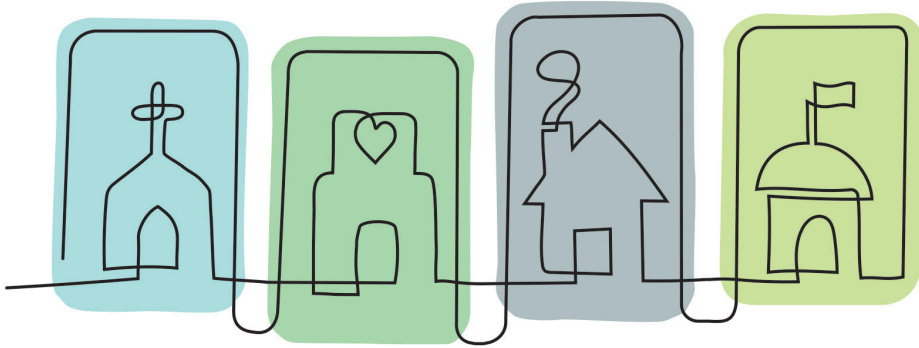
*Our vision for whole-life worship, lived in the values of holy love, flows in
and through our lives as we*

(1) behold Christ and connect to him (Temple),

(2) *become like Christ and conform to his likeness (Hospital),*

(3) belong to Christ's people and commit to them (Household),

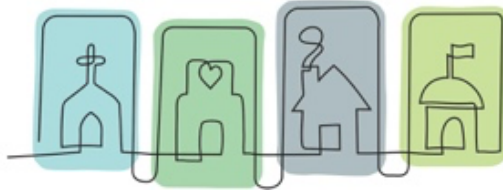
and (4) bestow Christ's life and carry his message (Embassy).



*The four missional identities and relational movements of restored humanity—
temple, hospital, household, and embassy.*

Mission Paths: Introduction

Reconciled Relationships



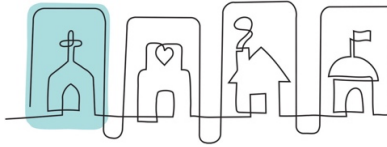
Your heart has four primary pathways by which it pumps blood throughout your body: the superior vena cava and inferior vena cava carry blood into your heart, and the aorta and pulmonary trunk send blood out of your heart. So too, our humanity, and renewed humanity in Christ, flows along four relational pathways.

The vision of whole-life worship and the values of holy love must have channels through which to move in and out of our everyday lives. As relational beings made in God's image, these channels, pathways, veins, arteries (what have you) take shape in four directions: God, ourselves, community, and the world. We are *already* living in these directions. They are essential to who we are. The problem isn't actually living in these directions, it is living in these directions well—in true worship and with holy love (RECONCILED!). We have lost the true object of our worship (vision), therefore, have ceased to inhabit the true content and substance of life (values), and are subsequently confused and hopeless in what life is about (mission). What God is doing in Jesus Christ is inviting us back into renewed worship to embody the character of holy love while learning to live in the four restored directions of our relational personhood. Reconciling us to himself, ourselves, one another, and the world. In all of these relationships we live by grace through faith, which practically means putting away our old lives of trusting in ourselves and putting on our new lives of relying Christ and his Spirit.

The movements of genuine worship and love are always in play along these mission paths. In beholding and connecting to Christ we experience true worship and love as God's temple. In becoming like Christ and conforming to his likeness we become true worshipers and lovers as God's hospital. In belonging and committing to Christ's people we encourage and sustain worship and love as God's household. And in bestowing Christ's life and carrying Christ's message we fill the earth with true worship and love as God's embassy. What follows is an exploration of each of these paths and some of the essential ways they are lived out in our lives.

The Temple

Behold and Connect to Christ



If our highest passion and purpose is to crown Jesus Christ as our all in all, in an eternity of lifelong worship, then our first and greatest priority is to behold and connect to God through Christ. As we await Christ's return, this happens through the saving announcement of the gospel of grace, foundationally received in his Word and Sacraments. As we hear and see with faith the glorious promises of the gospel, Christ's forgiveness cleanses us and his Spirit fills us. In this way God's repentant people, individually and corporately, become his new temple, his dwelling place, and the union of heaven and earth. The church's gathering together is designed to be the place where we most experience and enjoy God. This is the first mission path of the church as a "temple."

Beholding and connecting to Christ, as God's renewed temple, takes shape in five ways in our lives: (1) the Word and the gospel message, (2) the sacramental and the Sacraments, the habits of grace: especially (3) prayer and (4) singing, and (5) the saints. We will take them each in turn in the following devotionals. Notice that all of them make up the essential components of gathered worship, which is intended to be a feast of experiencing the fullness of God in Christ—where we most fundamentally and fully receive the grace we desperately need and give God the glory that he deserves!

O God, of your goodness, give me yourself, for you are enough for me. I can ask for nothing less that is completely to your honor, and if I do ask for anything less, I shall always be in want. Only in you I have all. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Exodus 33:12-23; Psalm 84; 1 Corinthians 3:16-23; John 1:1-18

Catechism Question #270 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

What does it mean to have no other gods? It means that there should be nothing in my life more important than God and obeying his will. I should worship him only and love, revere, and trust him above all else.

Further Reading: *Created to Draw Near: Our Life As God's Royal Priests* by Edward Welch

Restoration Principles of the Temple

Exuberant Creation:

What is it about our world that makes us want to connect with God, “god,” or a “higher power”?

Painful Loss:

How have you observed our commitment to connect with something/someone bigger and beyond us going sideways or being destructive for us?

Gracious Rescue:

Consider the Gospel John reading. What are the descriptions of Jesus? What did he come to do, and what does that have to do with worship?

Patient Work while Waiting:

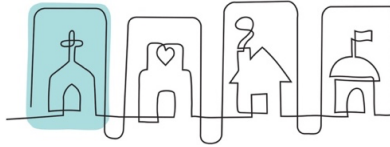
Why is it helpful to know that being reconciled to God through Christ is not a one-and-done event, but lifelong work? What do you find most challenging right now in connecting with God?

Final Triumph:

What makes heaven so heavenly? Truly. Consider that question in the context of this mission path.

The Word and the Gospel

Temple: Behold and Connect



I find agnosticism compelling. It seems reasonable that there is a “higher power” and a deeper meaning than what a purely secularist perspective can provide; but, also, who are we to say what “god” is really like? This is a completely correct posture and is in total accord with a Christian perspective with one subtle (but enormous) difference: what if God has chosen to be personally known because that is who God is? What if God isn’t silent, but is constantly knocking on the doors of our understanding to get in? What if God has worked in the world in such a way as to be honored and enjoyed? If that is the case, then who are we to say God can’t be or do whoever or whatever God is or has done? In an age of authenticity, surely God has first priority in being authentic? And add to all of this: what if you, your whole self, your true authentic self, body and spirit, are made for God?

The witness of the Scriptures, and especially the Gospel accounts of the life of Jesus, claim to faithfully represent God’s person and work in history (checkout Luke’s introduction in Luke 1:1-5 and Paul’s logic in 1 Corinthians 15:15). God’s holy character and missionary movements in the world are faithfully revealed through the prophets, the apostles, and God himself enfleshed in Christ, as the Holy Spirit inspired and revealed true truth to his people. The culminating witness of the Spirit is that God is restoring a broken, wayward world through Jesus Christ. This is the gospel (good news!) message that the Scriptures reveal. In the most personal terms, the gospel message is the invitation of God’s favorable welcome to lost sinners through the person and work of Jesus Christ. While this invitation is extended to the many individual lost sheep, it is an invitation that emanates from a throne of cosmic proportion where God has begun his renewal of all things in raising Christ from the dead. God’s cosmic party has begun and any and all are invited to leave the pigpen of licentiousness and the work camp of legalism to join the celebration of grace (Luke 15). The great glory of God’s majesty and mercy is such that he is both personal enough to save the lowest sinner and great enough to remake all creation. This is what God is doing in Christ. And we get in on the party by hearing this word of Jesus with repentant faith while building our lives and his world on him and his teaching. The witness, testimony, and revelation of God’s Word reshapes and repatterns the entirety of our thinking, feeling, acting, and speaking (making us completely new!) as we are captivated and compelled by the beauty, truth, and goodness of Jesus Christ in the gospel.

Practically, God’s Word comes into our lives through the public reading of Scripture, preaching, and teaching, as well as through personal and communal practices of Scriptural meditation and

devotional habits of reading, study, and memorization. For many people engaging God's Word can feel like a chore or burden. This is often because we have missed the gospel of grace. In God's Word we are reminded of and invited into *freedom* through the forgiveness and fullness of Christ! Keeping Christ and the gospel central sets us free to receive the Scriptures as light and life, even (or especially) when they seem to challenge or contradict our lives. We are all listening to someone's word and trusting in someone's authority. The gospel is an invitation to receive and rejoice in the word of the One who knows us best and loves us most. It is an invitation to turn away from our failing and fearful attempts at life and find true vitality in the Word of Christ, whose yoke is easy and burden is light.

Blessed Lord, who caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and the comfort of your holy Word we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Isaiah 40:1-17, 27-31; Psalm 1; 1 Peter 1:22-25; Luke 6:46-49; 24:36-49

Catechism Question #227 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

How should the Holy Scriptures shape your daily life? I should "hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them" that by the sustaining power of God's Word, I may grow in grace and hold fast to the hope given to me in Jesus Christ.

Further Reading: *The True Story of the World* by Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen

Restoration Principles of the Word and the Gospel

Exuberant Creation: Consider Isaiah 40:6-8. What do you think it means that "all flesh is grass" and that "the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever"? What is this trying to say about us and God's word?

Painful Loss: What if you did not have a Bible? How would you know God? How would you make sense of your life? (But seriously, spend time thinking about that.)

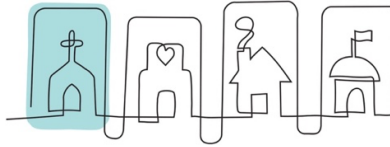
Gracious Rescue: If someone asked you what God's Word is to you, how would you respond? Or, how would you share the gospel message with someone?

Patient Work while Waiting: What promise of God are you clinging to or need to hear right now?

Final Triumph: How does God's Word help us hope? And why is hope so valuable?

The Sacramental and the Sacraments

Temple: Behold and Connect



I love being outside and watching nature documentaries. There are good reasons people care so much about the stewardship of our planet. It is, in a certain regard, understandable (even if regrettable) that pagan cultures put spirit houses on their properties and offer sacrifices to trees. What I mean is, we are all operating with some sense of the goodness of creation, even if we are misguided as to the point and purpose of that goodness. What experience tells us and the Scriptures clarify is that creation is a theater for the goodness of God (to knab a thought from the Swiss reformer John Calvin). The majesty of God is on display in and through every aspect of creation. Every created thing is preaching a sermon to us and revealing something about God. In Anglican terms, this makes all of creation “sacramental,” something visible that communicates an invisible or “spiritual” reality. The entire cosmos, including stars, stegosauruses, and slugs, display something of God’s eternal power and divine nature. But the majesty revealed in creation is not complete in disclosing our personal God nor is it sufficient in reuniting us to the God from whom we are now alienated. Our sin-hardened hearts need tangible testimonies of God’s mercy. While all things sing of God’s majesty, God has uniquely chosen a few things to communicate his mercy and salvation in Christ. These means of mercy are the sacraments.

The sacraments are not arbitrary physical objects that communicate the glory of God to us, but are designated created objects consecrated for holy use by Jesus himself to communicate the new life he offers us through his death and resurrection. Jesus established the Lord’s Supper and Baptism as the two visible, ritual means that communicate the spiritual grace of his broken body, shed blood, death, and resurrection. In these two sacraments, as they are communicated to God’s people with the announcement of the gospel, God grasps us in grace and we grasp God in faith. Baptism brings us into union with God through Christ by the Spirit, as we become partakers in Christ and members in his church through faith. Through the waters of Baptism God testifies and ties us to the *most defining event of our lives*—the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the Lord’s Supper believers enjoy ongoing communion with God through Christ by the Spirit. Through the bread and wine of Communion, Christ presides at his table of remembrance to nourish us with the memorial of his atoning sacrifice, showing us again and again that the *most defining reality of our lives* is that he loved us and gave himself for us. While much can be (and has been!) said in regards to

the sacraments, it stands that Christ has given his church Baptism and Communion to unite and nourish our lives in him as we respond in earnest, whole-hearted faith to the announcement of the gospel that they embody and extend to us.

With eyes to see and ears to hear, our God-saturated world sings of the majesty of the King of glory, even as our sin-hardened hearts tempt us to miss and misunderstand his beauty at every moment. With eyes to see and ears to hear, ordinary water, bread, and wine become God-saving means through the announcement of the gospel. In this world and by these means we glimpse and grasp the One for whom our souls are made, and who stands ready to save us at every moment. Welcome to the wild and wonderful world of the sacramental and the sacraments. Let us keep the feast!

Guide and direct us, O Lord, always and everywhere with your holy light, that we may discern with clear vision your presence among us, and partake with worthy intention of your divine mysteries. We ask this for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Exodus 12:1-28; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 11:17-29; Matthew 26:26-29; 28:16-20

Catechism Question #123 from the ACNA's To Be A Christian:

What sacraments were ordained by Christ? The two sacraments ordained by Christ that are "generally necessary to salvation" are Baptism and Holy Communion. These are sometimes called "sacraments of the Gospel."

Further Reading: *The God of the Garden* by Andrew Peterson

Restoration Principles of the Word and the Gospel

Exuberant Creation: Why do you think God chose to use water, bread, and wine in the story of our salvation?

Painful Loss: How might the sacraments of Baptism and Communion be misused, abused, or neglected? How does this harm the church and its witness?

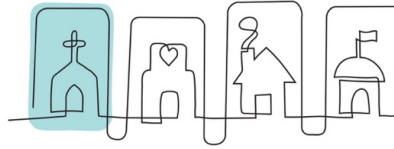
Gracious Rescue: Have you been baptized? If so, how does your baptism nourish your faith in Christ now?

Patient Work while Waiting: How do you prepare your heart for Communion in gathered worship?

Final Triumph: Baptism and Communion both point us to hope—resurrection and feasting. Why do you think it is valuable to have tangible reminders and expressions of hope?

Habits of Grace: Prayer

Temple: Behold and Connect



When you think about “connecting” with someone and being in a relationship with them, we take it for granted that we have to communicate with that person. Of course, we communicate. There is no connection or relationship otherwise. Prayer is no different than the most basic exercise of our relationship with God. When the Holy Spirit works in our lives to show us the love of God in Jesus, our heart's response is “thank you, Father!” That's prayer! And, in a very real sense, that is all there is to being a follower of Christ (as that prayerful gratitude, in response to God's gracious action towards us in the gospel, fills and transforms every aspect of who we are). There are plenty of “habits” that facilitate connection with Christ (sabbath, fasting, feasting, personal devotions, solitude, etc.), but prayer, as the first action of faith, is the most essential. It is the nourishing root of every other habit. It is in prayer that we confess faith in Christ, grow in intimate communion with the Spirit, and unburden our griefs, anxieties, and fears in the presence of our Father. It is in prayer that we partner with God in his mighty acts in the earth. It is in prayer that we cash-in every blood-bought promise of Scripture into the limitless bank of God's glory, thereby fetching fresh heavenly fire to energize and transform our lives in this world.

As an Anglican body, prayer is liturgically integrated into every aspect of gathered worship—prayers of the people, confession, collects (designated prayers), praise, etc. And personally, God means for prayer to be the central exercise of our lives. Like breathing, prayer is the ongoing conscious and unconscious practice by which we learn to walk by the Spirit. Because of the pressures of life and our own hardness of heart, it is necessary to cultivate *habits* of prayer. In the simplest terms this looks like pausing and setting apart time for gathered worship, prayer in community, personal devotions, solitude, and reflection. The Anglican heritage is a rich place to mine out treasures of both corporate and devotional practice, especially taking advantage of the Daily Office in the Book of Common Prayer (which contains forms for corporate, personal, and family devotions).

If you are struggling in cultivating a life of prayer (as we all do), focus on maximizing what you are already doing. We often undervalue the things that are a regular part of our lives. Focus on times of prayer in church. It is no small thing to be with God's people week after week while gathering for prayer. Maximize the natural moments in your day when you have

pauses and transitions (beginning, middle, end, meals, driving, etc.). Take advantage of time with fellow believers to pause and pray together. And, always, remember the gospel of grace. Christ is the one praying for and seeking us! Ours is an easy yoke and a light burden in him. Prayer is an exercise in freedom where we put off the heavy darkness of the world, flesh, and devil, and put on the lightness of Christ. In prayer we enjoy loving communion with our Father who adores us, our King who gave himself for us, and our Counselor who pours out God's love into our hearts.

O Almighty God, you pour out on all who desire it the spirit of grace and of supplication: Deliver us, when we draw near to you, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship you in spirit and truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Lamentations 3:19-33; Psalm 25; Acts 4:23-31; Luke 11:1-13

Catechism Question #155 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

What should you seek in prayer? In prayer, I should seek not only God's provision for my needs, but fellowship with God, who made me for fellowship with himself.

Further Reading: *A Praying Church* by Paul Miller

Restoration Principles of Prayer

Exuberant Creation: How would it inform your pursuit of God in prayer to know that walking in communion to God is just as fundamental to your life as eating, drinking, and knowing other people?

Painful Loss: Have you ever experienced darkness, dryness, or significant doubts in prayer? What was that like? How has that experience impacted your prayer life now?

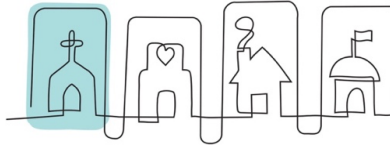
Gracious Rescue: Consider the prayer life of Jesus, as he prays for those who murder him (Luke 23:34) and now intercedes for God's people (Romans 8:34). How do the past and present prayers of Christ give you assurance and confidence?

Patient Work while Waiting: Who is God calling you to regularly pray for right now? How can you integrate that into a regular habit?

Final Triumph: The Scriptures end in Revelation 22 with an earnest plea: "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" How might this plea shape and inform what you ask for in prayer?

Habits of Grace: Singing

Temple: Behold and Connect



You may think it strange that singing makes it on the top five list of how we connect to God; but consider this: people at concerts belt out, raise their hands, and even weep as they sing along with a favorite band's music (don't tell me that isn't touching a raw nerve of worship in the human spirit). And consider that the largest and most central book in the Bible—the Psalms—is a songbook. Singing must be important to God and good for us. On the cross, it was the songbook of Israel that flowed from the lips of Christ in his final breaths. Fourth century Bishop and theologian Augustine of Hippo said that whoever sings prays twice. German Reformer Martin Luther wrote multiple editions of hymnals for his congregations and said that “next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to man that he should proclaim the Word of God through music.” Our bodies are made for the Lord (1 Cor. 6:13). There is something in singing that is an exercise of our true nature as embodied souls. Our hearts and throats come together to exalt, praise, honor, enjoy, and bless the living God, who is worthy of whole-hearted, whole-throated songs of praise. The materiality and spirituality of singing combine to give God's people a unique taste of God's transcendent glory.

When God's people are captivated with the beauty, truth, and goodness of Christ they sing! In Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5, the apostle Paul highlights singing to God as one of the essential fruits and exercises of living a Spirit-filled life. *Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart* (Eph. 5:18-19). The Psalms call God's people to sing, praise, make a joyful noise, make a loud noise, shout, and make melody on stringed instruments to honor and bless the One who is far exceedingly more worthy, valuable, majestic, glorious, and excellent than anyone and anything else! In singing to God, we live into the reality of God's will and kingdom coming on earth as it is in heaven, where saints and angels live in continual praise and enjoyment of the excellencies of God's perfections displayed in creation and redemption (Rev. 4-5).

It is for these reasons (and more) that singing is a central part of the life of God's people. When we gather together in worship, we are called to sing. As we go through our days, we

are called to sing. There is a huge opportunity these days to live out a life of wisdom in singing to God, bringing out both the old and new treasures of the church's musical heritage (Mt. 13:52). More than ever we can access and enjoy great psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs that have been a blessing to God's people throughout history even as we pay attention to the Spirit's inspiration to bring fresh words and melodies to enliven the church today. May we mine the treasure of the sounds of the saints to glorify our God and Father. May the outpouring of God's Spirit so fill our hearts that with full lungs and whole throats we live out our days in joyful, unceasing praise to the God of all majesty and mercy.

Almighty God, by whose grace Elizabeth rejoiced with the blessed Virgin Mary and greeted her as the mother of the Lord: Look with favor on your lowly servants, that, with Mary, we may magnify your holy Name and rejoice to acclaim her Son as our Savior; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

2 Chronicles 5; Psalm 95; Ephesians 5:15-21; Luke 1:39-56

Catechism Question #235 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

What is praise? In praise, I glorify and adore God for his holiness, his sovereign rule over all, and his salvation given in Jesus Christ.

Further Reading: *You Are What You Love* by James K.A. Smith

Restoration Principles of Singing

Exuberant Creation: How has music and singing marked your life? Can you remember moments or songs that have shaped defining memories for you?

Painful Loss: In what ways do you think songs and singing help us engage grief or loss?

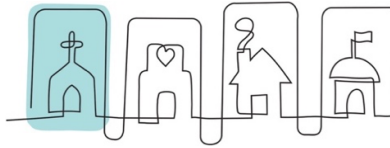
Gracious Rescue: Is there a song or hymn that has been impactful for you recently in knowing and walking with God?

Patient Work while Waiting: How might singing be a spiritual habit that requires effort and work like other habits? In what ways could this make singing more challenging and/or more effective?

Final Triumph: Why do you think it is especially powerful to sing about our future life in the return of Christ, the resurrection from the dead, and the restoration of all things?

The Saints

Temple: Behold and Connect



We are made to know God. And we are made to know God *in* and *through* other people. How do we know who Christ is (or who we are) except through the words and activity of other people? This cuts strongly against the dominant cultural, false-gospel of expressive individualism. The only way we can genuinely know God (and our authentic, most-alive selves, for that matter) is through the saints, past and present, who faithfully point us to the risen King and all the joys of being found in him. The church, at its best, is a community of restored image-bearers who display and proclaim the person and promises of God to one another. As Spirit-filled and Spirit-gifted people, God has designed his church to be the means by which he reveals himself to us. This is one of the main points in Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3 where he asks that we "may have strength to comprehend *with all the saints* what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Without the power of the Spirit in the presence of God's people we will not understand or experience the abounding love of Christ. We *need* each other. The words, tears, hugs, encouragement, affirmation, and counsel of loving saints *are* God's words, tears, encouragement, affirmation and counsel for us, even in their imperfections and limitations.

In the Anglican world, this interpersonal, relational necessity isn't just embodied in the Scriptures (the first and primary, Spirit-authorized witness to God) and the local expression of the saints of a church, but also through liturgical worship and an episcopal order (bishops). Huh? Those old prayers and that dude in the purple shirt help me know and love Jesus? That's right. Through the leadership, unity, and organization of local congregations under the care and oversight of bishops, the historical truth of the gospel is preserved and proclaimed, authority is ordered, and, at its best, people and pastors are nurtured and nourished. And through the ordered service, liturgical prayers, and historic creeds we draw near to the throne of grace with all the saints who have gone before us (Heb. 11:39-12:2; 13:22-24). In the fellowship of these dear sisters and brothers who have finished their race, and in submission to the historic teaching and order of a bishop, our knowledge of God is nurtured and nourished as we contend together for the same faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3). There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Spirit, one God and Father of all, in whom all the saints, past and present, seek to find rest for their souls.

We will look more at Christian community as we consider the mission path of being "God's Household," but it is good to acknowledge here that, interestingly, being with other believers

isn't first about being with other believers, but about being with God. This means that if we want to connect to Christ we have to value our fellowship with other believers. We have to value the historic legacy of the church in all of its mess and beauty. We have to sacrificially commit to weekly rhythms of gathered worship and small groups. We have to meet regularly with one another for encouragement and support in our daily lives. We have to be vulnerable, and come to one another looking to care for each other's needs. In this way, as we gather with saints present and past, the Spirit of God flows into and through our lives. Persevering through hurts, hardness of heart, and the ever-present reality of the failings of Christ's church, we press on in unity with other believers to experience the love of Christ and the comforting joy of his presence, now and into eternity future.

Gracious Father, we pray for your holy, catholic Church. Fill it with all truth, in all truth with all peace. Where it is corrupt, purify it; where it is in error, direct it; where in anything it is amiss, reform it. Where it is right, strengthen it; where it is in want, provide for it; where it is divided, reunite it; for the sake of Jesus Christ your Son our Savior. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Nehemiah 4:15-23; Psalm 34; Ephesians 3:14-21; Matthew 5:1-16

Catechism Question #100 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

Who are the saints? The saints are all those in heaven and on earth who place their faith in Jesus Christ, who are set apart, holy to God in Christ, and transformed by his grace.

Further Reading: *Simply Anglican* by Winfield Bevins

Restoration Principles of The Saints

Exuberant Creation: In what ways do you think a Christian version of expressive individualism (perhaps a “me and Jesus” mindset) has shaped your spiritual life? How might it be freeing to acknowledge your dependence on others to know and walk with God?

Painful Loss: Many of us have been hurt by the church. How do we make sense of pain caused by the people who are meant to show us God's love in Christ?

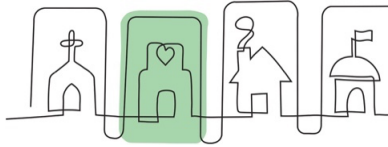
Gracious Rescue: Who have been the people that have most memorably shown you Christ and spoken to you of the grace of Christ? Take time to give thanks for them.

Patient Work while Waiting: How is Christian community a sustainable part of your life right now? Are there changes you need to make to prioritize connecting with God and his people?

Final Triumph: Who are followers of Christ that have “run their race” well that you look up to? What is it about their lives that makes you want to know Christ more?

The Hospital

Become Like and Conform to Christ



As we worship Christ in all his beauty, truth, and goodness, we both passively receive and actively pursue conformity to his likeness. This happens as the Holy Spirit convicts, comforts, and counsels us through a life of self-denying discipleship in a community of faith. We become what we behold, which means that the most essential power of our transformation is accomplished through the first mission path of the Temple. But transformation is not a wholly passive work. The ground must be tilled, seeds sown, and vines pruned, even if God is the one who gives the growth. For those baptized into Christ and united to him through faith, we are called to consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God by actively pursuing a life in conformity to his image and likeness.

This mission path is best characterized as a “hospital” because it addresses the reality that we are sick people who need healing from the Great Physician. God intends for us to be healed out of the darkness and depravity of this world, and to grow, grace by grace and glory to glory, into a fruitful display of Christian maturity that will One Day perfectly reflect Jesus’s likeness. Having our humanity healed into the image of Christ effects the totality of who we are, offering us a whole new life in union with Jesus—self, status, story, pursuit and practice. The church at its best, as God’s hospital, names and nurtures this new creation life in its members. In the community of the saints, we gain and grow-in (1) our new life in the Spirit, (2) our identity in Christ, (3) our suffering with resurrection hope, (4) our joyful servanthood, and (5) our abiding habits of Christian living (Rule of Life). We will take them each in turn in the following devotionals.

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace: where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is error, truth; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. O divine Master, grant that I may seek not so much to be consoled as to console, to be understood as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned, and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Proverbs 3:1-12; Psalm 103; Colossians 3:1-17; Mark 2:1-12

Catechism Question #363 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

How does Jesus heal you? Through the gift of the Holy Spirit, as I continue in repentance and faith, Jesus mends my disordered soul from the effects of sin in my mind, will, and desires.

Further Reading

The Raggamuffin Gospel by Brennan Manning

Restoration Principles of the Hospital

Exuberant Creation: What aspects about yourself and your story do you enjoy sharing with others?

Painful Loss: What aspects of yourself or your story do you prefer to not share with others?

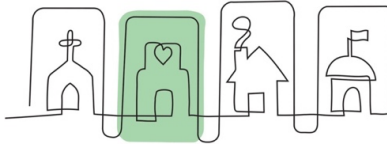
Gracious Rescue: What difference does it make to know that Jesus is saving and restoring your whole humanity, and not just your soul?

Patient Work while Waiting: What are the practical ways you are pursuing healing right now?

Final Triumph: How are you supporting others in their own healing as we all make our way home to God's restored creation?

New Life in the Spirit

Hospital: Become and Conform



The great goal of our age is to be authentically who we really are. Rarely do we step back and ask whether that is a good or reasonable goal. Take a moment right now to consider its implications. Is that possible? Is it even desirable? What if there are parts of us that are authentically destructive to ourselves and others? What if, as we all do, we find limitations placed on us by our own capacities or in the larger circumstances of our lives? And what if, rather than just being a little help to be our true selves, Christianity is an invitation to be made new? The invitation of the gospel is to a whole new self. A whole new self in union with Christ in a way that preserves and even perfects our unique individuality.

What is often missed in the Christian life is that God doesn't just do something *for us* in Christ, he also does something *to us* by the Holy Spirit. Through our watery incorporation into Christ in baptism and our genuine conversion through repentant-faith, however that might work itself out in our personal story, God works the "new birth." God takes up residence in us. And his presence doesn't just make us his temple, it makes us a whole new creation (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:17). We are "born again," according to the Spirit, according to the word of the gospel, according to the resurrection life of Christ dwelling in us. Us in Christ and Christ in us.

Conforming to Christ's likeness, then, is just *becoming* who we already are in Christ! He was plunged into our death, so that we could be plunged into his beloved life in the love of the Father, and thereby gain a whole new self, hidden with him in God. This is why, in Ephesians 4, the apostle Paul can speak of putting off our "old selves" and putting on our "new selves." God has done an indestructible work of grace in the soul of every believer. And even a little mustard seed of that life will last into the new creation.

Our new selves can be best summarized in two ways. First, we are forgiven. Totally. Completely. Justly. Irrevocably. Clean. Forgiven. This is the remarkable and stunning work of Christ's life, death, and resurrection: providing sinners like us with cleansing and right standing before God both now and into eternity—the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness! Second, our new selves are filled. If you read the Gospels, the message seems pretty clear: Jesus came for *forgiveness* and *fullness*. To take away the sins of the world, and to baptize with the Holy Spirit. Living a filled life has to do with being filled with the Holy Spirit. This forgiveness and fullness of new life is what is signed and sealed in baptism, and what we seek every day, again and again, as we learn a life of repentance—putting off our old selves apart from Christ and putting on our new selves in Christ as we learn to walk by the Spirit.

It can be hard to gain assurance of our “new selves” with all of our ongoing issues and weaknesses, but this is the good labor of working out our salvation. We do this in the context of loving community as we learn to rest more and more in Christ and not in ourselves. The gain assurance, confidence, and maturity, we need the ongoing ministry of the church, in all of its prophetic encouragement and persnickety edification, to bless, nurture, and sharpen our new creation life. The sanctifying support of community keeps our inconsistent steps moving forward no matter how we may feel on any given day, so that we continue to grow in grace until our true selves are revealed to us at the appearing of Christ (Col 3:1-4).

Almighty God, you have given your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and to be born of a pure virgin: Grant that we, who have been born again and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom with you and the same Spirit be honor and glory, now and forever. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Ezekiel 36:22-32; Psalm 51; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; John 3:1-21

Catechism Question #15 from the ACNA’s To Be A Christian:

What does God grant in your new life in Christ? God grants me reconciliation with him, forgiveness of my sins, union with him in Christ, adoption into his family, citizenship in his kingdom, new life in the Holy Spirit, and the promise of eternal life.

Further Reading:

Augustine on the Christian Life by Gerald Bray

Restoration Principles of New Life

Exuberant Creation: How do you usually describe yourself to people?

Painful Loss: When you think about your efforts to be “who you are” or “are made to be” or “want to be,” what obstacles, challenges, and losses have you encountered to your pursuit of self?

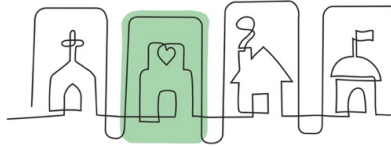
Gracious Rescue: How might you describe yourself to others as you consider your union to Jesus?

Patient Work while Waiting: How would your actions and thoughts toward other believers change if you saw them “in Christ”?

Final Triumph: How does the knowledge that our authentic selves will truly be revealed at Christ’s appearing (Col. 3:1-4) both temper our expectations of personal knowledge in this life as well as provide encouragement here and now?

Identity in Christ

Hospital: Become and Conform



If traditional societal identities were fixed and rigid, you might say modern identities are fluid and fractured. Historical social stigma towards outliers and our current ever-growing list of identity labels invite this reflection. Taking a step back to consider these two ways of forming an identity compels us to ask, “Can I have another option, please?” Is it possible to have a conception of ourselves that is grounded and defined, yet flexible to our unique personalities and narratives? You may find this shocking, but I think this is exactly what the ancient texts of Scripture offer us—a fresh vision of personal worth, value, and identity in Christ. Throughout the course of our lives we will have many temporary identities, which provide worth, meaning, and validation in our day to day living. But because these identities are based on certain relationships, circumstances, or roles that can begin and end at any point, they may change or be lost at any moment. And the sad truth about identities is that they are not just temporary, they can also be tainted. According to the derogatory words spoken over us or the selfish names we own for ourselves, identities can be false, fake, and deeply harming. What we gain in Christ is an identity that purifies, shapes, informs, and, ultimately, perfects all others.

Identity and names go hand in hand. So, what does God think about you? What does God call you? This broken world, our warped flesh, and the powers of spiritual darkness have left all of us, to varying degrees and depths, in pain and confusion through our experiences of being *invalidated*, *dehumanized*, and *shame-named*. But what if God is not like those hurtful instigators, or that voice in our head, or the masquerading dark forces? What if God is like a good heavenly Father who is redeeming his lost sons and daughters out of sin and death? God has profoundly different names for us in our identity of grace. United to Jesus we irrevocably gain every blessed name of the people of God. One of the most iconic list of these identifiers can be found in 1 Peter 2:9-10. Revelation 2:17 tells us that believers get a personal name from God that is shared in secret between them (is this a holy nickname?!). The most common identifiers used by apostolic writers include “in Christ,” “child of God,” “saint,” and “beloved.” Given the nature of God as love, the baptism of Christ, and the biblically central image of marriage, the name “beloved” offers one of the richest and the most comprehensive names for God’s people. It declares Christ as the Bridegroom King and marks the church as his Bride. This identity-forming, relational dance is teased out from

Genesis to Revelation, and prophetically punctuates the books of Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Hosea, the Gospel of John, Ephesians, and the Letters of John. Our identity before God in the grace of Christ is of a kind that is most intimate and intense, most mysterious and momentous. You and I, perfectly condemnable sinners that we are, yet remain the constant and irrevocable objects of God's holy affections.

Understanding our new identity is the natural outworking of understanding our new selves and status in *the* Beloved Son, who heals and perfects all other identities. The Christian life is wrapping ourselves in the belovedness of Christ—offered in the gospel, sealed in our Baptism, and celebrated in Communion. In this identity, Christ's baptism in the favor of the Father and the fullness of the Spirit becomes our baptism such that we are personally included in God's very own trinitarian love (John 17:23)! "Beloved," the Father calls us in every provision and providence. "Beloved," Christ calls us from the cross and the throne of grace. "Beloved," the Spirit calls us in every word of Scripture, sacramental participation, and stumbling step of faith. "Beloved" we will be for all eternity. Gospel transformation is an invitation to get used to being the object of God's unstoppable affections in Christ (Rm 8:31-39). What we don't account for is how contrary to our old natures it is to be loved by a holy God. If we really are going to *live* out our identity as God's beloved, we will *need* all the supernatural power of God and every bit of support and counseling from other beloved saints (Eph 3:14-19). Every growth, maturity, and transformation is an integration of our guilt, shame, and pain into the grace, honor, and love of God in Christ. God loves us. We are his beloved. The Christian life is adjusting all we are to this reality and identity.

Heavenly Father, you have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you: Look with compassion upon the heartfelt desires of your servants, and purify our disordered affections, that we may behold your eternal glory in the face of Christ Jesus; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Deuteronomy 7:6-11; Psalm 139; 1 John 3:1-3; Luke 3:21-22

Catechism Question #40 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

What do you mean when you call God "Father"? When I call God "Father," I declare that I was created for relationship with him, that I trust in God as my Protector and Provider, and that I put my hope in God as his child and heir in Christ.

Further Reading

Life of The Beloved by Henri Nouwen

The Water and The Blood by Kevin P. Emmert

Restoration Principles of New Life

Exuberant Creation: What are names, nicknames, and identities have been positive for you throughout your life (whether from others or yourself)?

Painful Loss: What are names, nicknames, and identities that have been painful for you throughout your life (whether from others or yourself)?

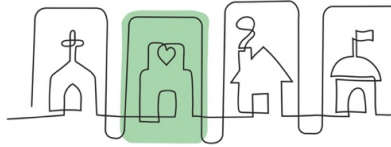
Gracious Rescue: Our identity in Christ is built on the status we gain through the saving actions of Jesus. How important is it to know that our identity in grace is not our own doing but based on the past works and current working of Christ (“past” being his life, death, and resurrection; “current” being his prayers, pouring out of the Spirit, and promise to return)?

Patient Work while Waiting: Consider the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River. How does it strike you seeing yourself as “in Christ” in his baptism? What encouragement or resistance do you feel in yourself? How might seeing yourself included in Christ’s baptism transform how you parent, go to class, or do your job?

Final Triumph: Read 1 John 3:1-3. Read it a few times. Read it again. Read it slowly. Ask someone to read it over you. One more time, when you think you have read it enough.

Re-storying in Christ's Suffering and Glory

Hospital: Become and Conform



My dad grew up in a working-class Minnesota home, marked, sadly, by alcoholism and trauma. He worked a factory job out of high school, but by the end of his career as an electrical engineer had 36 patents in the field of information technology. My mom, coming from hardy, family stock that immigrated from Ukraine after World War II, was one of the first women hired by Deloitte as a CPA in the 80's. These stories have shaped me. But there is a person and a story more shaping to me than even my parents. That's what Christ and his gospel offer us.

Our stories are not self-explanatory. We are all interpreting the “data” of experience within some narrative framework: “I am in pain; God must hate me.” There is a story there (characters, protagonist, antagonist, a plot, etc.). A knife can mean different things in the hands of a surgeon or a sergeant. I once heard it said that Sleeping Beauty could just have easily taken Prince Charming to court as married the guy. As persons responding to the true story of God in Christ, believers are called to see, understand, and make sense of everything *in Christ*. Who Jesus is and what Jesus has done forms the basis of how we interpret and integrate all of creation, human history, and our personal histories. This re-storying in Christ is what the gospel announces and the sacraments plunge and invite us into in God's new covenant community. This is the hard and miraculous work of being transformed by the renewing of our minds as we, truly and fully, offer our bodies and whole selves to God. The most pervasive pinch-point and opportunity of re-storying our lives in Christ come from our experience of suffering, loss, and death. How we make sense of and learn to live in the good promises of a good God in the midst of present suffering reveals more about our growth in grace than anything else. The beauty and power of the Christ story is that God does not meet our pain and death with platitudes or doctrines, but with *his own suffering* and *his own indestructible life*. This is the gospel. A God enfleshed. A weeping Christ. A suffocating Messiah. A man raised from the dead never to die again. This is what a gospel community announces and embodies at its best. In having our lives united to Christ, the Lord re-narrates our stories in solidarity with his own, such that in the deepest, richest, most comprehensive way possible we can say, “to live is Christ and to die is gain.” His suffering and subsequent glory means our suffering is never isolated, meaningless, fruitless, or final. United to Christ, all suffering happens in the maternity ward of grace and not the cancer unit of sin. Grace produces glory in the soil of suffering. This is something the world cannot receive because it only knows how to exalt power, success, and prestige. Much of the New Testament is making sense of and bearing witness to the power of God made perfect in weakness—a re-storying of the weak and discarded things of the world in the suffering and glory of Christ.

The worst thing that can happen to us is not that we would face hard circumstances (that's a given), but that we would harden our hearts towards the face of God in Christ. Jesus wept. He sweat blood. He was misunderstood, betrayed, abandoned, tortured, and executed in public humiliation by mob-rule and a miscarriage of justice. Through the acts of wicked humanity, the perfect will of God was accomplished to save us from sin and bring to light the new creation. These sufferings are the redemptive acts of God in the earth. These sufferings are the personal testimonies of God to his suffering people. The understanding, wisdom, and insight we gain in our suffering in the grace of God is how the Christ story re-narratives (renews, restores, reconciles, redeems, all the "re-" words) every minutia of our lives. Through suffering in grace, we partake in Christ and his story, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible we may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Almighty God, whose most dear Son went not up to joy but first suffered pain, and entered not into glory before he was crucified: Mercifully grant that we, walking in the way of the Cross, may find it none other than the way of life and peace; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.

Biblical Readings: Isaiah 53; Psalms 73, 126; 2 Corinthians 4:7-5:10; John 11:1-44

Catechism Question #61 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

How do Jesus' sufferings help you? Jesus has experienced our sufferings, understands our sorrows, and is able to sympathize with our weakness. Therefore, I should bear my sufferings with perseverance and hope, for my Savior is with me in them, and through them I will come to know him more fully.

Further Reading: *Walking with God Through Pain and Suffering* by Tim Keller

Restoration Principles of Christ's Suffering and Glory

Exuberant Creation: Consider your favorite movies and books. How did they start? What did you find compelling about the beginning of those stories in the characters, context, etc.?

Painful Loss: What have been some of the story-shaping griefs in your life?

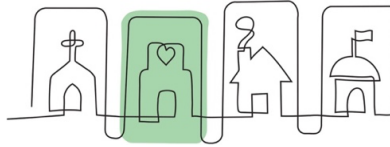
Gracious Rescue: Of the statements about the suffering of Christ stated above, what hits home for you most right now? Why do you think that is?

Patient Work while Waiting: Psalm 126 talks about sowing in tears. How might God be calling you to sow the tears of your grief in faith? What do you think that looks like in real life?

Final Triumph: Psalm 126 also talks about reaping with shouts of joy. How does the Christ story offer you joy through hope right now?

Happy, Holy, Humble Servanthood

Hospital: Become and Conform



What way of being in the world is most rewarded? While some of the most moving and compelling sports moments and stories can be found in The Invictus Games and The Special Olympics, what is really rewarded (quantified by viewership and financial profit) is winning medals in *The Olympics* (or any other professional field). What the world values is success by dominant people and teams, often rewarding (or at least overlooking) the pride, arrogance, and selfishness that fuels it. Obviously, we are oversimplifying to make a point, but, on the whole, strong winners and weak losers is the way of human history. This is the heritage of guns, germs, and steel which has forged civilizations and empires. But this is not the heritage of God and God's kingdom. According to the Scriptures and the servanthood of Jesus, the deepest reality is that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35). This is the reality from which all created order has sprung from the fountainhead of God himself—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Anything else is a rebellious aberration in the fabric of what is ultimately good, true, and beautiful.

For those who have a new self, identity, and story united to Jesus, the way up is down. The first shall be last. God's strength rests on them in weakness. Those who would be greatest must be least. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. The way of being in the world that is in union to our new life in the Spirit, our new beloved identity, and our new narrative in the Christ story, is that of happy, holy, humble, servanthood. This is the character of the image of God that Christ is restoring and repatterning in his people. If this is not the transforming trajectory and pursuit of our lives, we are not being conformed to the image of Christ no matter what value signaling, political posturing, or religious expression we may engage in.

Happy, holy, humble servanthood is the manner with which God's people pursue everything. *Happy* because those united to God in Christ have the roots of their satisfaction and joy in God himself, who is the good portion that cannot be taken from them (Luke 10:41-42). *Holy* because those united to God in Christ are dead to sin and alive to God as set apart vessels of righteousness for his purposes of Spirit-fruitfulness in the earth (Rm 6:12-14; Gal 5:16-26). *Humble* because those united to God in Christ know their complete dependence on God, from their breath to their bank accounts to their enduring fruitfulness

in the world (1 Cor 4:7; John 15:5-6). And *servanthood* because those united to God in Christ are no longer living for themselves but for the glory and will of him who loved them and gave himself for them (2 Cor 4:5, 14-15).

We may be thinking, “I don’t do that; I *can’t* do that.” Yes! Exactly! Now we are getting to it! Functionally and practically, the name of the game is repentant-faith for those who would pursue a life of happy, holy, humble servanthood in Christ. Being found in Christ is not a one-time conversion, but a whole-life transformation. On the most practical level it begins with learning to say, “I am sorry”, while we slow down to make different choices as we rely on the Spirit. As we own our failings, as we pump the brakes on fast-paced modern life, and as we choose the cruciform life of servanthood, the Spirit does the remarkable work of Christ himself being formed in us. *His* happiness (Heb 1:9). *His* holiness (Heb 10:14). *His* humility (Phil 2:1-11). And *his* servanthood which is remaking the world in first-love devotion to God and love of neighbor.

O God, who wonderfully created and yet more wonderfully restored, the dignity of human nature: Grant that we may share the divine life of him who humbled himself to share our humanity, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings:

Isaiah 12; Psalms 127-131; Philippians 2:1-14; Matthew 20:20-28

Catechism Question #368 from the ACNA’s To Be A Christian:

What marks a life of sanctification? God calls me to a life marked by gratitude and joy. In gratitude for God’s grace in Jesus, I die daily to the desires of my fallen nature. In the joy of knowing that I will become like Jesus, I live each day in service to him.

Further Reading

The Radical Disciple by John Stott

Restoration Principles of Happy, Holy, Humble Servanthood

Exuberant Creation: God is the one who ultimately embodies “it is more blessed to give than to receive” in his trinitarian love and creative actions. What difference does it make to how you treat others, if the origin of everything (in God) is one of *giving* and *serving*?

Painful Loss: Consider the ways human history has been shaped by an ethic of dominance rather than an ethic of servanthood. What comes to mind? What about your own story?

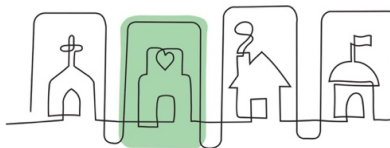
Gracious Rescue: Christianity has, rightly, always held the cross of Jesus as central to its life and teaching. How has the crucifixion of the Son of God changed your daily life (relate to others, school, work, etc.)?

Patient Work while Waiting: A crucified God was ridiculed by dominant Roman and religious cultures of the first century. In what ways does our culture push against Christ-crucified as an ethic-shaping pattern for being human? How do you struggle with this?

Final Triumph: How does the apostle Paul use the Christ story of Jesus' suffering and subsequent glory to teach the church in Philippi from Philippians 2:1-11? What significance does the exaltation of Jesus play in motivating the church to live lives of servanthood?

Rule of Life

Hospital: Become and Conform



Our imaginations are incessantly bombarded by branding and media that push us in varying directions of how to be human. Cultural icons (no matter our political stripe) give us pictures of how to live the “good life.” The world is conforming us. This isn’t to say that all things in the “world” are “bad” and all things “church” or “Christian” are “good.” There is plenty of biblical worldliness all around, whether licentious or legalistic, religious or irreligious. The point? We are being changed (even if it is just more hardened in directions we are already drifting). Nothing is neutral.

What is most “good” for us is to be captivated by the goodness of Jesus Christ. This goodness of Christ is what re-makes us in the hospital of Christ’s church; offering us a new self, identity, story, and way of being in the world. But how do we actually foster this whole new life (self, identity, story, and character)? How do you live into and sustain a life of being happy, holy, and humble? The reality of worldly, fleshly, and demonic inertia means that if we do not strategically remain in the flow of the living waters of the Spirit, modern life and our flesh will form us into whatever image comes easiest. Not a pretty picture in the end. To abide in the house of God’s healing, we need to live a repentant-faith in a community of love with what the church has historically called “a rule of life.” The ACNA Catechism on this is succinct and brilliant: *see Appendix for Rule of Life Catechism and Church Calendar.*

We need to be *trained* in godliness, making *every effort* to grow in grace (1 Tim 4:7-8; 2 Peter 1:3-11). We are to look carefully how we walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time to be filled with the Spirit because the days are evil (Eph 5:15-18). When we get this conversation out of the fear of “works righteousness,” it becomes extremely straightforward. This is simply how life works. Agricultural societies get this. To grow a crop you sow seeds, and there is a process of how to do that best. If you plant corn in concrete, it will be ineffective (and silly). A rule of life is based on the classic metaphor of the trellis and the vine. To be fruitful and effective, our lives of grace need scaffolding and order to mature and not be trampled on. The “trellis” of our practice, training, habits, rhythms, disciplines, non-negotiables, etc., lift us to the Father’s loving and pruning hands.

We all technically have a “rule of life,” it is just going unstated and largely being set by the precedence of modern life: sports teams, education structures, family expectations, work demands, media and entertainment, etc. A rule of life is meant to help us navigate daily pressures

and decisions in such a way that, in the long run, we grow in our new self, identity, story, and way of being in the grace of Christ. It is the rehab center in the hospital of humanity. To abide in the house of God's healing, we need to live a repentant-faith in a community of love with a rule of life. The community of love is what we will explore next in the mission path of the household.

O God, because without you we are not able to please you, mercifully grant that your Holy Spirit may in all things direct and rule our hearts; through Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Psalm 90; 2 Peter 1:3-11 (Ephesians 4:17-24; 5:1-21); John 15:1-11

Catechism Question #253 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

Why do you need a rule of life? I need a rule of life because my fallen nature is disordered, distracted, and self-centered. A rule of life helps me to resist sin and establish godly habits, through which the Holy Spirit will increasingly conform me to the image of Christ.

Further Reading: *Practicing the Way* by John Mark Comer; *Crazy Busy* by Kevin DeYoung

Restoration Principles of New Life

Exuberant Creation: Reflect on your "rule of life." What are the daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly habits and rhythms you are committed to (be honest about the hours logged on YouTube; yes, perhaps that's an effective part of your vocation, but maybe not)? Consider how the order and scaffolding of your days are shaping you and those around you (positive and negative).

Painful Loss: What practical and personal circumstances do you find most frustrating and painful in ordering your life? Presently or in the past.

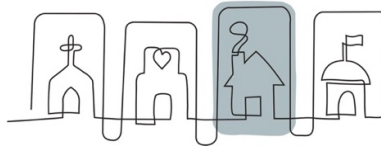
Gracious Rescue: The life we receive in the grace of Christ by his Spirit is a pardoned life and an empowered life. What have been some of the best seasons of "growing in grace," and what can you learn looking back on them?

Patient Work while Waiting: Have there been times or seasons of life when the pace, pains, and practice of life seemed to derail your personal development or growing in Christ? What made them so difficult? How did they change or change you?

Final Triumph: In his work and our union to him, Christ frees us from the consequences and power of sin, and when he returns, he will free us from the presence of sin altogether. Why do we need to see this future, sin-free "crown" of glory while we carry our "cross" of this life?

The Household

Belong and Commit to Christ's People



By virtue of our connection to Christ, we become members with all those who are also in union with God in Christ by the Spirit, through faith and baptism. For better and for worse, we are born into the families we are born into. We do not choose them. Similarly, we do not choose those who are in Christ with us. But we are all called in Christ together for the purpose of worship and with the values of holy love. For this reason, we actively strive towards a unity unto maturity with every Spirit-given grace in the midst of our difficulties, diversities, and differences. In this way the third mission path of the church is “the household of God.” Living as adopted sons and daughters of God, under the one lordship of Christ, filled with the same Holy Spirit, with an equal inheritance, a shared calling in the kingdom, and the same hope in the resurrection from the dead, the church seeks a common life together in the grace of Christ. The church, at its best, is meant to give us a taste and picture of what a true family looks like, even with all of its complications and messiness. This requires a joyful, repentant, and resilient commitment to one another which takes shape in how we (1) welcome one another, (2) share a common life, (3) exercise our spiritual gifts for one another’s benefit, (4) build-up one another as maturing disciples, and (5) in our case, do this within our Anglican identity, heritage, and practice. We will take each of those in turn in the following devotionals.

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, “Peace I give to you; my own peace I leave with you”: Regard not our sins, but the faith of your Church, and give to us the peace and unity of that heavenly city, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, now and for ever. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Isaiah 51:1-3; Psalm 134; Ephesians 2:11-22 ; Luke 19:1-10

Catechism Question #103 from the ACNA’s *To Be A Christian*:

How do you participate in the communion of the saints?

I live as a member of the communion of saints through faith in Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit by gathering to worship God with my fellow Christians, by praying for and encouraging one another, and by coming to one another’s aid in times of trouble, sickness, or grief.

Further Reading

The Church by Brad East

Restoration Principles of The Household

Exuberant Creation: What difference does it make seeing the church as a house or family, rather than a club, political party, or affinity group?

Painful Loss: How have you noticed our culture trying to find “church” apart from God?

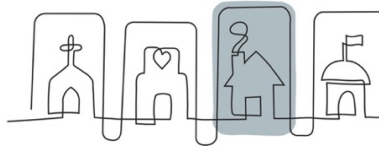
Gracious Rescue: When did the church begin?

Patient Work while Waiting: What has been most rewarding in your experience of the church? Challenging?

Final Triumph: What is Jesus’s prize, reward, and inheritance from his suffering obedience? What is his joy forever?

Welcome One Another

Household: Belong and Commit



Emotional reactivities abound these days. Suspicion is rampant. General institutional commitments are faltering. Some have argued we are a society in emotional regression. While this may be true, as a community at peace with God being healed in his holy love, the church is called to be a place where the bonds of connectivity, maturity, and hospitality are repaired and nurtured. Reconciled to God through Christ, the church's embodiment of this grace is to make friends of enemies in our fellowship (that is literally what reconciliation means).

One of the most heated leadership confrontations documented for us in the Scriptures is the apostle Paul's argument with the apostle Peter in the book of Galatians. Paul says that he "opposed [Peter] to his face, because he stood condemned." Why such intensity? Had Peter voted for the wrong political candidate? Did he choose the wrong color carpet for the fellowship hall? Were his kids attending public school or the wrong private one? Peter had stopped doing dinners with some people from church; specifically, the non-Jewish ("Gentile") believers in his church. As a first century, Jewish man this would have been culturally "normal" and acceptable, but as an apostle of Jesus Christ it was an act of hypocrisy "not in step with the truth of the gospel." Why? The gospel destroys previously held worldly, barriers and makes people unified in Christ through faith in his name and baptism into his death and resurrection. The welcome of God's grace directly addresses our worldly preferences, non-essentials, cultural differences and how we walk with others in their own process of weakness, struggle, and brokenness. Here are some questions the gospel and our cultural moment compel us to reflect on: How quick are we to take comments or actions personal? Are we open to the possibility that our emotional reactivities are just as likely pointing to unhealth in us as to that of others? Do we only know how to ask questions from our own limited social, economic, and political perspective or do we have a sense of the genuine needs and concerns of those beyond our "tribe"? Do people feel cared for when they visit our church or our small groups? Are those spaces that someone from the LGBTQ community could visit, ask questions, and explore faith in Christ? When it comes to our church music preferences, do we eagerly seek to learn new things (whether old-new or new-new)? Are we able to feel non-threatened in conversations on race and economics, especially as it pertains to the differing narratives of the black, brown, and white experience in our country? Can we be honest about the differing needs of urban and rural areas without becoming territorial? Are we honest about media-driven perspectives dominating our discourse, rather than the voice of Christ? These questions, rightly, make us uncomfortable. But, for the glory of Christ and good of others, we cannot be afraid of them.

Living as a community of holy love in an increasingly fractured society is hard work. It is perplexing. It is not a world of quick fixes and easy answers. It challenges our natural affinities and comforts. Simply being in the same fellowship with people requires cross-cultural missionary efforts and skills. The unifying reality of being baptized into Christ and coming to the same Table of Communion will matter more and more as the authentic witness of the gospel brings in people from diverse backgrounds, experiences, strengths, weakness, and brokenness. Let us not take lightly the welcome of God. Let us receive it as the life-transforming joy it is for us *and* for those radically different than us. Take heart, dear friends, God has welcomed us in Christ! Take the challenge, dear friends, God calls us to extend that same welcome to one another!

O God, who created all peoples in your image: We thank you for the diversity of races and cultures in this world. Show us your presence in those who differ from us, and enrich our lives with their fellowship, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings: Isaiah 56:1-8; Psalm 100; Romans 15:1-7; John 4:1-42

Catechism Question #200 from the ACNA's To Be A Christian:

How do you forgive others? Forgiveness is a decision of my will and an attitude of my heart that seeks the good of my neighbor, and chooses not to hold against them the damage they have inflicted. I forgive whether they have asked for forgiveness or not.

Further Reading: *The Beautiful Community* by Irwin Ince; *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Restoration Principles of Welcome One Another

Exuberant Creation: How can you proactively name things that are good, true, and beautiful in people that are different than you or that you disagree with?

Painful Loss: What “camps” or “tribes” are you most quick to write-off and not treat as dignified humans made in the image of God?

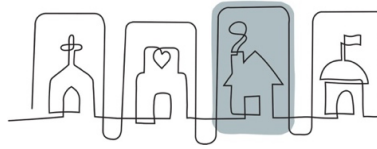
Gracious Rescue: At what times in your life have you most personally valued Christ’s love for the wayward, outcast, and socially marginalized?

Patient Work while Waiting: Consider election seasons. How do you proactively live out your unity with brothers and sisters in Christ and not let cultural public discourse determine how you treat those with whom you eat Bread and Wine?

Final Triumph: How did Jesus speak about his return? In all of his teaching, what were his implications for how we are to treat each other now as we wait for him? (If needed, see Matthew 25.)

A Common Life

Household: Belong and Commit



Imagine an orchestra performance that begins with Tchaikovsky's 5th symphony horn solo. The singular notes resound and resonate with clarity and beauty. You are transported. But then, something weird happens. The cello comes in with Bach's prelude to cello suite No. 1, and a choir breaks-out in Handel's Messiah Hallelujah chorus, and the percussion instruments start playing NBC's Olympic Games theme song. What?! Those are all distinct and amazing sounds in their own right, but even beautiful things can be ugly when disordered. This parallels the disharmony often experienced in the local church. We all bring something wonderful to the table in terms of our desires, giftedness and experiences. But if those things are not ordered in a harmonious fashion, then we will experience one another and our life together as noise. This is why, in love, we are called to submit to one another and do things in an orderly fashion. This means, practically, we need shared expectations around how we live in community together. Any semi-healthy family has ways of organizing itself and functioning as a family in daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly commitments and rhythms. We need *a common life* through a shared vision of *relationships, prayer, and time*.

Common relationships are ways we pursue being *with one another*. Jesus had his three (Luke 9:28), his twelve (Luke 6:13), and his one-hundred and twenty (Acts 1:15). This is an appropriate goal for our own relational vision of a common life in Christ. We need 2 or 3 people who know us in the good, bad, and ugly of daily life. Spiritual friends that we can text, call, and cry with at any moment. There is no magic button for these kinds of relationships, and they can change in seasons of life; but it is healthy and Christ-like to pursue them in tangible ways as best we can. We also need a small band of "twelve" to cultivate habits and formational practices of discipleship together. In many churches, this is the purpose of "small groups"—sisters and brothers in Christ welcoming one another into their homes to cultivate a life in Christ together through hospitality, God's Word and prayer. Lastly, we need the larger assembly of the gathered people of God, our "one-hundred and twenty." It is in the joy of corporate worship that the rhythms and practices of Word, Sacrament, Prayer, Song, Feasting, and Fasting find their fullest expression as we come together in one diverse family in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Common prayer is a way of being *with God* with one another. Every Jesus-community has a common prayer or liturgy (even if it is not named that way). The gift of the Anglican heritage is to take up the invitation of the saints who have gone before us in the Daily Office, the gospel-organized services of Eucharist, Baptisms, Sickness, and Death, as well as a treasure-trove of prayers, traditions, and wisdom for organizing our lives in Christ. Leveraging this heritage of the saints, we build a life of common prayer as we walk with God together.

Common time is a way of being with God with one another *for God's purposes*. This aspect of a common life is especially necessary for living in harmony. Here we find the formational and practical wisdom of "seasons," that take shape in the rhythms of the church calendar as well as agreed upon ministry patterns (shared expectations on small groups, catechesis (formational teaching), outreach, service, etc.). Common time keeps us on the same page, allows us to plan and think creatively as a community, and keeps the things of God regularly in front of us to not forget or neglect the purposes of Christ.

There are many details to fill-in, but here is the feast of a common life for God's people. A shared song in which to learn the way of grace. A place to belong and commit in common relationships, common prayer, and common time. Let us keep the feast!

Lord Jesus Christ, you said to your apostles, "Peace I give you; my own peace I leave with you": Regard not our sins, but the faith of your Church, and give to us the peace and unity of that heavenly city, where with the Father and the Holy Spirit you live and reign, now and for ever. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Nehemiah 8; Psalm 36; Acts 2:42-47; Matthew 5:1-16

Catechism Question #103 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*: How do you participate in the communion of the saints? I live as a member of the communion of saints through faith in Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit by gathering to worship God with my fellow Christians, by praying for and encouraging one another, and by coming to one another's aid in times of trouble, sickness, or grief.

Further Reading

Liturgy of the Ordinary by Tish Harrison Warren

Restoration Principles of A Common Life

Exuberant Creation: Why do you think it is helpful to organize the life of our communities in seasons and rhythms? Reflect on the seasons of nature and how we experience life in them.

Painful Loss: Consider times in your life of frustration or confusion in organizations or communities. Can you see ways that disharmony was brought about through unclear, unmet, or unorganized expectations? What can be learned from these experiences?

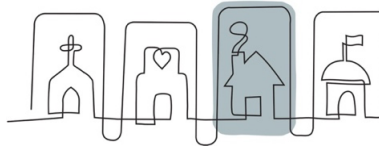
Gracious Rescue: Did Christ's life have a pattern? Did his disciples commend to us a kind of common life observable or taught in the Scriptures?

Patient Work while Waiting: Why does building a common life with others require continual patience, commitment, and submission to one another?

Final Triumph: What kind of harmony and "seasons" do you think we will experience when Christ ushers in the new creation at his return?

Spiritual Gifts

Household: Belong and Commit



In youth recreation sports coaches regularly shuffle players around to find the best combination for the team to win and function properly (and just give kids playing time). The reason coaches do this is because players have different capacities, skills, and gifts. While “winning” for the church is a much different thing than travel-league soccer, the Lord calls the community of his people to work as a team to reflect his beauty, truth, and goodness to one another and the world. And the Spirit of Christ equips the saints with gifts to function together as a team; even more intimate and vulnerable than that, to function as a single, unified *body*. The Scriptures offer clear teaching on the purpose, posture, power, practice, and pursuit of the Spirit’s gifts.

When it comes to giftedness, whether natural or supernatural, there is a lot of ego that gets thrown around. But the posture and purpose of the gifts given by God the Holy Spirit operate under a different lordship than the world. Every gift, skill, talent, or capacity, no matter how innate, cultivated, and miraculous is intended for the servanthood of seeking the wellbeing of others. Spirit-gifted capacity for service is always intended to be practiced within the context of and in submission to the Spirit-cultivated character of servanthood (revisit “Happy, Holy, Humble Servanthood” devotional when you start feeling “better than”). So, spiritual gifts are given for the purpose of encouragement to others with all the sacrificial humility of Jesus dying on a cross.

A broad way to think about “spiritual gifts” are any Spirit-given ability a follower of Christ possesses that is utilized to encourage other believers in knowing and walking with God. In the New Testament, there is especially a focus on the revealing of God’s truth for specific encouragement and exhortation, that is, the application of God’s Word in daily life. This is why Paul hammers home the benefit of “prophesying” over “tongues” in 1 Corinthians 12-14. [There is plenty to consider in what Paul means by prophecy, prophesying, and, tongues, but, for the purposes of this meditation, let’s just say that the “spiritual gift” kind of “prophecy” in the local church is the equipping of the saints to apply the once-for-all-delivered, authoritative, Prophetic and Apostolic witness of the Canon of Scripture; and “tongues” is a Spirit-given language of intercession and praise to be interpreted for public encouragement as able.] All the gifts of the Spirit—prophesying, preaching, teaching, leading, hospitality, faith, miracles, tongues, interpretation, healing, service, wisdom, and more—are given to followers of Christ not as ends in themselves (they will pass away!), but as means of gaining more of Christ, understanding and displaying the love of God, and for the strengthening of obedience in our weaknesses and

discouragements. The power of spiritual gifts is the Holy Spirit, who gifts Christ's people (in whatever way and for whatever season) for their maturity and strengthening of faith, all to be shared with humility in the orderly fashion of the church's organization and offices. This is their power and practice. In our pursuit of the Spirit's empowerment, we earnestly seek-out these gifts and cultivate them. Why would we not want any gift and help God wants to give us? Our hunger for the living God comes through and is strengthened by his gifts given to the church. Your gifts help other people experience God and know Christ more deeply. This is the best! Let us, then, earnestly, eagerly, and energetically seek all the fullness that Christ died to give us for the building up of his church.

O God, King of glory, you have exalted your only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph to your kingdom in heaven: Do not leave us comfortless, but send us your Holy Spirit to strengthen us, and exalt us to that place where our Savior Christ has gone before; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

Biblical Readings: Numbers 11:16-30; Psalm 148; Romans 12:1-8; John 16:1-15

Catechism Question #86 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*: What are the particular ministries of the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit imparts life to every living thing in creation, reveals God's Word to his people, and calls sinners to a new life of faith in the saving and life-giving work of Jesus. The Holy Spirit unites Christians to Jesus, indwelling them, convicting them of sin, giving them spiritual gifts, and bearing spiritual fruit in their lives.

Further Reading: *Eucharismatic* by Andrew Wilson

Restoration Principles of Spiritual Gifts

Exuberant Creation: The first people recorded in the Bible as being “filled” with the Spirit are Bezalel and Oholiab, whom God anoints with “skill, intelligence, knowledge, and craftsmanship” for building the tabernacle (Exodus 35)? What insights might we glean from this for building-up the church?

Painful Loss: How have you observed spiritual gifts being used improperly and destructively? From your experience, how can the church pursue greater health and maturity in using spiritual gifts?

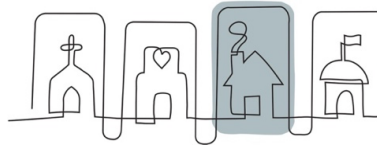
Gracious Rescue: Why do you think it is important that we identify our gifts, natural and supernatural, as being from Christ and of his Spirit? What are the implications for how we seek and use our gifts in the church?

Patient Work while Waiting: In what way has the Holy Spirit gifted you? What gifts are you being prodded to ask for and pursue? How are you cultivating and “fanning into flame” these gifts?

Final Triumph: The glory of God filling the earth will beautifully engulf all spiritual gifts at the restoration of all things (1 Corinthians 13:8-13). How does the temporary nature of these gifts help us pursue and practice them in earnest yet healthy ways now?

Discipleship

Household: Belong and Commit



One unavoidable aspect of being made in the image of God is that we exist in the context of relationships—God, self, others, world. We do not choose or decide those relationships. They are a given and inherent aspect of being human. In regard to others, we are always influencing and impacting people. Everything we do has implications for the lives of others. We are all exercising authority, influence, and power in the world and on the people around us. What we do matters. Not just for ourselves, but for others. The direct application and invitation of this relational reality in the household of God is that we are called to disciple, mentor, train, and build-up others in knowing God. Faith in Christ means that we are committed to living as disciples of Jesus, who are learning a new life from him as our highest influence, allegiance, and authority. In this life of discipleship, we are to disciple and be discipled.

The first and most natural place discipleship happens is in the context of the home. Parents raise and train their kids in the life of knowing and being loved by Christ, which is what they themselves are learning and living (not perfectly, but genuinely). But the whole church is God's family. And many of us come from homes where Christ-like discipleship is not a priority or a current reality (never lose hope, God can change this!). Therefore, in God's house, as the church, we are called to learn the life of following Christ from one another, no matter the exact natural relations we do or do not have. I am sure we can all point to people who have significantly impacted us in our spiritual development, directly and indirectly. In discipleship God invites us to strategically focus our influence and energy in helping other people grow in Christ. While different seasons of life look different for how we can impact the lives of others, discipleship remains a top priority for us as believers who are called (and have vowed in our service of Holy Baptism) to make ongoing, intentional investments in the lives of others for their maturity into Christ.

While programs are helpful and necessary vehicles of creating environments for discipleship, real discipleship is always personal. That doesn't mean it is always individual, but personal in the sense that there are contact points of relational and sacrificial investment. To draw on a previous devotional, discipleship exists within the reality of our "common relationships"—our "3," "12," and "120." Within those common relationships we are to prayerfully make

investments in those around us. We are to know people by name. We are to regularly pray for them. This can happen for brief seasons or for a lifetime. Consider your own growth in Christ and how others have positively invested and influenced you. How are you making intentional investments to encourage others in their walk with Christ? How are you leading, teaching, and strengthening those in God's household (one-to-one, small groups, leading studies, youth, children, specific ministry service, etc.)? How are you allowing yourself to be led, taught, and strengthened? Fixing our eyes on the One to whom we are all disciples, let us prayerfully labor in relational investments such that our love would abound more and more and that we may be found eagerly waiting for Christ at his return.

Keep, O Lord, your household the Church in continual godliness, that through your protection it may be free from all adversities, and devoutly serve you in good works, to the glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Deuteronomy 4:1-15; Psalm 145; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Matthew 28:16-20

Catechism Question #302 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

How should parents [natural and spiritual] treat their children? Earthly father and mothers should represent to their children the loving care of our heavenly Father by nurturing and protecting them, teaching and modeling to them the Christian faith and life, guiding and assisting them in education, and encouraging them in their lives and vocations.

Further Reading: *Discipling* by Mark Devers

Restoration Principles of Discipleship

Exuberant Creation: Who have been the primary influencers in your life? When you think about other people that have positively impacted your relationship with God, who comes to mind? In what ways did they impact you?

Painful Loss: How have you experienced a lack of positive discipleship in your life, whether in being discipled or discipling others?

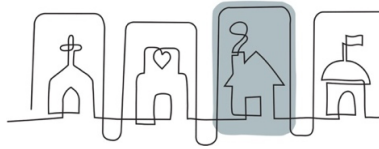
Gracious Rescue: Why is it important to see that our discipleship and discipling as all from and about Jesus?

Patient Work while Waiting: In what ways are you being discipled right now? How are you discipling others?

Final Triumph: Why is it important for the goal of our walk with Christ and how we are influencing others to be set fully on the grace to be received at Christ's appearing and our appearing before him?

Anglican Identity and Practice

Household: Belong and Commit



In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis describes Christian belief as a house. In the house there is a hallway with several doors to choose from. The hallway is for waiting and choosing, not living. We must go through a door and learn to live in that room. The application to the local church is: belief in Christ must necessarily be embodied in a particular context, community, and expression. Due to our historical moment, there are many different variations of church identity and practice (even when these churches are in the same doctrinal or denominational family). The particular perspective of this devotion is to inhabit and celebrate the Anglican heritage (and a particular thread of that heritage). A litany of controversies, confusions, and failures is extensive in any life and institution. Anglicanism is no exception. But, for the sake of simplicity and by way of invitation, let's highlight the most compelling features of being a follower of Christ in an Anglican context: the beauty of grace and the beauty of the people.

Anglicanism is a place to be encountered by the living God. A room in the house where, at its best, every arrangement and content of the space is drawn from, shaped by and points to our saving Christ in Word and Sacrament. A room where God himself—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is present to restore and redeem all persons and all things. This is a room of grace, and there is nothing more beautiful. In regards to church identity and practice, the beauty of grace is an invitation to draw on every scrap of creative glory in the historic, reforming, catholic community of the saints—rich in practices and doctrines that faithfully present us with the grace we desperately need, and give God the glory that he deserves (the glory of this gracious God and his restoring grace is doctrinally summarized for us in the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer, The ACNA Catechism, and the Jerusalem Declaration). In this way Anglicanism is happily and intentionally attempting nothing unique, but only to exist within the historic continuity of a church under the saving purposes of God. Anglicanism is also a place to embrace and be embraced by the beauty of the people, where real presence takes precedence over performance. Our transcendent encounter of a gracious God is in the context of the embodied, liturgical, orderly, and global realities of God's people. People with bodies that are an essential and expressive reality of their personhood and worship (embodied). People with voices and wills who participate together in worship (liturgical). People who mutually honor one another within the servanthood-authority of the three-fold offices of deacons, presbyters, and bishops for the upbuilding of the church (orderly). People of various tongues, tribes, and nations sharing in the same Christ and

acknowledged in the worldwide Anglican Communion, which is a majority African and South American body (global). Here is the beauty of the people.

None of this is to ignore very real weaknesses and failings, and much of this is shared by many other Christian churches of every stripe. But we need a room, and Anglicanism offers us a feast in the beauty of grace and the beauty of the people. Choose a room. Inhabit it with joy and patience. Here is one where you can be captivated by the beauty, truth, and goodness of Jesus Christ in such a way as to live for the glory of God, the good of our city, and the joy of the nations. Welcome! Let us keep the feast!

Almighty and everlasting God, you govern all things in heaven and on earth: Mercifully hear our prayers, and grant that in Restoration Anglican Church the pure Word of God may be preached and the Sacraments duly administered. Strengthen and confirm the faithful; protect and guide the children; visit and relieve the sick; turn and soften the wicked; arouse the careless; recover the fallen; restore the penitent; remove all hindrances to the advancement of your truth; and bring us all to be of one heart and mind within your holy Church, to the honor and glory of your Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

2 Kings 22:8-23:3; Psalm 95; Ephesians 3:7-4:6; Matthew 13:51-52, 16:13-20

Catechism Question #244 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

What is liturgy? Liturgy is an established pattern or form for the worship of God by God's people. The liturgy leads us in the remembrance of God's mighty acts and unites us in grateful response.

Further Reading: *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis; *The Heritage of Anglican Theology* by J.I. Packer

Restoration Principles of Anglican Identity and Practice

Exuberant Creation: Think about the different churches you have experienced. What were the best aspects that you remember? Give thanks to the Lord for good grace in these communities.

Painful Loss: What losses and hurt to do you carry from the church? How are you being honest about those and pursue healing?

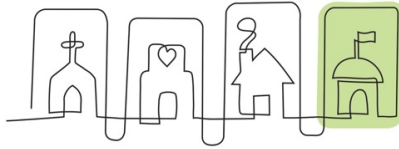
Gracious Rescue: In what ways have you been encountered by the beauty, truth, and goodness of Jesus Christ in being a part of Restoration's fellowship?

Patient Work while Waiting: Every church has limitations, lack, and failures in its practice, leadership, culture, and size. In what ways do you expect to be frustrated with the limitations and lack of this local church? How can you be honest about that and continue to invest and grow?

Final Triumph: What glimpses of the perfected church in the new creation do you most long for? Why do you think that is?

The Embassy

Bestow Christ's Life and Carry Christ's Message



To be human is to have a relationship with the world—to have a design and destiny to “do” something in the world and for the world. As people who are being restored in Christ, the church now does its “doings” in the world in the fullness of the blessing of Christ. Our renewed worship of the living God compels us to carry God’s message of grace, in word and deed, to our neighbors and the nations. In the grace of Christ, we bestow the beauty, truth, and goodness of Jesus on every square inch of our lives and influence. As citizens of a heavenly kingdom and clay pots carrying the great treasure of the gospel, the church is called to humbly, energetically, and thoughtfully seek the fulfillment of Christ’s Great Commission as a part of his Great Commandment by seeking the welfare and comprehensive peace of our communities in the transforming glory of Christ where we live, work, and play.

In this way the church exists as God’s embassy in the earth—citizens of heaven living for the will and Word of Christ in a foreign land, being fully in the world but not truly of it. We are commissioned and equipped to proclaim the truth that God is not counting our sins against us in Christ, and to live lives that reflect Christ’s beauty, truth, and goodness as a winsome and transformative testimony to the glory and grace of God.

This life of bestowing and carrying takes shape through the community of faith in five ways: (1) generous stewardship, (2) evangelism, church planting, and missions, (3) vocation and calling, (4) compassion, mercy, and justice, and (5) the city of God. We will take each of those in turn in the devotionals that follow.

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the Cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Zechariah 8:14-23; Psalm 67; 1 Peter 2:9-12; Luke 8:4-18

Catechism Question #182 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

How do you live in God's kingdom? As a citizen of God's kingdom, I am called to live in obedience to God's Word and will, in loving witness and service to others, and in joyful hope of Christ's return.

Further Reading

Faithful Exiles by Ivan Mesa & Elliot Clark

Restoration Principles of The Embassy

Exuberant Creation: Regarding God's purposes of life and salvation in the world, why is it important to see creation is good before it is lost?

Painful Loss: An embassy assumes the distinction "in but not of." What difficulties do you think ambassadors face, living in embassies, and how might this parallel the Christian experience?

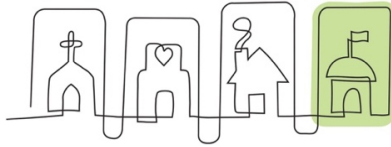
Gracious Rescue: How does Jesus himself model the life of an embassy?

Patient Work while Waiting: An embassy assumes the distinction "in but not of." What is the opportunity of being in something but not of it?

Final Triumph: Have you ever completed a job or assignment you worked really hard on to finish? What do you think it will be like for Jesus to return and make all things new?

Generous Stewardship

Embassy: Bestow and Carry



Our dominant cultural perspective and narrative right now is one of scarcity. The hegemony of secular evolutionary materialism has been exalted in popular discourse to the place it does not naturally inhabit in terms of the world of meaning and ethics. Let's bring that down a bit. If we believe that evolutionary theory, based on survivalism and scarcity, is the deepest meaning and purpose at work in the world, *do you think it bodes well for being kind, compassionate, or giving generously to the poor and marginalized?* No. It means get power and keep it at all costs. The message of the Scriptures, what we know at our better moments, and what is observable in daily life (if we pay attention) is that what makes life worth living and possible is generosity, abundance, sacrificial love, and abounding goodness. This is, especially, the uniquely Christian contribution to the world. When the self-giving love of God is unleashed through the sacrificial suffering of the cross of Christ, lives are changed. Hearts, minds, homes, and wallets open, because God has undeservedly opened everything to us in Christ. The Christian gospel is *abounding* unto *abundance* through *agony*. Our story, in grace, is the abounding generosity of God, overflowing into creation as God carries us (and all things) into the abundant fullness of the new creation, all of which is happening through the great agony of the cross. Abounding unto abundance through agony. How does God's abounding, abundance, and agony, then, inform our giving of time, talents, and treasures?

Speaking monetarily, giving in the church isn't just tithing (but that it is a helpful place to start). The tithing of "ten percent" in the Old Testament is meant to be basic, kind of like the floor of a house. Necessary, but insufficient for full life. The tithe is a shadow-principle pointing us to the fullness of Christ. The revelation of the gospel moves us into a world where Christ is all because he gave all, and now all we are and all we have is all for him. You may be thinking, "Ok. I hear you, but just give me the answer." That's it. Put it ALL on the table. Yourself and all you have. Joyfully offer it to Jesus and his purposes. Your very self, body and soul. And all your things, especially your finances. Your budget. Your cars. Your house. Your apartment. Your clothes. Your time. Nothing is off limits. All is worship. All is for the glory of Christ and the good of others. This is not an invitation to fearfully wonder what God might take away from us. It is the joyful participation into a life where it is more blessed to give than to receive. The very divine life of God that is meant to define all we are.

This kind of generosity means sacrifice. We pinch our budgets and limit ourselves in order to give generously to God and others. We live within our means, and even below our means, so that we can open our homes, our calendars, and our wallets for the purposes of Jesus. This is hard work (and there is grace for every variable season and station), but I would bet that the proportion to which we understand the gospel is reflected most directly in how we feel about and use our money and resources. It is for good reason Jesus taught on the stewardship of resources and finances more than any other topic. Listen to him. He has the words of eternal life. Let's let money serve our Lord, not be our lord; in so doing we will find true freedom.

O merciful Creator, your loving hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us always thankful for your loving providence, and give us grace to honor you with all that you have entrusted to us; that we, remembering the account we must one day give you, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Exodus 35:4-29; Psalms 36; 2 Corinthians 8:1-9; 9:6-12; Luke 21:1-4

Catechism Question #337 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

As God's steward, how are you commanded to use your possessions? As I am able, I should earn my own living, care for my dependents, and give to the poor. I should use all my possessions to the glory of God and the good of creation.

Further Reading: *The Gospel Comes with a House Key* by Rosaria Butterfield

Restoration Principles of Generous Stewardship

Exuberant Creation: Consider the difference between ownership and stewardship. What first thoughts come to mind when you think about your money and your stuff belonging to God?

Painful Loss: Why do you think talking about money makes us so nervous? Where are you most fearful in your finances right now?

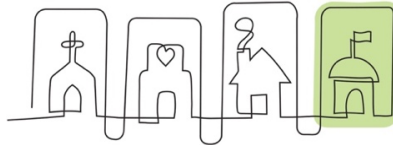
Gracious Rescue: Consider how 2 Corinthians 8:9 makes you think differently about your money?

Patient Work while Waiting: In what ways have you been blessed by the hospitality of others? How can you embody that in your own life now?

Final Triumph: Everything in its incorruptible, new creation state is already ours in Christ. Does that even seem real or helpful to you right now? How does the future resurrection inform your present budgeting?

Evangelism, Church Planting, Missions

Embassy: Bestow and Carry



We talk about what we love. I once lived in a town where I would occasionally bump into Hall of Fame NFL and NHL players. You better believe that anyone else I ran into that day heard about those encounters. I can't help but wonder what that says about our relationship with Christ. If we struggle to talk about Christ to other people, how impactful or important is his person, work and love? Is a Hall of Fame hockey player really a bigger deal to me than the King of heaven and earth? How would our spouses and friends feel with such a lack of regard (not too spousal or friendly, I would guess)? Now, our lack of regards towards God does not diminish his abundance of regard towards us. This is grace! And there is always more grace for pardon of failures and power for faithfulness.

One of the primary places we short-circuit in our witness is a misunderstanding of the central message of Christianity. The Bible and following Christ are not about good advice or trying to be better, as if it is a take-it or leave-it option among others. What God has done and is doing is GOOD NEWS! It is God himself—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—active in the world; *revealing* the majesty of his person (of which we are sadly ignorant) and *acting* in his mercy to bring about total restoration through Jesus (towards which we are obstinately and suspiciously rebellious). God is at work in the world finding his lost sons and daughters and restoring a broken creation. This is why Jesus came. And God has invited his *found* daughters and sons, the church, to take a central role in this work. We have a prophetic place as God's priests to bring the world to God and to bring God to the world.

When it comes to sharing our faith, it is first a matter of really knowing Christ and his work. Start there. Know the gospel and why it changes everything for you and all creation. If we are not captivated and compelled by the beauty, truth, and goodness of Jesus Christ in a foundational way, then we just won't talk about him. Do you really know Christ? Is Jesus himself your source of life, rest, and hope? Sharing our faith is also something we cultivate. We *learn* to share. We cultivate a biblical awareness of the good news to know the story well enough to share it. We cultivate a cultural awareness of how the good news connects with the big questions people are asking. We cultivate a personal awareness in our relationships and how God may be opening the hearts of family members, neighbors, co-workers, and friends. We cultivate a communal awareness for laboring to start other, healthy Jesus communities (churches). We cultivate global awareness of how billions of people are unreached with the gospel and where doors could be opening. Put yourself in places and around people who will call and challenge

you to participate in God's work of reconciling and renewing all things in Christ. Pray earnestly for understanding, and a heart that is alive to God and his purposes in the world. Pray for lost friends, family members, neighbors and nations to have the opportunity to hear and receive the gospel. There will be everything else in our lives to distract and discourage us from this work of proclamation. It takes sacrifice and effort. It will be awkward. There is confrontation and cultural baggage. But God's glory, our joy, and the good of our neighbors and the nations is tied to our participation in this good news announcement. Let's not hold back and hide from our glorious calling of bearing the great treasure of God's grace to a world that desperately needs it!

Almighty God our Savior, you desire that none should perish, and you have taught us through your Son that there is great joy in heaven over every sinner who repents: Grant that our hearts may ache for a lost and broken world. May your Holy Spirit work through our words, deeds, and prayers, that the lost may be found and the dead made alive, and that all your redeemed may rejoice around your throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Isaiah 52:1-12; Psalms 71, 105; 2 Corinthians 5:16-6:10; Luke 4:14-43

Catechism Question #181 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*:

How does God's kingdom come? God's kingdom is announced to the people of Israel, arrives in Jesus Christ, and advances through the church's mission. It will appear in its fullness once Christ returns in glory.

Further Reading: *Before You Share Your Faith* by Matt Smethurst

Restoration Principles of Evangelism, Church Planting, and Missions

Exuberant Creation: Think of something you hold fundamental to being human (like having food to eat); what if personally knowing God is even *more* fundamental and central than that? How would that alter your understanding of the *needs* of others?

Painful Loss: Why do we feel such resistance to talk about a GOOD God and GOOD news? What are the reasons that cause you hesitation in sharing your faith that are rooted in genuine wisdom and/or a love of neighbor? And what reasons need genuine repentance?

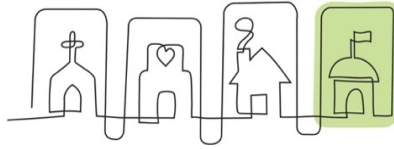
Gracious Rescue: What aspect of the person and work of Christ would make the most sense to your unbelieving co-worker?

Patient Work while Waiting: Who are you regularly praying for to come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ?

Final Triumph: How would you connect the good news of the final judgment and new creation to a world full of fear, reactivity, and anger?

Vocation and Calling

Embassy: Bestow and Carry



As followers of Christ, beyond explicitly telling people about the reconciling work of God through the death and resurrection of Jesus, do our lives in this world really matter? Very often it can seem like we are here only to soul-snatch people out of this world. In a Western world that pushes the perspective that our jobs and careers are everything, the church often makes any “non-church” work feel incidental and inconsequential. The dissonance of this dynamic is disorienting and discouraging. How can we make sense of it? If *all things* are to be done for his glory, surely the Lord sees things differently. If we dig deep into the biblical narrative and get glimpses of the church at its best, what we see affirmed and announced are four truths that offer meaning and significance to daily work while not deifying it to a place of idolatry: (1) the goodness of all creation; (2) the reality of common grace; (3) the royal priesthood of all believers; and (4) the ultimate restoration of all things. Added to these four positive affirmations are three ongoing setbacks we face in our work: (1) everything in this life will include struggle, disappointment and loss; (2) we live in the enemy occupied territory of destructive demonic wisdom and activity; and (3) we all have groaning in our bones and grumbling in our hearts. Putting all these together we have seven helpful truths that fill out the picture of our work in this life.

Space does not allow for an unpacking of all seven of these things, but here are two implications. *First*, everything we do matters. God loves buildings, technology, farming, law, music, food, and education. These are *his ideas* for human flourishing cultivated through human lives. And even though everything is shattered in sin, nothing in our work is wasted, if we are acting in Christ. For those in Christ, every labor of love bears fruit. Every imperfect act of true obedience is not vain because Jesus is raised from the dead never to die again. If God, as creator, has labeled every square inch of this world as “Mine!”, then in the resurrection of Christ from the dead he is walking back through the storehouse aisles of creation slapping every label with the orange tag “To Be Transformed” (to merge some thoughts from Psalm 50:12, Abraham Kuyper and Christopher Watkin). Such is the truth and power of Christ as the one through whom all things were made and the one through whom all things are being remade. The resurrection puts a banner of transformation over every bit of dust and doing in this life. *Second*, nothing we do is complete (or satisfies as it should). Even our best enjoyments, relationships, and wins in this life are subject to

corruption, dust, and loss. While we have a hope in everything, hope means we are anticipating a future fulfillment. We are called to set our hope fully on the grace to be revealed to us at Christ's coming (1 Peter 1:13). On *that* Day, as we hear God's "well done!", we will receive our complete and satisfying reward for every labor done in grace. So, for now, we aim to bestow the transforming beauty of Christ with great patience and resilient hope in the face of discouragement, disease, disfunction, and doubt. We do this in the specific ways God has gifted us, and in the particular circumstances God presents to us. As servants of Christ, with a hope of complete and comprehensive transformation, we work hard in freedom and joy as we announce and embody the gracious welcome of King Jesus until he returns to make all things new.

O God, your unfailing providence sustains the world we live in and the life we live: Watch over those both night and day, who work while others sleep, and grant that we may never forget that our common life depends upon each other's toil; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings

Genesis 1-2 ; Psalms 80, 92; 1 Corinthians 15:35-58; Matthew 20:1-16

Catechism Question #296 from the ACNA's To Be A Christian:

What does God's commandment about the Sabbath teach you about work? My work is a gift from God that can grant me provision and satisfaction, and serve the common good, but it neither defines my life nor rules over it. I am thereby freed from resentment and sloth to work diligently and with joy for God's glory.

Further Reading: *Kingdom Calling* by Amy L. Sherman

Restoration Principles of Vocation and Calling

Exuberant Creation: What is your daily "work" right now (student, finance, homemaking, designer, service industry)? How do you help others experience the goodness of God in this work?

Painful Loss: What is the most frustrating aspect of your work right now?

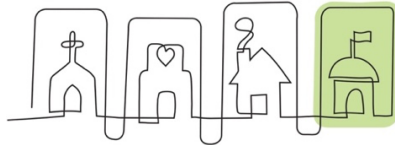
Gracious Rescue: In the places of your losses and disappointments in work, what promise of God do you call to mind most often? If you are unsure, ask for help to think of some.

Patient Work while Waiting: How are you bestowing the beauty, truth, and goodness of Jesus in your work? How can you creatively improve your work (or yourself in your work) by embodying the beauty, truth, and goodness of Jesus (consider skills, relationships, or attitudes)?

Final Triumph: How would your attitude in your work change if, as you worked, you could see the perfected, future, fruit of its final redemption in the new creation (aka. experience something of an immediate good return on your labor)?

Compassion, Mercy, and Justice

Embassy: Bestow and Carry



Does God care? It is a tragedy and terrifying reality that we feel prompted to ask that question. But ask it we do. Ask it the Bible does. And ask it for good reason. There is something seriously, significantly, and comprehensively wrong... with *everything*. And the church is no exception. What are we to make of this? Does this indict the person and nature of a good God? The broad framework with which the Scriptures talk about justice and mercy is shalom. Shalom, generally translated as “peace,” is comprehensive wholeness and wellness for the entire cosmos. Life at its purest and most abundant. Shalom is humans in right relationship with God, themselves, each other, and all creation. Shalom is what existed in the Garden of Eden. But we are far from Eden now, living in a sin-shattered world where the spiraling of human wickedness is the clear testimony of the human experience documented in the Scriptures and the scars of every human life. How, then, with this framework of shalom, do we understand a good God *and* poverty, slavery, abuse, and degradation?

The place to begin is the clearest revelation of God to us—Jesus Christ. Jesus is prophetically predicted as the prince of shalom in Isaiah 9. A little later in the book of Isaiah (42:1-4), it is said of this chosen, Spirit-filled servant “a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth.” The apostle Matthew explicitly identifies this text with the person of Jesus in Matthew 12:15-21. Christ is depicted as the most tender, kind, and gentle caretaker while simultaneously being the fiercest, most resilient worker of righteousness and justice human history will ever know. Especially in our political climate, it is beyond our experience to imagine such a combination in a single person. But through the teaching, tears, suffocating death, and vindicating resurrection of this prince of shalom, God reveals himself as the only one fit for the providential dispensation of justice and mercy. In Christ we find a comprehensive and shocking “Yes!” to the question of whether God cares or not; *and* we find the question put back to us, “Do you care? Will you repent of your own participation in evil and wickedness? Will you partner with me in my establishment of justice in the earth? Will you weep where I weep, and go where I go? Will you pray and work for the will of God on earth as it is in heaven?”

In the cultural moment we find ourselves, the church has a repentant, uphill road ahead. We, like our King, must embrace the way of the cross as none other than the way of life and peace. Positively though, where does that leave us? The most fundamental question we need to be

asking is not that of self-preservation but of other-provision, because that's the fundamental flow of the gospel—God towards his church, his church towards the world. So, we ask: Where is my community pained, parched, and poor? And how can I be a part of demonstrating and delivering the Lord's comfort, relief, and provision? How can I work for righteousness and peace as a citizen, neighbor, and laborer where God has strategically placed me? What is it about my work and daily life that can be a unique demonstration of shalom? These are not questions of how to get power and maintain it, but how to leverage power for the good of others (and even be willing to give it up!). Followers of Jesus, being in the world but not of it, engage the public square as servants in the joy of other people. If we ask these kinds of questions, and keep asking them, we will increasingly move towards what the Lord has in mind for shalom. We will participate in Christ's compassion, mercy, and justice in the world as we wait for our prince of shalom to restore all things. At his return, all our faithful weeping will be revealed as the fruitful work it truly is. Come, Lord Jesus! Amen.

Almighty God, you created us in your image: Grant us grace to contend fearlessly against evil and to make no peace with oppression; and help us to use our freedom rightly in the establishment of justice in our communities and among the nations, to the glory of your holy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Corresponding Biblical Readings: Isaiah 42:1-9; Psalm 126; Titus 3:1-7; Luke 10:25-42

Catechism Question #180 from the ACNA's *To Be A Christian*: When you pray for God's kingdom to come, what are you asking? I pray that the whole creation may be renewed and restored under its rightful Lord, now in part and fully in the age to come.

Further Reading: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglas, an American Slave* by Frederick Douglas

Restoration Principles of Compassion, Mercy, and Justice

Exuberant Creation: When you imagine “shalom” in the Garden of Eden, what comes to mind?

Painful Loss: What do you find particularly frustrating or painful about your work, the community you live in, or life in general? Have you ever thought about that as a specific way the Lord may be calling you to participate in his purposes of shalom?

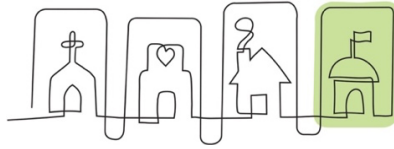
Gracious Rescue: How does the work of Christ saving us from the condemnation of our own sin *and* his calling for us to display his righteousness *both* inform what and how we engage in civic life?

Patient Work while Waiting: What people, programs, organizations, or social and political systems do you or could you participate in for the purposes of Christ?

Final Triumph: When you consider the pain and unrighteousness of human history, how might the final judgment of Christ (which includes the reality of hell) bring us comfort and wisdom?

The City of God

Embassy: Bestow and Carry



Made in the image of an eternally communal God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—we are created with the need for and the goal of community. This design for connectivity in community, practically and relationally, is the basis for the development of cities. “Cities,” in a broad sense, are systems of people in serviceable connectivity—what we would call communities, towns, and cities. But cities are not just perfunctory, they are spiritually and theologically significant. The Scriptures begin with a garden, full of present and potential beauty, and culminate with a cultivated garden-city, outfitted with all the cultures of the world. You and I live in between the good garden of Genesis 2 and the perfect city of Revelation 22, which is a world of two cities.

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” These opening words from Charles Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities* have maintained cultural staying power because they are rhetorically beautiful and mythically true. It puts words to the complexity of our human experience. We are a glorious humanity shattered in sin, and that is, according to Aslan the Lion, “both honor enough to raise the head of the poorest beggar, and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor on earth.” We are a tale of two cities. You can follow this “tale” through the entire narrative arc of the Scriptures, which is what Augustine of Hippo does in his book *City of God*. One of Augustine’s contributions to the tale of two cities is to show that they are both built on love, but two very different kinds of love—either love of self (in the most negative sense), in the case of the “earthly city,” or love of God and others, in the case of the “Heavenly City.” While these two cities grow together and are intermixed in our hearts and world, the Scriptures compel God’s people to pursue a city vision and engagement based on the abounding love of God in Christ. And this engagement is, at its best, one of transformation rather than transaction. Transaction is a survival-based human vision. Transformation is a love-based human vision. Transaction means we swipe left or right. Transformation means we meet face to face. We do not measure relationships and investments by what our eyes can see or wallets hold, but according to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The implications of this are to be pursued through a lifetime of prayerful obedience in abounding generosity, joyful evangelism, faithful work, and compassionate justice. Hopefully that sounds familiar (if not, reread the previous four devotionals).

This city vision and engagement is not at the exclusion of rural preference or enjoyment. The unique, imaginative, and prophetic way Revelation expresses the *garden-city* of the New Jerusalem

helps bring together visions of people and life we unnecessarily separate. While, yes, in the new heavens and earth the city-folk will have to teach the ruralites how to use the subway; likewise, the country-farmers will need to teach the urbanites how to tend those orchards of healing. This playful imagining of Revelation 21-22 is meant to highlight the mutual interconnectedness of people popular media, politics, and social trends pit against one another. The place and purpose of the city does not mean that everyone has to live in an urban center, but it does mean we are all called to work towards the good of a particular area and a particular people, in a given community, town, or city. It is in our participation in the shared place of the city that followers of Christ have the most creative impact *and* most feel the tension of being “in but not of the world.” This complexity is part of the Lord’s plan in our own transformation as we are pressed and pushed to let go of our self-preservation tendencies and put on the loving robes of the King, as he empowers us to build the city of God amid the ruins of the cities of this world.

Heavenly Father, you sent your Son among us to proclaim the kingdom of God in cities, towns, villages, and lonely places. Behold and visit the city of Staunton and Augusta County. Renew the bonds of charity that uphold our civic life. Send us honest and able leaders. Deliver us from poverty, prejudice, and oppression, that peace may prevail with righteousness, and justice with mercy. And at the last, bring us to your Holy City, the new Jerusalem, where we shall know perfect unity and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Biblical Readings: Jeremiah 29:1-14; Psalm 48; Hebrews 13:1-14; Matthew 13:24-30

Catechism Question #182 from the ACNA’s To Be A Christian:

How do you live in God's kingdom? As a citizen of God's kingdom, I am called to live in obedience to God's Word and will, in loving witness and service to others, and in joyful hope of Christ's return.

Further Reading: *The Secular Creed* by Rebecca McLaughlin

Restoration Principles of The City of God

Exuberant Creation: When you visit a big city, what do you like to see?

Painful Loss: How have you seen the church live more like the city of the world and less like the city of God? What comes most immediately to mind?

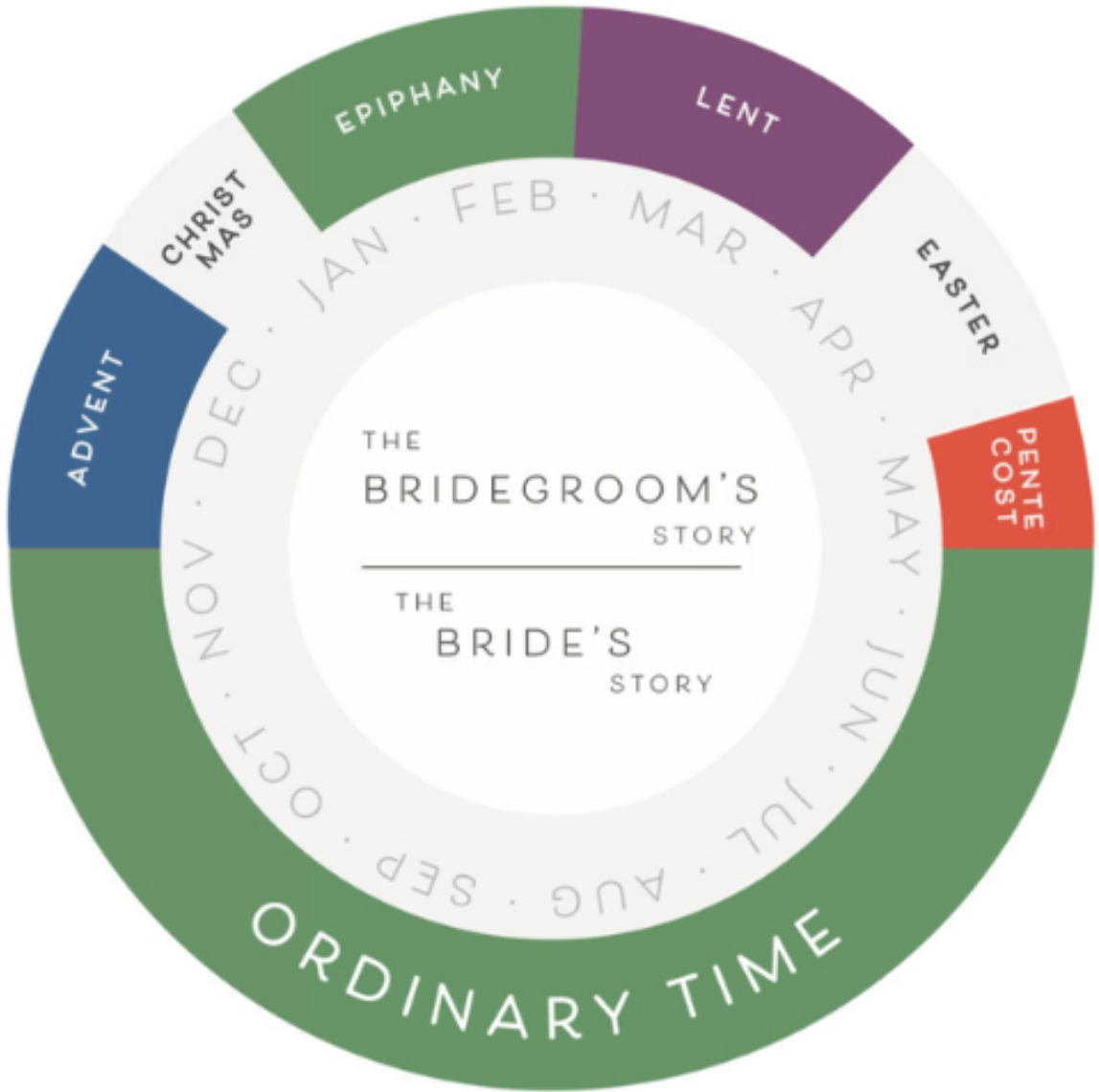
Gracious Rescue: When you consider the life of Christ, in what ways do you see a life of transformation over and above one of transaction? How is that encouraging or challenging to you?

Patient Work while Waiting: How are you pursuing the welfare of your city? What do you find most rewarding about that? Challenging?

Final Triumph: What do you think it looks like to “seek the city that is to come” (Hebrews 13:14) while also “seeking the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile” (Jeremiah 29:7)?

Appendix

Church Calendar and Rule of Life



Rule of Life: Things to Consider

What is a rule of life? *A rule of life is a discipline by which I order my worship, work, and leisure as a pleasing sacrifice to God.*

Why do you need a rule of life? *I need a rule of life because my fallen nature is disordered, distracted, and self-centered. A rule of life helps me to resist sin and establish godly habits, through which the Holy Spirit will increasingly conform me to the image of Christ.*

What is included in a rule of life? *In addition to Scripture, prayer, and worship, a rule of life includes witness, service, self-denial, and faithful stewardship of my time, money, and possessions.*

When considering how you can be strategic about growing in grace through your Rule of Life, think about your season of life, and how to leverage your community and the seasons of the church.

The church seasons themselves have associated “Rules”:

Advent: penitence, benevolence, reflection

Christmas: feasting, celebration, and light

Epiphany: house blessing, light, missions, baptism

Lent: penitence, benevolence, fasting

Holy Week: reflection, silence, fasting

Easter: feasting, baptism

Pentecost: celebration, missions

Ordinary Time: ongoing integration of practices

Historically, the church has considered (1) weekly Gathered Worship, (2) The Daily Office (Morning, Noon, Evening, Compline, and Family Prayer), and (3) Personal Devotions as the three essentials of a Rule of Life that are happening within a community context of feasting and fasting throughout the church-year. Going to church weekly, praying with others, and reading our Bibles is just “what we do” as followers of Jesus.

Feel free to utilize the chart on the following page to brainstorm a Rule of Life.

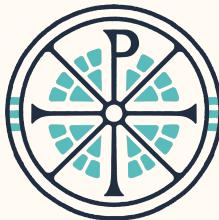
Practice	Daily	Weekly	Monthly / Seasonally
Sabbath		<i>Gathered Worship</i> <i>Day to “play” (no work or “to do’s”)</i>	<i>Rector’s Retreats (Fall/Spring)</i> <i>Summer: programmatic fallowness</i>
Prayer	<i>Daily Office</i>	<i>Gathered Worship</i>	
Fasting		<i>Tuesdays Valley Mission lunch</i> <i>Wednesdays pray in solitude in place of lunch</i>	<i>Lent: Make space/time</i>
Solitude	<i>Daily Office</i>		
Scripture	<i>Daily Office</i>	<i>Gathered Worship</i>	<i>Lent: Memorize something</i>
Community		<i>Gathered Worship</i> <i>Small Group</i> <i>Groan and Grumble Call</i>	
Generosity			<i>Tithe 10%, Missions Support</i> <i>Christmas: Benevolence-Alms</i> <i>Lent: Benevolence-Alms</i>
Service		<i>Tuesdays Valley Mission lunch</i>	<i>Advent and Lent</i>
Witness			<i>June and October: neighbors</i> <i>Epiphany / Pentecost</i> <i>Summer: partners?</i>
Celebration and Feasting		<i>Gathered Worship</i>	<i>Christmas and Easter</i> <i>Bleak of Winter Party</i>
Technology	<i>Phone Basket</i>	<i>Phone Silenced for Full Day</i>	<i>Lent: No TV</i>



Curated Reads



Church Center App



restorationstaunton.org