



SAINT STEPHEN'S

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Saint Stephen's Rhythm of Life:
Tuning My Heart Toward God™

Facilitator Training Guide

3775 Crosshaven Drive
Birmingham, AL 35223
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Sunday, February 11, 2024

Small Group Facilitation and Rhythm of Life Training

Opening Prayer—Silence

- Introductions—during lunch
-

Facilitation Training

- Creating a Hospitable Space
 - Invitation to gather
 - Role of the facilitator
 - Fully participate
 - Holds the space of welcome/safety
 - Arrive early
 - Be prepared
 - Follow up to the group
 - Touchstones from Courage and Renewal
 - What are your hopes/dreams/concerns about facilitating a ROL group?
-

Rhythm Of Life Training

- Review the Rhythm of Life booklet
- Suggested format for each week
 - Prayer Practice, Facilitated Conversation, Closing Prayer
 - **Week One:**
 - Opening Prayer Practice: Read aloud the passage below and sit in silence for 1-2 minutes afterward.

- Jeremiah 31:33-34a. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord;
- Introductions—
- Share Touchstones from Courage and Renewal and agree to use them as guidelines for being in community.
- Give people 4 minutes to complete the Living Compass Self-Assessment Tool (In Resources section)
 - What did you notice?
- What is a Rhythm of Life?
- In each chapter of our life, we have unique limitations placed on our time and our resources. As we strive to live lives of meaning and purpose, we are challenged to balance time for prayer, family, vocations, and for tending to our physical and emotional well-being. A Rhythm of Life is a commitment to live in ways that deepen our relationship with God, ourselves, and the created order. Guided by questions related to the spiritual, relational, physical, financial, and vocational aspects of our lives, each person prayerfully discerns their own Rhythm of Life. The Rhythm of Life is flexible and meant to be adjusted and re-adjusted over time.
- Trellis—“ The root meaning of the Latin and Greek words translated as ‘rule’ is trellis. Saint Benedict was not promulgating rules for living; he was establishing a framework on which a life can grow. While a branch of a plant climbing a trellis cannot go in any direction it wants, you cannot know in advance just which way it will go. The plant is finding its own path, within a structure. The space in which it moves is open, though not without boundaries.”Sullivan, Mary Bea (2019-01-16T22:58:59.000). Living the Way of Love (Kindle Locations 146-149). Church Publishing Incorporated. Kindle Edition. Quoting Patrick Henry Benedict’s Dharma.
- “We are made in God’s image, and so we carry God’s own core values as part of our being. By discovering what they are, how we stray from them, and how we can return, we become what we are created to be. As we consciously align our lives with

God's will, we are most truly ourselves." Becoming Ourselves Again Reclaiming Our Core Values Church Pension Group, 5.

- Discuss the three questions in the "Why?" Section
- Homework: Prayerfully complete the questions for "Why" and "Spirituality" before next week.
- Closing Prayer: God be in my head, and in my understanding;
God be in mine eyes, and in my looking;

God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;
God be in my heart, and in my thinking;

- God be at mine end, and at my departing.
Amen.

- **Week Two:**

- Opening Prayer Practice: Centering Prayer for 3 minutes,
<https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/centering-prayer-method/>
- Review Touchstones from Courage and Renewal.
- Pair off in groups of 2 or 3 and give each person 5 minutes to share the highlights of their experience of answering the questions around spirituality. Only one person speaks at a time. What do they have energy around? What might be challenging? Keep Time for them and remind when to switch.
- Return as a large group and debrief
- Homework—Prayerfully respond to questions for "Relationships" section
- Closing Prayer—A Prayer of Self-Dedication, BCP p. 831

Almighty and eternal God, so draw our hearts to *you*, so guide our minds, so fill our imaginations, so control our wills, that we may be wholly *yours*, utterly dedicated unto *you*; and then use us, we pray *you*, as you will, and always to *your* glory and the welfare of *your* people; through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

- **Week Three:**

- Opening Prayer Practice:
- The importance of values in creating a flourishing life.
 - "To be happy with yourself, you've got to be doing the things the person you want to be does." Kathryn Ely
 - To be brave is a willingness to experience unpleasant experiences in the service of your values. Kristin N. Meyer
 - David Brooks—resume values and eulogy values...five words you would like to have used to describe you in your eulogy.
 - Discuss responses to the “Relationship” section of the ROL.
 - Homework: Prayerfully respond to the “Physical” section questions.
- **Week Four:**
 - Prayer Practice: Ignatian Examen (in Resources Section)
 - Daily Review of our lives with God helps us to discern where God is guiding/growing us; also, helps to see habitual patterns.
 - “Christian spirituality tells us that the goal for all human life is to become saints. What it sometimes fails to say is that you and I are not meant to become another St. Paul, or St. Francis of Assisi, or Mother Teresa. You are called to be you. And I am called to be me. We are called to become who God created us to be. As Fanny Brice, the great singer and actress of the 1930s said, you need to “Let the world know you as you are, not as you think you should be, because sooner or later, if you are posing, you will forget the the pose, and then where are you?” Adam Bucko *Let Your Heartbreak Be Your Guide*, 23
 - Discuss responses to the “Physical” section of the ROL—either in groups of two or three, or in large group.
 - Check in regarding how it is going living into this Rhythm of Life. Where do you have the most energy? Where is it challenging? What would be helpful?
- **Week Five (and Six?)**

- Open with Prayer—Lectio Divina, <https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/lectio-divina-contemplation/> with Matthew 6:19-21
 - “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust^[h] consume and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”
- Review the past week and how things are going
- Discuss Financial/Organizational
- And if no week Six, also Vocational; if there is a Week Six discuss Vocational
- Does anyone desire a Rhythm of Life buddy? Someone to check in with on a regular basis.
- During last gathering, have a closing circle re: what this experience meant to each person (who chooses to answer).
- Closing Prayer:
 - Lord, open unto me – From *Meditations of the Heart* by Howard Thurman
 - Open unto me — light for my darkness.
 - Open unto me — courage for my fear.
 - Open unto me — hope for my despair.
 - Open unto me — peace for my turmoil.
 - Open unto me — joy for my sorrow.
 - Open unto me — strength for my weakness.
 - Open unto me — wisdom for my confusion.
 - Open unto me — forgiveness for my sins.
 - Open unto me — love for my hates.
 - Open unto me — thy Self for my self.

Thursday, September 21, 2023

Resources for Rhythm of Life

Books

- Joan Chittester, *The Rule of Benedict*
- *Esther de Waal, Seeking God the Way of St. Benedict*
- Patrick Henry, *Benedict's Dharma*
- John McQuiston, II, *Always We Begin Again*
- Mary Bea Sullivan, *Living the Way of Love*

Prayers

- Centering Prayer. <https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/centering-prayer-method/>
- Ignatian Examen, <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/>. Also handout in Resource Section
- Lectio Divina, <https://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/lectio-divina-contemplation/>
- Online Book of Common Prayer, <https://www.bcponline.org/>

Apps

- Centering Prayer
- Pray as You Go—Daily Meditations
- eCP —Episcopal Lectionary and Daily Offices
- Reimagining the Examen
- Forward Day by Day (also in booklets in the church)

Podcasts

- Living Compass Spirituality and Wellness Podcast
- The Wellness Compass, Scott and Holly Hughes Stoner
- Opening Minds and Opening Hearts, Contemplative Outreach
- Now and Then Podcast, Henry Nouwen
- Everything Happens, Kate Bowler
- On Being, Krista Tippett
- Ten Percent Happier, Dan Harris

Rules of Life and Misc.

- The Way of Love The Episcopal Church. <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love/>
- Society of Saint John the Evangelist (SSJE) <https://www.ssje.org/growrule/>
- Center for Spiritual Imagination (Rev. Adam Bucko)
<https://www.spiritualimagination.org/rule-of-life/>
- Retreat on 2 Feet Facebook page—
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/453669210049678/>

Give and receive welcome.

People learn best in hospitable spaces. In this circle we support each other's learning by giving and receiving hospitality.

Be present as fully as possible.

Be here with your doubts, fears and failings as well as your convictions, joys and successes, your listening as well as your speaking.

What is offered in the circle is by invitation, not demand.

This is not a "share or die" event! Do whatever your soul calls for, and know that you do it with our support. Your soul knows your needs better than we do.

Speak your truth in ways that respect other people's truth.

Our views of reality may differ, but speaking one's truth in a circle of trust does not mean interpreting, correcting or debating what others say. Speak from your center to the center of the circle, using "I" statements, trusting people to do their own sifting and winnowing.

No fixing, saving, advising or correcting each other.

This is one of the hardest guidelines for those of us who like to "help." But it is vital to welcoming the soul, to making space for the inner teacher.

Learn to respond to others with honest open questions.

Do not respond with counsel or corrections. Using honest, open questions helps us "hear each other into deeper speech."





When the going gets rough, turn to wonder.

Turn from reaction and judgment to wonder and compassionate inquiry. Ask yourself, "I wonder why they feel/think this way?" or "I wonder what my reaction teaches me about myself?" Set aside judgment to listen to others—and to yourself—more deeply.

Attend to your own inner teacher

We learn from others, of course. But as we explore poems, stories, questions and silence in a circle of trust, we have a special opportunity to learn from within. So pay close attention to your own reactions and responses, to your most important teacher.

Trust and learn from the silence

Silence is a gift in our noisy world, and a way of knowing in itself. Treat silence as a member of the group. After someone has spoken, take time to reflect without immediately filling the space with words.

Observe deep confidentiality

Safety is built when we can trust that our words and stories will remain with the people with whom we choose to share, and are not repeated to others without our permission.

Know that it's possible...

to leave the circle with whatever it was that you needed when you arrived, and that the seeds planted here can keep growing in the days ahead.





Self-Assessment Tool

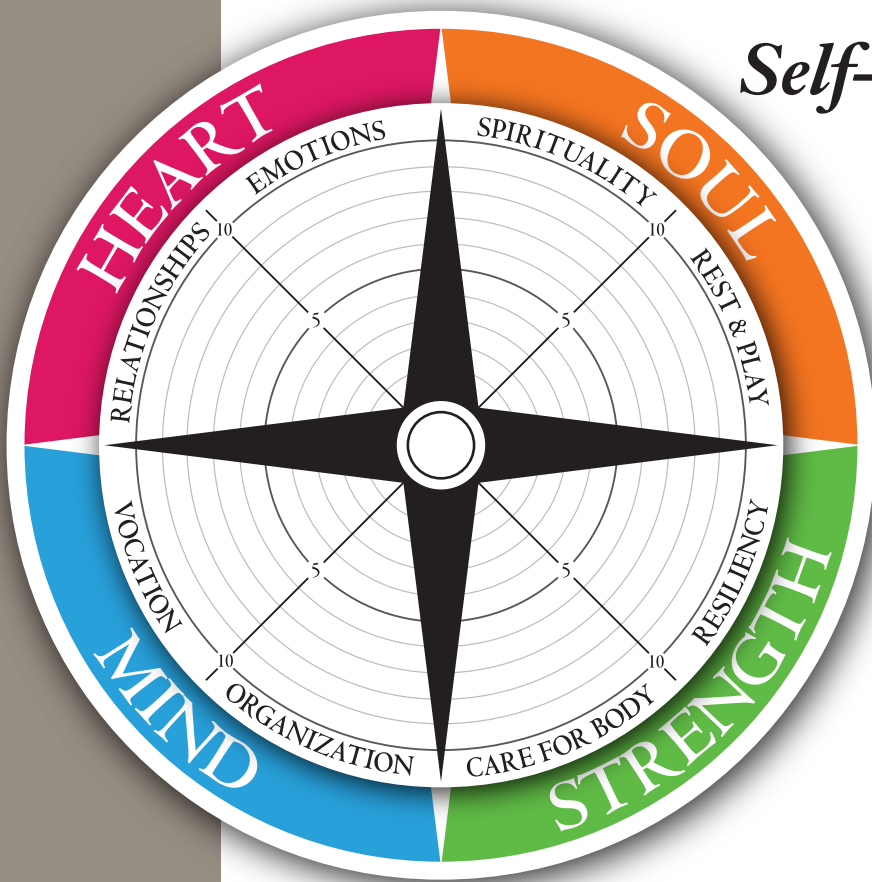
Shade in each of the eight areas on the compass with the value that reflects your current state of wellness and balance.
0 = Uh-Oh! 10 = Awesome!

*Change is inevitable.
Growth is optional.*

—John C. Maxwell



livingcompass.org



FAITH Steps

Now that you've put yourself on your own map of wellness, pick one area you feel called to focus on. Remember that whatever we pay attention to is what will grow.

Area I feel called to focus on:

List one FAITH step you are ready and willing to take in the next 24 hours.

Is there someone you would like to share this FAITH Step with?

Support + accountability = much greater chance for success.

Please let us know how this process worked for you!

F
A
I
T
H

Focused.

Specific and narrow in scope.

Action-Oriented.

An action that is observable and measurable.

Inspired.

I feel that God wants me to take this step.

Time-specific.

I will do at this time, or within a finite time frame.

Heartfelt and Honest.

Commit to a step we are ready to take, true to wherever we are in the stages of change.



livingcompass.org

Living with a Rule, support vs. suppression

LENORA BLACK, OSB

For fifty years I have been living with the Rule of Benedict, first as a Benedictine Oblate, then as a professed religious. Thinking I was really familiar with this fifteen hundred year old Rule, I was startled when a Buddhist gave me a radically new perspective. In a book originating from a dialogue between Christian and Buddhist monastics, *Benedict's Dharma*¹, four Buddhists reflect on the Rule of Benedict. The first chapter bears the title, "The Trellis" and begins:

"The root meaning of the Latin and Greek words translated as "rule" is *trellis*. Saint Benedict was not promulgating rules for living; he was establishing a framework on which a life can grow. While a branch of a plant climbing a trellis cannot go in any direction it wants, you cannot know in advance just which way it will go. The plant is finding its own path, within a structure. The space in which it moves is open, though not without boundaries."

This trellis image resonates with the Buddhist Dharma, usually translated as "teaching" but also carrying the meaning of "support." Both the Rule of Benedict and the Dharma of the Buddha offer us "general guidelines for the inner journey."

Like most Westerners, I generally understand "rule" as referring to some regulation, some "Thou shalt;" or "Thou shalt not;" a command or a prohibition. Lent, for many of us, conjures up images of renunciation, or rules we make for ourselves. These may become burdens, and we can scarcely wait until Lent is over, to be released from them.

A *rule of life* is very different from a collection of detailed regulations. Most of the concrete regulations set forth in the Rule of Benedict have been adapted or significantly changed over the centuries, and it is precisely because this Rule is flexible enough to adapt to cultural changes, that it has endured this long. Living a spiritual life of any depth usually calls for commitment to following certain practices. We are free to choose an established rule of life that has survived through centuries of practice, or we can draw up

our own rule of life. Whatever rule we choose to follow, the rule is always *a means*, a *beginning*, and never a goal in itself.

In a society that places a high premium on personal autonomy and celebrates individualism, the choice to follow a rule of life is counter-cultural. Decades ago many students memorized the poem, "Invictus, which Timothy McVeigh chose as his parting words. The last lines of this poem by William Henley are: "I am the Master of my fate/ I am the Captain of my soul." The idea that commitment to a rule of life can actually *enhance* our freedom may meet with incredulity. Some may point to cults that impose rigid rules on their followers, and in fact violate their freedom. The kind of unquestioning obedience demanded by cult leaders has nothing in common with voluntary commitment to a rule of life that, like a trellis, provides the direction and support needed to encourage growth in goodness.

On both the political and religious scene today we find many people caught in rigid patterns of belief and behavior. They are not comfortable with ambiguity, with any *gray* areas, but want everything in absolute categories: right or wrong, black or white, friend or enemy. This is fundamentalism and it lurks at the root of all terrorism. The conviction that *I* am absolutely right, that only *my* religion is true, that only *my* country is right, leads inevitably to the dangerous conclusion that anyone who believes differently is to be converted, suppressed, eliminated, or at least ignored. History is bloodied with examples of conversion by conquest.

Making laws or rules to govern other people's behavior is never simple. Good law grows from serious reflection on our own life experience, and how often do we take time for that kind of reflection? As we mature, our life experience changes, and we outgrow some rules we needed earlier. Laws and rules need to change to reflect changed life experience, but changing them takes time, and law will always lag behind experience. On the other hand, a good rule of life, like the trellis, provides direction and sets some boundaries but leaves room for growth.

While all of us live under a variety of rules and laws that we had no part in making, we do have the freedom to choose our own rule of life, remembering that the rule is meant to be a trellis, not a straitjacket. We build character through making commitments and living up to them. Without commitments we lose focus and tend to drift aimlessly.

The discipline required to live up to any serious commitment may at times be painful, but it builds character, liberating us from following every interior impulse or external pressure. We form our commitments, and then our commitments form us.

There is an element of mystery in every significant commitment. We never know fully what we are committing ourselves to, and it takes faith as well as discipline to persevere while we follow the path we have chosen. Sometimes the journey is lonely but at other times we draw strength from the companionship of those who travel along the same road, and we move on with greater joy and confidence. When the going is rough, the commitment we have made defines the boundaries of the road and keeps us from losing our way.

We may design our own trellis, our own rule of life, but we might do well to study trellises that others have designed, and that have been shown to encourage growth. Benedict's Rule has survived these 1500 years because it is so balanced. Firm but gentle, it calls for courage yet compassionately responds to weakness. Benedict describes the "*way which is bound to seem narrow to start with. But as we progress in this monastic way of life and in faith, our hearts will warm to its vision and with eager love and delight that defies expression we shall go forward on the way of God's commandments!*"

Sr. Lenora is editor of SpiritLife and lives at the Benedictine monastery in Tucson, Arizona.

¹ *Benedict's Dharma: Buddhists Reflect on the Rule of Saint Benedict*

² *Prologue of the Rule of Benedict*, translation by Patrick Barry, OSB, edited by Patrick Henry, 2001, Riverhead Books, New York, NY.

March-April 2002

The Ignatian Examen (From *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen: Fresh Ways to Pray from Your Day*, Mark E. Thibodeaux, Loyola Press)

Ignatius provides a simple five-step routine for our daily Examen:

- **Give thanksgiving.** I begin by giving God thanks for all the things I'm grateful for today. I allow my mind to wander as I reflect on the ways God has blessed me on this particular day. I allow big things and small things to arise—everything from the gift of my faith, to the gift of my marriage, to the easy commute to work today.
- **Ask for the Spirit.** Next, I want to look at the moments in my day when I did not act so well. However, before doing so, I ask God to fill me with his Spirit so that the Spirit can lead me through this difficult soul-searching. Otherwise, I'm liable to hide in denial, wallow in self-pity, or seethe in self-loathing.
- **Review and recognize failures.** I look back at my day and ask the Lord to point out to me the moments when I have failed in big ways or small. I take a sobering look at the mistakes I've made this day.
- **Ask for forgiveness and healing.** If I have sinned, I ask God to forgive me and set me straight again. If I have not sinned but simply made a mistake, I ask for healing of any harm that might have been done. I ask for help to get over it and move on. I also ask for wisdom to discern how I might better handle such tricky moments in the future.
- **Pray about the next day.** I ask God to show me how tomorrow might go. I imagine the things I'll be doing, the people I'll see, and the decisions I'll be mulling over. I ask for help with any moments I foresee that might be difficult. I especially ask for help in moments when I might be tempted to fail in the way I did today.
- To help me remember the five steps, I like to use a 5-Rs mnemonic:
- **Relish** the moments that went well and all of the gifts I have today.
- **Request** the Spirit to lead me through my review of the day.
- **Review** the day.
- **Repent** of any mistakes or failures.
- **Resolve**, in concrete ways, to live tomorrow well.



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Core Values Exercise

David Brooks speaks of the difference between Resume Values and Eulogy Values. What are five words you would like to be used to describe you in your eulogy?

Core values are the “guiding principles” of one’s life, a “compass.” Core values are the fundamental beliefs of a person or an organization. The best decisions are in alignment with our core values

My 5 Core Values (May be the same as eulogy values):

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Core Value #1:

Why is this important enough to me to be a value

Who am I when I get this value met? How do I act? What do I think about? What motivates me?

How am I not being myself when I do not get this value met? How do I behave? How do I feel about myself? About others? About life?

Where am I not getting this value met? What am I doing that restricts, dishonors, or does not give this value the room and nourishment it requires and deserves?



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What changes would I make in my life in order to fully meet and satisfy this value?

*What can I install to protect myself so that this value has a chance of getting met?
What do I no longer permit others (or situations) to do to or with me?*

Who supports me in living out this value?

REPEAT FOR YOUR 3 ADDITIONAL CORE VALUES.

Ten Helpful Habits for Living Out My Values

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

CORE VALUES LIST

Accountability
Achievement
Adventure
Altruism
Ambition
Appreciation
Autonomy
Beauty
Belonging
Bravery
Boldness
Calmness
Candor
Change
Collaboration
Comfort
Community
Compassion
Cooperation
Courage
Creativity

Curiosity
Daring
Decisiveness
Dependability
Determination
Development
Dignity
Discipline
Drive
Efficiency
Empathy
Enthusiasm
Excellence
Excitement
Expertise
Exploration
Fairness
Faith
Family
Fearless
Flexibility

Focus
Forgiveness
Friendship
Fun
Generosity
Gratitude
Happiness
Health
Honesty
Honor
Hope
Humility
Humor
Impact
Independence
Innovation
Intelligence
Joy
Judgment
Justice
Kindness

Knowledge
Leadership
Learning
Logic
Loyalty
Love
Mastery
Meaning
Mindfulness
Openness
Optimism
Originality
Passion
Peace
Perspective
Perseverance
Playfulness
Positivity
Power
Productivity
Prudence

Purpose
Reliability
Resiliency
Security
Self-Awareness
Self-Regulation
Social Intelligence
Spirituality
Stability
Strength
Success
Talent
Teamwork
Thoughtfulness
Trust
Truth
Understanding
Warmth
Wealth
Wisdom
Zest

