

The Rule
of the
Companions
of the

Community of the Good Shepherd



The Companions

of the Community of the Good Shepherd

The Companions of the Community of the Good Shepherd (the Community) comprises women and men throughout the Diocese of The Bahamas and The Turks and Caicos Islands who desire to live their Christian life in a special association with the Community of the Good Shepherd. They are interested in, and support the life, work, vision, and mission of the Community. They express this by their prayers, encouragement and financial gifts. The Community welcomes Companions as partners in living the Gospel. The Community prays for Companions by name in the daily cycle of prayer. Together we abide as a family in Christ, ***Following the Shepherd's Way.***

What is a Rule of Life?

Just as ***cerasee*** needs a fence or another plant to provide support for it to grow, a Rule of Life is a framework which provides support as we lead our Christian lives. It helps us to prioritize our lives, while giving equal attention to each area.

The Companions' Rule of Life

Companions seek to live an ordered life of prayer, study and service in union with the Community, following a Rule of Life which expresses a common commitment to faithful discipleship. The purpose of the Rule of Life is to strengthen our abiding in Christ by bringing rhythm, order, and balance to our discipleship. The Rule helps us offer the whole of ourselves to God each day and keeps us open to God's love and will for us. Companions are encouraged to adopt the Rule to their particular life circumstances, describing for

themselves how they will endeavour to live out the Rule outlined in this document.

Relationship with the Community

The bond between Companions and the Community is spiritual and personal. Companions seek to maintain their personal connection with the vowed members of the Community by praying regularly for them, by participating in Community activities when possible, and by keeping up to date with the life and ministry of the Community, through the Community's newsletter, Social Media presence, and any other media channels.

Shepherd for Companions

A professed member of the Community is assigned to be a Shepherd for the Companions. Annually, Companions receive correspondence from the Shepherd, requesting recommitment of their pledge.

Becoming a Companion

After thoroughly reviewing the Rule of the Companions, if you desire to commit to living the Rule, application is made to become a Companion, then, following a period of discernment, the Rite of Reception is administered at your Parish or at a Community Service.

Inquiry/Application



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Prayer for the Community

Companions and members of the Community are united in the mutual bonds of prayer. Companions promise to pray for the Community and its mission every day, commending to the love of God all professed members and those they are called to serve.

Reflecting on the Rule of the Community of the Good Shepherd

Each Companion takes time, periodically, to reflect on the teachings of the Rule of the Community of the Good Shepherd, using it as a guide to an ordered and balanced life.

Worship

The vocation of all Christians is to share and strengthen the common life in the Body of Christ. Companions are committed and recognized members of a worshipping community within the Body of Christ, contributing to its life and ministry.

The Eucharist

The celebration of the Holy Eucharist is our fullest expression in worship of God. Companions participate in the Holy Eucharist on a regular basis, normally each Sunday, and the major Feast Days in the Christian year.

Feasts and Fasts

Companions are to incorporate into their worship and devotional life, the major Feasts of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost, and the seasons of Advent and Lent. These feasts will be holy and joyful if we are prepared to enter from time to time into Jesus' desert fast. Fasting is appropriate on penitential

occasions and times of retreat, reflection or preparation. It is highly recommended during Advent and Lent. Those restricted from fasting are asked to take on other appropriate disciplines.

Daily Prayer

Prayer is inspired by the Holy Spirit, who has been poured out in us. Prayer embraces all of life and draws us into intimate communion with God. Companions adopt a rhythm of regular prayer. Several times a week, Companions must give priority to **meditative** prayer in which their hearts are opened to the love of Christ, whereby they grow in intimacy with Him.

Seeking to develop and sustain a pattern of personal and corporate prayer and worship that honours God and deepens our relationship with God and one another.

PRAYER

Companions are encouraged to incorporate some form of the Daily Office into their prayer life. In praying the Offices of Morning Prayer, Noonday Prayer, Evening Prayer and Compline, Companions join in the round of worship offered by the Community, and Monastics the world over.

Reflective Study

Taking time, both individually and with others, to nurture our discipleship, reflecting on our life and experiences, and discovering deeper meaning in the riches in Christian writings, art, and music.

STUDY

When we pursue knowledge, we are expressing our love for God's Word and what it so richly reveals to us. Through regular reading and study, Companions develop their understanding of the Christian faith in contemporary life, deepen their knowledge of the Scriptures, and nurture their spiritual growth.

Retreat

Attending to our rhythm of life and allowing times for retreat, rest, and refreshment, individually and socially, that we might find creativity, contentment, and inspiration.

RETREAT

As often as we can, we should seek to withdraw from the busyness of the world and focus on the primacy of the love of God above all else. This is an essential element in our rhythm of life. Whenever the Community offers a Community-wide Retreat, Companions are encouraged to participate. When this is not possible, Companions are encouraged to observe a few quiet days a year to focus on prayer, stillness, reflection and spiritual reading.

Reconciliation

Companions commit themselves to, at least twice per year, deeply reflecting on their life of discipleship in the light of the Gospel. The times are usually before Christmas and Easter. When repentance is expressed, the forgiveness of God is experienced. This may be done through the Sacrament of Reconciliation where available. Where it is not, the Companion's prayers are offered to seek the grace of renewal.

Relationship

The lifeblood of any Community is the love of God that flows through relationships. God is love itself. The deeper and more honest the relationship, the more evident will be the love of God. Companions must therefore devote time and energy in building relationship with friends, family members, and spouses.

Giving

One way of expressing our gratitude to God for His generosity, is by giving – of our precious time, our God-given abilities, and of our resources. In the stewardship of their resources, Companions consider the needs of the Church, the poor, the Community of the Good Shepherd’s programmes, and other charitable concerns. Waste and extravagance go against monastic simplicity; therefore, Companions take responsibility to avoid this in every aspect of life.

Work

One of the aspects of monasticism which was important St. Benedict was work. Our foremost work is Prayer. We are also called to work towards ensuring that others are blessed by our Good and Gracious God – through us.

Seeking to exercise our God-given time and talents for the common good in work, whether paid or unpaid; giving integrity to our Christian calling in the way we carry out our work and in the way we relate to those around us.

WORK

Service

Living the values of the Gospel in the way we encounter people, offer them welcome, time and space, listen to them and build relationship through conversation and loving action.

SERVICE

Service is love in action. It follows, then, that another word for service, is in fact love. Jesus said, “Even if you do something to the least of these, you do it for me.” Let us use the Beatitudes as the model for our service, the framework upon which to bring Heaven to Earth. Companions strive to be “poor in spirit” emptying themselves of anything that is not of God – allowing their True Selves to emerge. We

mourn, showing our sensitivity to the plight of others. Companions do the act of love and then let the Holy Spirit take over to do with it as the Spirit desires. The foundation of service rests on our love for God, our neighbours, creation, and ourselves.



The Anglican Diocese of The Bahamas and The Turks and Caicos Islands