EXAMPLES PACK

Currently includes:
Church of the Ascension, Ealing (London),
Nazareth Community (London), St Peter’s Bourne (London),
Community of the Tree of Life (Leicester),
Community of St Aidan and Hilda (International)
The Church of the Ascension, Hanger Hill (with St Mary’s West Twyford) is a diverse and eclectic parish in West London.

Context
The Ascension and St Mary’s are a combined parish, amalgamated in the 1980s but separated by the A40 arterial road. Over half of the Ascension congregation live outside the Parish. Creating a sense of community outside of Sundays is a constant challenge. The incumbent, Revd Simon Reed, is also one of the three Guardians who oversee the Community of Aidan and Hilda, an interdenominational and international dispersed new monastic community. For over ten years, Simon has been encouraging church members to follow a Way of Life adapted from the Community to deepen their discipleship and foster a deeper sense of community.

Calling
The church’s mission statement is ‘to be a Christian community helping people connect more deeply with God and connect God with the whole of life.’ There are three emphases: praying, welcoming, and growing. This aim is a functional definition of Paul’s definition of Christian ministry in Colossians 1:28-29, to ‘present everyone mature in Christ.’

Postures - Who are we becoming?
The heart of discipleship is to become imitators of Jesus. This is a lifelong journey. To journey well we do not travel aimlessly, alone, or without stopping. We therefore need a Way of Life as a map, a Soul Friend as a companion, and a rhythm of prayer to refresh us.

The Way of Life is derived from that of the Community of Aidan and Hilda.
It has three life-giving principles, Simplicity, Purity, and Obedience (a modernisation of traditional monastic vows) and ten Waymarks:

1. Be a Life-Long Learner;
2. Journey with a Soul Friend;
3. Keep a Rhythm of Prayer, Work and Re-creation;
4. Live as Simply as Possible;
5. Celebrate and Care for Creation;
6. Heal Whatever is Broken;
7. Be Open to the Holy Spirit and Listen;
8. Pray for Good to Overcome Evil;
9. Pursue Unity;
10. Share Jesus and Justice.

**Patterns & Practices**

There is regular teaching about the three core practices of Way of Life, Soul Friendship, and Prayer Rhythms, and members of the congregation are invited to begin exploring. Simon and two others are available to meet with individuals as a Soul Friend, normally every two months. During this time, personal applications of the Way of Life are worked out. Individual prayer rhythms are encouraged and resourced. Daily Prayer is available via the website on weekdays. There is a monthly online Prayer Evening, and an annual 24 hours of prayer. The Ten Waymarks are worked out in the teaching and activities of the Parish, which include an Eco group and a Community Café.

Read more online: 
ascensionealing.org/2022/02/10/our-way-of-life/
WAY OF LIFE | EXAMPLE SHEET

NAZARETH COMMUNITY
The City is My Monastery

“The Nazareth Way of Life is an encouraging support that invites me to try again if I fall short, accepts me as I am but gently realigns and reorientates me so that my life can continue to be intentionally focused on a pathway towards God.”
Emma Bresslaw, Member of the Nazareth Community

Based at St Martin-in-the-Fields, London. Dispersed community which includes a Companion strand for those outside London (meeting online).

Context
Rev Richard Carter swapped a life of simplicity as a member of an Anglican religious order in the Solomon Islands for parish ministry at St Martin-in-the-Fields, amid the bustle of London’s Trafalgar Square. In March 2018, he founded its Nazareth Community, whose members gather from everyday life to seek God in contemplation and to learn to live generously.

Calling
The Nazareth Community is an experiment in being with God, with one’s neighbour and with oneself in the centre of London. The community offers a structure and a framework to grow in prayer and compassionate discipleship. It is a dispersed community that joins together through a shared Way of Life. Those who make their promises come from many different walks of life, including those who have known homelessness and those who are refugees. Each new member of the community receives a small Lampedusa Cross. Each cross was made on the island of Lampedusa from
the wreckage of migrant boats washed ashore and is a sign of resurrection born in the pain and the hope of the cross. The Nazareth Community is rooted in, but not exclusive to, the congregation of St Martin’s.

◆ Postures - Who are we becoming?

• **Silence:** to behold. The community is born through and nourished by contemplative prayer. Times of prayerful silence become like a rhythm to everything else; it is the soil from which everything else grows.

• **Service:** to accept. As the silent prayer of the community increases and finds a rhythm, so will the generosity and compassionate attentiveness of those taking part increase.

• **Sacrament:** to gather. Members are encouraged to attend Eucharist regularly. The community’s weekly Eucharist is welcome to everyone with no sense of exclusiveness.

• **Scripture:** to inspire. Members are encouraged to find regular times to read scripture with an open, generous, listening heart.

• **Sharing:** to enrich. Members set aside protected time for monthly sharing and reflection together, growing deeper in prayer and fellowship.

• **Sabbath:** to restore. Each member of the community is encouraged to find and discover a pattern of Sabbath Time. It could be a day a week or a period of time which brings refreshment, relaxation and rest.

• **Staying:** to live. This is about creating a way of life which is balanced and sustainable. Not like a new year’s resolution that lasts a few weeks, but much more like a rhythm of life.

The aim of all of these is not to be a burden, but to be freeing.

◆ Patterns & Practices

The communal Patterns include three weekly hours of Silent Prayer, a weekly informal Eucharist and a weekly Lectio group. This same pattern of silence, eucharist, sharing is offered on a Saturday morning each month. A weekly Contemplative Prayer Walk is live-streamed on Saturday mornings. Practices include contemplative prayer, silence, lectio divina, eucharist, art and music.

*Read more about this community in ‘The City is my Monastery’, Richard Carter (Canterbury Press Norwich, 2019).*
ST PETER'S BOURNE

Pursuing God, Justice and Mission Together

“In the shared Way of Life at St Peter’s Bourne I’ve been led to pursue God in a deeper way by pursuing loving my neighbour, and enjoying his presence in the ordinary.”
Gabriel, Resident at St Peter’s Bourne

St Peter’s Bourne is a residential community in Oakleigh Park, Barnet made up of 13 adults and 5 children of diverse age and ethnicity living in a led community. Most of the residents have regular working lives in London. There is a wider community of companions and friends who regularly join for prayer times.

Context

In the early 2000s, St Peter’s Bourne needed to raise income to renew the fabric of its building. People from local churches moved into the house and over time, a community grew and the idea of creating a more intentional community formed. In 2021, a new community gathered in response to a shared Way of Life: “To Purse God, Justice and Mission Together”.

Calling

St Peter’s Bourne aims to be a hub in North London for prayer & worship, meaningful social action and mission. More than a Christian house-share, it is an intentional community committed to a shared Way of Life. Pursuing God means to have a heart that is yielded and without reservation choosing Him, fostering a passion for prayer and worship. For a community member who is working 9-5 the outward expression of that will be different to one who is not employed. Those in the community are members of churches from different denominations, with different ways of prayer (e.g. silence, tongues, painting and crafts, singing, enjoying the garden, etc.).
**Postures - Who are we becoming?**

**Pursuing God:**

- Hosting the presence of God – A praying community, inviting the presence of God into lives.
- Worship – Gathering together to meet with God through worship whenever possible.
- House of Prayer – Developing a rhythm of prayer for North London; interceding for its churches, geography and society.
- Place of Retreat – Hosting church groups and individuals retreating together for the day to plan, pray and hear God.

**Pursuing Justice:**

- Engaging with prison leavers – Welcoming them into the community to disciple and provide support.
- Community projects - Training and investment in coffee producing communities overseas.
- Refugee support - Inviting those from Ukraine into the community.
- Discipleship – Living together as a way to discover aspects where people can grow in love.

**Pursuing Mission:**

- Pioneering and church planting - Hosting teams and praying for this work in the wider area.
- Supporting local churches – Leading mission events both locally and more widely.

**Together:**

- Holistic – The community does not want to be an inwardly focused prayer community, but a community that through its rhythms of prayer is empowered to challenge injustice and live a missional lifestyle.
- The community eats together regularly, spends time developing friendships and challenges each other to be closer to God. The aim is to have fun while journeying together!

**Patterns & Practices**

The community meets to pray and share food weekly. There is a shared Thursday morning breakfast before the children go to school and a weekly dinner and worship night. There is a monthly OPEN event, inviting others from North London to join for worship and prayer. In the Summer, a longer event and BBQ is hosted in a marquee.

*Read more online:*

[www.stpetersbourne.com](http://www.stpetersbourne.com)
COMMUNITY OF THE TREE OF LIFE

Based in Leicester, New Monastic, House of Prayer, Part of Leicester Diocese, both Residential and Dispersed (Companions)

Context
A new monastic community was initiated by Bishop Martynn when he arrived in Leicester Diocese in 2016. Rev Rachel Bennetts was appointed as Prior of the Community in 2017. She started gathering people to pray and seek God together. As months passed, a small locally dispersed community formed and a calling of prayer and formation emerged. A Way of Life, centred on the Gospel invitation of John 15, began to take shape.

While the locally dispersed community was growing, in 2019, the first residents joined the residential home in the city centre of Leicester. The community’s focus has been on being a house of prayer: praying a threefold daily office, sharing meals, serving local ministries and responding to invitations to lead creative prayer in different contexts. Alongside this, they have supported young adults in their formation as part of a discipleship year out and placements in local churches.

Calling
The community aims to live a life rooted, flourishing and fruitful in Christ. They are responding to the threefold discipleship invitation of Jesus in John 15 to abide, love and go. They define themselves as a community of abiding and fruitfulness; a community of prayer and action. Seeking to give their whole lives to God in prayer; believing that all action flows from and through the abiding presence of Christ within.
Postures - Who are we becoming?

Roots - Centring practices for abiding in Christ:
- Prayer: choosing to abide in Christ; present to God’s presence.
- Scripture: choosing to dive deep into God’s word.
- Solitude: choosing to make space to be alone with Jesus.

Trunk - Communal practices for flourishing in community:
- Worship: choosing to respond to ‘Who God is’ with ‘all I am and have’.
- Reconciliation: choosing to listen first and speak life.
- Sabbath: choosing to eat well, play well and rest well.

Branches - Missional practices for growing fruitful in service:
- Justice: choosing to stand up, speak out and act justly.
- Work: choosing to ‘show up’ and play my God-given role.
- Blessing: choosing to share blessing as I have been blessed.

Patterns & Practices

The communal patterns include:
- A daily office, including morning prayer, mid-day prayer and compline for those who are residential;
- A weekly morning of solitude;
- A weekly meal and service of worship;
- A monthly listening group session;
- A monthly 24/7 day of prayer.

Practices include silence, creative prayer, lectio divina, imaginative contemplation and listening groups.

Read more online: leicestertreeoflife.org
WAY OF LIFE | EXAMPLE SHEET

COMMUNITY OF AIDAN AND HILDA
Journeying with God, inspired by the Celtic Saints

The Community of Aidan and Hilda (CA&H) is a dispersed, international and ecumenical community with main branches in the United Kingdom, the USA, Australia, Norway, and South Africa. In the UK, the Community owns houses for retreat and a prayer room on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne in Northumbria.

◆ Context

CA&H started in the UK and the USA in 1994 during a resurgence of interest in the vibrant Celtic Christian spirituality of the first millennium. Founding Guardian Ray Simpson, who had previously explored forms of new monastic living while leading the innovative Bowthorpe Community Church in East Anglia, followed a call to move to Holy Island while developing the vision of ‘a world-wide people who journey with God, reconnecting with the Spirit and the Scriptures, the saints and the streets, the seasons and the soil, through a Way of Life, a rhythm of prayer, and a network of Soul Friends.’

The Community’s presence on Holy Island connects with its importance as the ‘cradle place’ of the Celtic mission in England and a centre of pilgrimage, but the life of the Community is expressed wherever its members are across the world.

◆ Calling

An important part of the Community’s original calling is to be ‘contemplatives in the marketplace.’ CA&H welcomes people of all backgrounds and countries who wish to be wholly available to the Holy Trinity and to the way of Jesus as revealed to us in the Bible. Its vision is to live a holistic Christian spirituality for today, to be a renewed people who journey with God, to develop resources for emerging and existing churches, and to heal broken people and fragmented communities. Members follow a Way of Life, with a Soul Friend, based on a rhythm of prayer and study, simplicity, care for creation, and mission, seeking to weave together the separated strands of Christianity. The work of
the Community is the work of each member. Unity with other members is rooted in the knowledge that all follow the Community’s Way of Life and that this reflects their deepest calling. Expressions of the Community should also be indigenous in each country and faith community.

**Postures - Who are we becoming?**

At the heart of the Way of Life is a reshaped version of the three traditional monastic vows, expressed as Simplicity, Purity, and Obedience, understood as life-giving principles, not rules, to help to love God and all creation wholeheartedly. The Way of Life consists of ten Waymarks:

1. Life Long Learning;
2. Spiritual Journey;
3. Rhythm of Prayer, Work and Recreation;
4. Praying For God’s Will in God’s World;
5. Simple Lifestyle;
6. Care For Creation;
7. Healing Fragmented People and Communities;
8. Openness to God’s Spirit;
9. Unity;

**Patterns & Practices**

Membership of the Community begins as an Explorer. For a minimum period of one year, Explorers work out their personal application of the Way of Life and begin meeting every few months with a Soul Friend (anam chara) who will share their journey with God. After this period of discernment they then become Voyagers (vowed members of the Community), a commitment which is renewed annually on St Hilda’s Day (17th November). After seven years it is possible to take life vows. Some Voyagers also choose to live a more traditionally monastic lifestyle. Voyagers commit to follow the Way of Life, have a daily rhythm of prayer, meet regularly with their Soul Friend and make an annual retreat. They are also strongly encouraged to join a local CA&H group, and to attend one of the Community’s two annual gatherings. They are presented with a wooden Celtic cross to wear, carry, or display.

*Read more online:*

[www.aidanandhilda.org.uk](http://www.aidanandhilda.org.uk)