



**THE WAY OF LOVE**  
*Practices for Jesus-Centered Life*

**Half-Day Way of Love Retreat Based  
on the Pattern of Morning Prayer**

January 2020

The following half-day retreat introduces the Way of Love within the framework of Morning Prayer. The text set off by a horizontal rule provides background information for the teaching portions of the retreat as well as reflection questions.

Because this is a brief introduction to the Way of Love, we recommend offering additional resources that can be taken home that will support people in their desire to engage in the Way of Love. Resources can be found at [www.episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love). Leaders are invited to modify this retreat to fit their context.

### **Orientation and Introductions**

- Welcome participants, orienting people to the space and the day's schedule.
- Invite people to share their names and something about themselves.
- Provide a brief overview of the Way of Love based on the Way of Love brochures, available at [iam.ec/wolbrochures](http://iam.ec/wolbrochures).
- The pedagogy of the retreat is experience first followed by reflection. Through the structure of morning prayer, the community gathered will experience each of the seven practices in the Way of Love as an act of worship.

*Note to planner: You may make substitutions in prayers and readings to fit your context as prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer, pp. 75-102. Sets of readings that correspond to the Way of Love (known as "Propers") can be found at [iam.ec/edownwolpropers](http://iam.ec/edownwolpropers) and [iam.ec/formawolpropers](http://iam.ec/formawolpropers). *Enriching Our Worship 1*, available at [iam.ec/eow1](http://iam.ec/eow1), offers inclusive language alternatives for prayers.*

*After the orientation and introductions, gather the community with the Opening Sentences.*

## **Opening Sentences**

*The Officiant begins the service with these sentences.*

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord." Psalm 122:1

O give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name; make known his deeds among the peoples. Psalm 105:1

## **Confession of Sin - TURN**

*The Officiant says to the people*

Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our heavenly Father, to set forth his praise, to hear his holy Word, and to ask, for ourselves and on behalf of others, those things that are necessary for our life and our salvation. And so that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to worship him, let us kneel in silence, and with penitent and obedient hearts confess our sins, that we may obtain forgiveness by his infinite goodness and mercy.

*or this*

Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbor.

*Silence may be kept.*

*Officiant and People together, all kneeling*

Most merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word, and deed,  
by what we have done,  
and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.  
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ,  
have mercy on us and forgive us;  
that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

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*Explain the following: The simple of act of coming together to worship is an act of TURNING. By gathering from our many and scattered places, together, we assert the value of community and orient our lives toward Jesus, the one who loves us first. We deepen our act of turning after the opening sentences by confessing our sin. Together, we speak the truth of our faults by acknowledging that we, the body of Christ, contribute to the brokenness of the world by things we have done and things we have left undone. We turn toward God's inexhaustible mercy and unending compassion and ask for forgiveness, forgiveness that we can offer others. What we discover is that God has already forgiven us. As people, reconciled with ourselves, our neighbor, freed of the burden of sin, we are we are free to do God's will.*

*Invite participants to move to one end of the room where plain paper, pens, markers have been set. On a piece of paper list or draw the things (habits, responsibilities, etc.) that distract them from God. Turn around. Walk to the other side of the room. Turn their papers over and write or draw what they need to turn toward the One who loves us first. What is one step they can take this week toward the Way of Love?*

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*The Priest alone stands and says*

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life. *Amen.*

*A deacon or lay person using the preceding form remains kneeling, and substitutes "us" for "you" and "our" for "your."*

### **The Invitatory and Psalter - WORSHIP**

*All stand*

*Officiant* Lord open our lips.

*People* And our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

*Officiant and People*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

*Except in Lent, add* Alleluia.

**Venite** *Psalm 95:1-7*

Come, let us sing to the Lord; \*  
let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.  
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving \*  
and raise a loud shout to him with psalms.

For the Lord is a great God, \*  
and a great King above all gods.  
In his hand are the caverns of the earth, \*  
and the heights of the hills are his also.  
The sea is his, for he made it, \*  
and his hands have molded the dry land.

Come, let us bow down, and bend the knee, \*  
and kneel before the Lord our Maker.  
For he is our God,  
and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. \*  
Oh, that today you would hearken to his voice!

### **The Psalm**

Psalm 19:7-14

The law of the Lord is perfect  
and revives the soul; \*  
the testimony of the Lord is sure  
and gives wisdom to the innocent.

The statutes of the Lord are just  
and rejoice the heart; \*  
the commandment of the Lord is clear

and gives light to the eyes.

The fear of the Lord is clean  
and endures for ever; \*  
the judgments of the Lord are true  
and righteous altogether.

More to be desired are they than gold,  
more than much fine gold, \*  
sweeter far than honey,  
than honey in the comb.

By them also is your servant enlightened, \*  
and in keeping them there is great reward.

Who can tell how often he offends? \*  
cleanse me from my secret faults.

Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins;  
let them not get dominion over me; \*  
then shall I be whole and sound,  
and innocent of a great offense.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable in your sight, \*  
O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

*At the end of the Psalms is sung or said*

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: \*  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

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*Explain the following: The Invitatory, "Lord, open our lips," recognizes God is the source and object of our worship. God's blessings enable us to worship. The words of the Venite literally call us to WORSHIP; "Come, let us sing to the Lord," it begins. We worship God in thanksgiving, praising God for creating and sustaining all creation: "In his hands are the caverns of the earth," the psalmist sings out. The climax of the Venite calls us to engage our entire bodies and with all our senses in worshipping: "bend the knee" and "hearken to his voice!" The Venite places us in the posture of worship.*

*Invite participants to sit in silence and notice first their breathing ... in and out. Invite them to deepen the breath. In and out. Then begin a body scan beginning with their toes and slowly working up to their knees, stomach, chest, shoulders, ears and head. Invite the group to consider, "How do you, or could you, worship God with your body?" "What does it mean for God to be the source and object of worship?" and "What prompts them to worship God?"*

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## **The Lessons - REST**

A Reading from Genesis 1:26-2:2

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

So God created humankind in his image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.

God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.” God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done.

The Word of the Lord

People: *Thanks be to God*

**Canticle 9: The First Song of Isaiah** *Ecce, Deus*

Surely, it is God who saves me; \*  
I will trust in him and not be afraid.  
For the Lord is my stronghold and my sure defense, \*  
and he will be my Savior.  
Therefore you shall draw water with rejoicing \*  
from the springs of salvation.  
And on that day you shall say, \*  
Give thanks to the Lord and call upon his Name;  
Make his deeds known among the peoples; \*  
see that they remember that his Name is exalted.  
Sing the praises of the Lord, for he has done great things, \*  
and this is known in all the world.  
Cry aloud, inhabitants of Zion, ring out your joy, \*  
for the great one in the midst of you is the Holy One of Israel.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: \*  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

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*Explain the following: Genesis 1:1-2:2 is an ancient and sacred poem about the beauty of creation, God's intention for creation to flourish, and the reality that REST is woven into the rhythm of creation itself. A common refrain in the poem is "And God said that it was good." And on the sixth day, the day when humankind was created, God said that it was very good.*

*On the seventh day, God RESTS from work and in the goodness of creation. God, whose greatness has no boundaries, sets aside time – creates boundaries – for restoration. This act of God is a reminder of our finitude. In the reality of seemingly infinite demand on our time and energy, we need to set boundaries, to set aside time for rest. While rest may be necessary to return to "productive work," this rest gives us no other purpose than to dwell in the light of God's presence. The Sabbath is productive for its own sake. On the seventh day, God invites us to rest in the knowledge and reality that God made all of creation, including each one of us, very good.*

*Invite the participants into a time of journaling or artwork, resting in the knowledge that God has made you very good. What images arise? What does rest look like for you?*

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A Reading from John 15:1-17 - LEARN

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. 3 You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in

the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

The Word of the Lord

People: *Thanks be to God*

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*Explain the following: LEARN is the practice of reading Scripture regularly, particularly the words of Jesus. In this passage, Jesus reminds us that we abide in him as the true vine. The word “abide” is not a commonly used word. It has a sense of waiting and lingering with, not just for a moment, but faithfully and for a sustained time. Imagine lingering with God's love in such a way that this love permeates all of who we are and all of what we do. Here, we are invited to abide and remain in Jesus, and let Jesus and his words be the foundation of our lives. What freedom such knowledge of God's love offers us. It is not up to us! The second half of the reading reveals the fruit of this love in our lives – love for one another. Notice how the source of our love for one another is the love that Jesus has shown us. Jesus reveals to us what it means to be fully human, living as God intended. This love is enduring fruit, binding people into one community of love.*

*Using a method like African Bible Study, Lectio Divina, or another of your choice, reflect on what Jesus is saying to the community today. You can find several styles described at [iam.ec/cmcbiblestudy](http://iam.ec/cmcbiblestudy).*

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## **The Apostles' Creed - BLESS**

*Officiant and People together, all standing*

I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth;  
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the Virgin Mary.  
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.  
He descended to the dead.  
On the third day he rose again.  
He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.  
I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins

the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

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*Explain the following: In saying the Creed, the assembly joins in proclaiming the good news of God's saving acts throughout history. Together, we give our hearts to the God who BLESSES: the God who created the world, gave the only Son for the sake of the world, and sent the Holy Spirit to inspire all life. We say the Apostles' Creed at every baptism and during the Renewal of Baptismal Vows. In that liturgy, we respond to the Creed by making five promises. In these promises, in response to all that God has done for us, we promise to BLESS God by "continu[ing] in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers," by "persevering in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord," by "proclaim[ing] by word and example the Good News of God in Christ," by "seek[ing] and serv[ing] Christ in all persons," and by "striv[ing] for justice and peace among all people, and respect[ing] the dignity of every human being." Imagine, your life as an act of blessing!*

*Choose one of the following two exercises:*

*(1) Together, open the Book of Common Prayer to pages 304 and 305. Re-read the five Baptismal Promises and explore what each means in your ministry context, at work, home, school or leisure. You may choose to focus on the final three promises.*

*(2) Sit or stand in pairs, back to back. Each person is invited to take a turn quietly naming ways in which s/he/they have experienced blessing. Then the pairs turn to face each other, and each person names at least one way in which s/he/they have been a blessing to others. Finally, the partners thank God for each other and bless each other.*

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## **The Prayers - PRAY**

*Officiant*        The Lord be with you.  
*People*            And also with you.  
*Officiant*        Let us pray

Our Father, who art in heaven,  
    hallowed be thy Name,  
    thy kingdom come,  
    thy will be done,  
        on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,  
    as we forgive those  
        who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,  
    but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,  
    and the power, and the glory,  
    for ever and ever. Amen.

V. Save your people, Lord, and bless your inheritance;

R. Govern them and uphold them, now and always.

V. Day by day we bless you;

R. We praise your name for ever.

V. Lord, keep us from all sin today;

R. Have mercy upon us, Lord, have mercy.

V. Lord, show us your love and mercy;

R. For we put our trust in you.

V. In you, Lord, is our hope;

R. And we shall never hope in vain.



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*Explain the following: Having heard God's Word proclaimed and God's intentions for the world, we are confronted by the reality that the world is not as it should be. God's dream for the world is yet to be fully realized. As we recognize this brokenness, we are led to PRAY. The Lord's Prayer is a prayer for today, as well as a prayer that leans into the future. When we say, "Hallowed be thy name," we are saying that God's name is not known throughout the world and imploring God to make God's name known and loved in all places. The words "give us our daily bread" recall the manna God provided the Israelites as they wandered for 40 years in the wilderness. Like them, today, we depend on God's grace. Finally, the prayer leans into the future, asking God for the bread for tomorrow. Give us a foretaste of that promised kingdom!*

*To continue this time of prayer, invite participants to sit in silence or engage in other prayer practices such as coloring mandalas, finger labyrinths, walking labyrinths, Anglican prayer beads, or other prayer resources at hand. At the end, invite people to reflect on their experiences. For what were they moved to pray? How has that time of prayer transformed you or your intentions?*

*Alternatively, pray for each other out loud in a circle. If appropriate, invite the group to stand in a circle with right hand on the left shoulder of the person next to them. Going one person at a time, the person on the right will name in a couple of words the need or hope for which they would like prayer. After that person has named their need or hope, the person on the left, whose hand is on their shoulder, can offer a prayer in response. Prayers could thus be offered around the circle.*

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### **Intercessions and Thanksgivings (optional)**

Creator God, the mercies of your son, our Lord, Jesus, compel us to TURN our hearts to his Way of Love. That we might follow Jesus together as your faithful people, we pause, listen, and respond in prayer, saying: Jesus, guide us in your way.

Jesus, your life, death, resurrection, and ascension inspire the church to continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship. Guide your people to LEARN your Word, that we might see God's story unfolding in our midst.

We pray together,

*People:* Jesus, guide us in your way.

Son of God, you responded to your Father in prayer and pleaded that we might all be one. Guide leaders and faithful citizens of this nation to respond to God and to one another in compassion — in thought and deed, with or without words— that the people of [country name] might live in unity and peace.

We pray together,

*People:* Jesus, guide us in your way.

Light of the World, you taught us to WORSHIP in spirit and in truth. Lead us to join with others to acknowledge the holiness of God, that the whole world might be united in the truth of your love.

We pray together,

*People:* Jesus, guide us in your way.

Lord, you came not to be served but to serve. Empower us to BLESS those in [this city, this town, this village] that generosity, compassion, and selfless action transform us and the people in our midst.

We pray together,

*People:* Jesus, guide us in your way.

Savior, you came into our midst that we might know life. Embolden us to GO among those who are weary, burdened, sick, or imprisoned, [especially those we now name silently or aloud] that we might live like you, crossing the boundaries that divide sick from well and sinner from saint.

We pray together,

*People:* Jesus, guide us in your way.

Lamb of God, in your death you destroyed death and taught us that it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Compel us to daily die to self and REST in your grace. For all who have died, [especially N., N.], may they rest in peace and rise in glory.

We pray together,

*People:* Jesus, guide us in your way.

### **Collect**

God, source of life abundant, open our hearts to the way of love birthed at creation, the way of freedom and life for all people. Open our ears to your voice calling us to walk in your ways. Open our eyes to ways in which we might abide in your love and share your blessings with the whole world. All this we ask in the name of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

*A hymn may be sung. Refer to the Way of Love Propers to be found at <https://iam.ec/formawolpropers> for options. "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus" (Lift Every Voice and Sing, #136) and "Be Thou My Vision" (1982 Hymnal, #488) are especially appropriate.*

### **General Thanksgiving - GO**

*Officiant and People*

Almighty God, Father of all mercies,  
we your unworthy servants give you humble thanks  
for all your goodness and loving-kindness  
to us and to all whom you have made.  
We bless you for our creation, preservation,  
and all the blessings of this life;  
but above all for your immeasurable love  
in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ;  
for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory.  
And, we pray, give us such an awareness of your mercies,  
that with truly thankful hearts we may show forth your praise,  
not only with our lips, but in our lives,  
by giving up our selves to your service,  
and by walking before you  
in holiness and righteousness all our days;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit,  
be honor and glory throughout all ages. Amen.

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*Explain the following: In this prayer of thanksgiving, the community promises to show our praise to God "not only with our lips, but in our lives." We praise God by GOING out in the world, crossing boundaries of difference to live as Jesus lived, joining God in healing a hurting world by walking the Way of Love.*

*Invite participants to consider concrete ways they hope to go forth and live Jesus' Way of Love as their own. Invite those gathered to form two concentric circles by dividing the group into two. One half makes a circle facing outward. The other half to make a circle around the first circle, facing inward toward a partner. Pairs are invited to engage in a 2-minute mutual conversation with a partner around the question: "What about going out in the world to live the Way of Love will be most challenging for you?" At the end of two minutes, people in the outer circle move one person to the right. With this new partner, the pair will share for 2 minutes around the question, "What support do you need to go and practice the Way of Love?" The outer circle moves an additional person to the right. With this new partner, the pair will share around the question, "What first steps will you take to go and practice the Way of Love?"*

*Note: You may, at this time, give the assembly the opportunity to make a commitment to the Way of Love using the commitment liturgy here: [iam.ec/wolcovenant](http://iam.ec/wolcovenant).*

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## **Sending**

Let us bless the Lord.

*Thanks be to God.*

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reflections and queries by writing to [wayoflove@episcopalchurch.org](mailto:wayoflove@episcopalchurch.org) or on social media using #wayoflove. Scriptural  
citations from the New Revised Standard Version.