



## Apprenticeship to Jesus (A2J)

A2J is an ecumenical fellowship of Christians, who are both Protestant and Catholic, (and we pray someday also Orthodox), who are called to a *Way of life* with Jesus, as his friends and partners in mission to love and serve the Church and further God's kingdom. We are united by our *Rule of Life*, which expresses our values and appreciation of monastic spirituality and its simple and rich rhythms of *prayer*, *study* and *service*. This fellowship is founded on two core pursuits: 1) the contemplative life (intimacy with God) and 2) the active life (engaging the mission of God on earth).

## Connecting

Within this fellowship, some live together in the same neighborhood, some in the same houses, and still others live across the city and others continents away. We welcome followers (apprentices) of Jesus at the different stages of their journey and from diverse traditions. This fellowship is open to all who want to join us and are called to the values and mission. Some, but not all, within this fellowship have been called by God to make a formal commitment to this *Way of Life* and to one another that can be renewed each year.

## Our Rule of Life (Rule)

A *Rule of life* is rooted in a commitment to embody the New Testament vocation of following Jesus in a specific place and time. It makes plain how the members live and serve together as they lay out the communities' practices. Throughout history, communities like the Benedictines and the Franciscans organized themselves around a set of practices that became their *Rule of Life*. Our *Rule* is an expression of our mission, values and commitments. Our *Rule of life* is corporately created and revisited each year to be adjusted as God leads and then re-affirmed.

## Our Mission

To be a Christian Fellowship for renewal and reconciliation as we champion discipleship being restored as a way of life.

## Our Shared Values

1. Living a life of discipleship that is integrated into everyday life and fosters a deepening friendship with Jesus and commitment to grow in his likeness for the sake of others.
2. Working and praying towards reconciliation and unity in the body of Christ, knowing this is at the core of Jesus' heart and will release God's blessing and healing not only to the Church but to the world
3. Loving our neighbors and communities, believing mission thrives when it is expressed relationally and naturally in the neighborhoods we live in. The world desperately needs small, humble, and faithful communities of love and hope that can become signs of reconciliation, unity and peace.

## Our Shared Commitments

1. Share our lives & gifts with one another, helping each other be faithful to Jesus, one another & the *Way of Life*
2. Affirm and support the unique gifts of service each of us have to offer
3. Create quarterly gatherings for prayer, worship and study as an offering for others to receive with us.
4. Create resources together for the common good, obeying Jesus' command '*freely give as you freely received*'
5. Gather once a year as a fellowship for a weekend Retreat together.

The A2J Fellowship [www.a2jphoenix.org](http://www.a2jphoenix.org) is part of the Antioch Network Fellowship [www.antiochnetwork.org](http://www.antiochnetwork.org)

# OUR BELIEFS

Apprenticeship to Jesus is intentionally diverse in our Christian traditions; we embrace those from different streams of the Church who can agree on the core doctrines of the historic Christian faith. We aim to be a catalyst for reconciliation and unity in Christ's Body.

Above all, we want to be faithful to the admonition of the Scriptures. We long to see the prayer Jesus prayed in John 17:11-12 fulfilled: *Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, that they may be one even as We are.*

We believe Spirituality that enriches the church and advances God's kingdom in the world must be Trinitarian, historically rooted, mission oriented, and Spirit-empowered.

We believe doctrine is important and our committed to be faithful to the Scriptures. Regardless of our doctrinal distinctions, we seek to love and show Christ to all:

- In essential beliefs — we have unity.

*"There is one Body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of us all..."* (Ephesians 4:4-6)

- In non-essential beliefs — we have liberty.

*"Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters... Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls... So then each of us will give an account of himself to God... So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God."* (Romans 14:1, 4, 12, 22)

- In all our beliefs — we show love.

*"...If I hold in my mind not only all human knowledge but also the very secrets of God, and if I have the faith that can move mountains — but have no love, I amount to nothing at all."* (1 Corinthians 13:2—Phillips)

We believe the Nicene Creed is a doctrinally sound barometer around which most followers of Christ can rally. The Nicene Creed remains the only ecumenical creed agreed upon by the entirety of the body Christ (with possible exception of the Messianic Jewish witness), or at the very least, whose theology is upheld historically by most traditions.

*We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.*

*We believe in on Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the son], who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen*

## A2J Rule of Life

### Why a Rule of Life?

A Rule of life is rooted in a commitment to embody the New Testament vocation of following Jesus in a specific place and time. It makes plain how the members live and serve together as they lay out the communities' practices of prayer, study, and service. Throughout history, communities like the Benedictines and the Franciscans organized themselves around a set of practices that became their community *Rule*. Such as, living simply and sacrificially, works of mercy, and living in community. It was not a set of rules to conform to, but rather an expression of their shared mission and values.

### The Sources of our Rule

- *Whoever wants to follow Jesus must deny their very self, take up their cross each day, and follow in Jesus' footsteps.* (Luke 9:23)
- *Seek first the kingdom of God...* (Matthew 6:33)
- *Let your light shine before all men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven* (Matthew 5:16)

**Prayer** - Our desire is to live moment by moment in the presence of God, learning to continually interact with Him within the daily issues of life. Daily pray together is crucial in this process.

- *Join together to devote yourselves to constant prayer...* (Acts 1:14)
- *"Jesus" Often withdrew to lonely places to pray* (Luke 5:16)
- *Be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms, hymns and inspired songs. Sing praise to the Lord with all your hearts. Give thanks to God the Father always and for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* (Ephesians 5:18-20)

**Study** – We study God, specifically how he has revealed himself through Jesus. We study a shared curriculum on our own and together. We are in the process of developing an A2J study curriculum, part of this is *Ancient Wells—A book of Worship, Theology, and Formation*.

- *Let us meditate on the law of the Lord day and night.* (Psalm 1:2)
- *We must follow closely the teaching and conduct of the apostles. We must remain faithful to what we have learned and believed, because we know who our teachers were. Likewise, we should know the sacred scriptures, the source of the wisdom through faith in Jesus Christ leads to salvation.* (2 Tim. 3:10-14)

**Service** - Jesus' calls us to follow him and walk in his ways in a lost and broken world. In Apprenticeship to Jesus we learn from him how to love one another and meet the needs of the world around us.

- *Your love must be sincere. Detest what is evil. Cling to what is good. Love one another with the affection of brothers...Be generous in offering hospitality. Bless your persecutors, bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Have the same attitude towards all. Put away ambitious thoughts and associate with those who are lowly.* (Romans 12:9-16)
- *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation* (2 Corinthians. 5:18)
- *Whenever you give a lunch or dinner, invite beggars and the crippled, the lame and the blind. You should be pleased that they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid in the resurrection of the just.* (Luke. 14:12-14)

**Community Life** - God created us to express his image in the context of community. In community we learn not only how to be with and to love one another, we also learn how to be with God and to love him. The life and health of the community is essential in establishing a life of going deep with God.

- *They devoted themselves to the apostles' instruction and the communal life, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Let a reverent fear overtake us all, for many signs and wonders are performed in our midst. We share all things in common, selling our property and goods, and dividing everything on the basis of each one's need. We go to the temple area together every day, while in our homes we break bread. With exultant and sincere hearts we take our meals in common, praising God and winning the approval of all the people. Day by day the Lord adds to our number those who are being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)*
- *Because you are God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with heartfelt mercy, with kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another. Forgive whatever grievances you have against one another. Forgive as the Lord has forgiven you. Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect. Christ's peace must reign in your hearts, since as members of the one body you have been called to that peace. Dedicate yourselves to thankfulness. (Colossians 3:12-15)*

## Ways to be Involved

**A2J Fellowship:** All are welcome to join our shared pursuit of a life of discipleship and mission. Whether it is joining us for a morning prayer, a common meal, or a Saturday workday we are enriched by your presence.

**Novices:** Seriously testing a call to long-term commitment while living out the *Rule of Life* together with those who have made formal commitments. This is for a year, which can be extended.

**A2J Core:** Have committed the A2J fellowship *Rule of Life*. This is a long-term commitment, that can be renewed each year, where each one chooses to submit to one another in decisions of leaving or being sent out.

*"I have never lost the intuition that community life could be a sign that God is love. Gradually the conviction took hold of me that it was essential to create a community determined to give their whole life, a community where kindheartedness and simplicity would be at the centre of everything."*

-Brother Roger (founder of Taize)

*"The renewal of the church will come from a new type of monasticism, which has only in common with the old an uncompromising allegiance to the Sermon on the Mount. It is time men and women banded together to do this."*

-Dietrich Bonhoeffer

*"There is a time for all things. A time for spiritual and intellectual formation and a time to seek my place in the world, and to put down roots, to make a commitment to people and assume responsibilities"*

-Jean Vanier (founder of L'Arche communities)