Living Life Marked as Christ’s Own
A discipleship offering inspired by the Anglican Marks of Mission
www.5marksoflove.org
In this six-week series we will be examining and reflecting on the ways in which God’s Life and God’s Mission express themselves in and through us. Inspired by the Anglican “Marks of Mission,” we will look for signs of God’s presence and activity in our lives, in our communities, and in the world around us. Each week we will explore one of the “Marks,” using short daily videos, thought-provoking questions and activities, and prayerful discussions to reflect on what God is doing in our lives and in our world.

The series is designed for use by individuals or small groups. Individuals are invited to watch the daily videos and reflect on the questions they pose. In small groups, facilitators will guide participants as they grow and learn together. The goal of the program is to encourage and empower participants to offer themselves whole-heartedly to the Mission of God, and to live for God’s glory.

All materials and videos are free online and as downloads.

For Individuals

* Subscribe to the video series at www.5marksoflove.org
* You will receive a daily email with a mobile-ready video and a question.
* Watch the video each day, take time to reflect on the question it poses and journal your thoughts.

For Groups & Leaders

* At www.SSJE.org/5marksofloveresources you can log into a Google Drive Resources Folder where you can access ‘Facilitator’s Guide’ created by SSJE and the Center for the Ministry of Teaching at VTS. It is designed for first-time group leaders as well as those who are more experienced.

* You will also find additional supporting materials in the Resources Folder, including images and text for use in bulletins, email, and as website badges.

* Encourage individuals to sign up for daily emails at www.5marksoflove.org. Please contact friends@ssje.org if you want to add your whole community’s email list to receive a daily email with a video from the SSJE Brothers.

* If participants are using social media, share thoughts using #5marksoflove on preferred social media platforms to make it simple to find and respond to others’ comments.

* Add, read, and share comments on www.5marksoflove.org.

* Use the workbook, videos and the comments as inspiration for sermons.

Monastic Wisdom for Everyday Living

Beloved: Marks of Mission, Marks of Love

Br. Mark Brown, SSJE, explores the impact of Jesus’ baptism in the River Jordan on his developing sense of identity and mission. He draws insights from this story to help us understand more fully the Mission of God in the world, and God’s purposes in our own lives.

Free download - www.SSJE.org/5marksoflove
Living Life Marked as Christ’s Own

We belong to God.

In Baptism, we have been “sealed by the Holy Spirit” and “marked as Christ’s own forever.” “It is no longer I who live,” writes St. Paul, “but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). By God’s grace, we share in the Divine Life, a gift given to us in Baptism.

How does this Divine Life express itself in and through us? If we are “marked as Christ’s own forever,” what are the “marks of love” that reflect and manifest the life of God abiding and at work within us? In this six-week program, we will observe and reflect on the ways in which God’s life expresses itself in us and through us. Specifically, we see God’s life at work within us as we:

1. Proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom (TELL).
2. Teach, baptize and nurture new believers (TEACH).
3. Respond to human need by loving service (TEND).
4. Transform unjust structures, challenge violence of every kind, and pursue peace and reconciliation (TRANSFORM).
5. Strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth (TREASURE).

These “Marks” are the fruit of God’s life within us, a life which is nurtured by prayer and worship. When we center our lives in God and allow Christ to live his life in and through us, we participate in the Mission of God. It is God’s intention to reconcile all things in Christ and make them new. The Church does these things – telling, teaching, tending, transforming, and treasuring – in an almost unconscious way; they are manifestations of the Divine Life operating in us. They are not simply tasks to be carried out; they are signs that our life is rooted and grounded in the Being of God.

The Mission of God extends beyond the Church, and includes people in other traditions and faiths as well. We are partners with many others who are also bringing good news; who are also teaching and nurturing, tending and caring; who are also challenging injustice and working for peace; and who are also striving to protect, sustain, and renew the created order. Our way of participating in the Mission of God is rooted in our faith, and is the natural by-product of our common life of prayer and worship. But we are not the only ones furthering the Mission of God on the earth. We believe that it is presumptuous to claim that distinction for ourselves, and we seek a variety of partners in this divine work of service to all humanity and to all created things.

It is also presumptuous to assume that we will always see clearly what God wants us to be and to do in the world. In the past, models of mission were often paternalistic and oppressive. We come in humility, asking constantly for God’s guidance and for further enlightenment. We adopt a posture of listening, opening our hearts to God and to others, seeking always what is most congruent with God’s purposes. We will not always “get it right,” but we believe God sees the good intentions of our hearts.

This series is not about telling people what to do. Rather, it hopes to help us all reflect on how we might live more fully. We are encouraged to balance action with contemplation, so that our words and deeds proceed from the deepest places of our hearts, where God dwells. We are to offer ourselves, body and soul, to God’s Mission, and to live for God’s glory. We pray that we all may learn to speak clearly and truthfully, and to act with integrity, motivated always by hearts overflowing with God’s love.
Introduction

...Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” (Mark 1:14-15)

When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth... (John 16:13)

When you think of the word “mission,” what comes to mind? A job to be done? A task to be carried out? A lot of times we want to jump right into whatever it is we’re trying to accomplish and just get the work done! But when it comes to God’s Mission, it’s important to stop, be silent, listen and wait. Prayer and discernment should always be the first steps we take.

Through prayer and discernment, we listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. We seek out God’s truth in our lives and in the world around us, asking the Spirit to guide us. We try to discover what God is up to and how we can be a part of it. We go to Christ in the Gospels to learn from who he was and to comprehend who he is today. We remain fully open to his presence in our lives and in the lives of those around us. We listen and observe – and then we follow where he leads.

Finding and following the path can be difficult when there are too many things in the way. Listening for a strong quiet voice is impossible if there is too much noise in our lives. So how can we quiet the noise so the Holy Spirit can get through to us? How can we declutter our lives to make room for God’s light?

We begin with repentance. Through repentance, we clear out the things that get in the way of God and we surrender to the cleansing power of God’s boundless love and forgiveness. Re-orienting our lives towards God, we choose to follow the trail that is marked by Love rather than the trail that proceeds from selfishness, violence or indifference.

In this process of intentional prayer, discernment and repentance, God’s Mission begins to reveal itself. We are able to see signs of Christ’s kingdom here on earth: signs of renewal and restoration, of hope and healing. Christ’s vision of making all things new and alive in his Love begins to show itself in our own lives and in the world around us. The transformation of our lives, and of our communities and our world, begins to seem possible.

As we move forward to study and live into these “Five Marks of Love” that characterize the Mission of God, let’s take a moment to stop, listen, and pray that God will reveal God’s way and truth to us. Pray with the psalmist: “Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me...” (Psalm 25:4-5).

Questions to Ponder · Visit 5marksoflove.org to watch the videos

- Can you hear God say to you, “You are my beloved“?
- How, in small ways, could you carry out God’s Mission today?
- Which “Mark of Mission” is closest to your heart?
- Where do you see God at work in the world?
- How can you help carry out God’s Mission?

Tips for the Letter to God Activity

“You are my Beloved!” These were the words spoken to Jesus at his baptism in the Jordan River. Immediately he was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where he spent forty days reflecting on his call and absorbing the truth of these powerful words.

These same words are spoken to each of us by God. By God’s grace, we are offered the same love. We, too, are God’s beloved children - not because of anything we have done or will do, but simply by the gift of God’s grace. God chooses us in love, to be united with God in a reciprocal relationship in which we experience and express joy and delight in one another.

Take time to ponder these things. Absorb them into the depths of your heart so that they become the defining truths that underlie your identity. You are God’s beloved, and there is nothing that can ever separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Spend time now reflecting on the ways in which you have experienced and come to know God’s love for you. Through whom and in what ways have you heard God say to you, “You are my beloved”? Have you embraced this truth as the core of your identity? Have you discovered the freedom it brings?
Letter to God

Letter writing is an art form that is gradually slipping away in our generation. When we can quickly send a text or an email, why spend time with pen and paper? But slowly writing out our desires, joys, memories, and words of love for another person can be a meditative practice that connects us in a deeper way.

What if we were to take the time to write a letter to God? What would we say? How might we express our love for God in words? In the space below, spend some time composing a letter to God. Try to express your deepest thoughts and feelings.

Dear God,

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, you are here. You are present with us. Open our eyes and cleanse our hearts so that we may see and know you in the world around us. Lead us in the way that leads to life. Amen.

Watch · Answer · Share #5marksoflove
The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free…  
(Luke 4:18)

When we receive good news, we can’t help but share it. We post photos of newborn babies online as soon as they are delivered. We call our loved ones with the news that a relative has found a new job or received a promotion. We announce engagements and graduations, inviting others to celebrate with us. We love to share good news.

Even in times of sadness or loss, we find good news to share. Our friends console us by their presence and with their love. People in our community come together after a devastating tragedy. We gain insight and inner strength when we survive a traumatic period in our lives. These, too, are experiences to be shared.

We share these moments not because we want to boast or because we want to draw attention to ourselves. We share because we can’t help it. Signs of grace deserve to be shared.

This is how it is with the Kingdom of God. The Gospels are full of Good News. The Good News that Christ is among us, within us, always going before us. The Good News that we are unconditionally and forever loved by God. The Good News that hope, healing and transformation are possible in God’s love. When the Good News has taken root in our lives, it radiates out from the very core of our being. Our lives shimmer with the joy that Good News brings.

“Proclaiming the Good News of God’s Kingdom” is the first of the “Five Marks of Love.” This week we’ll be exploring ways to deepen our understanding of what it means to proclaim the Good News. Pay attention to how this first Mark of Love is present in all of the other Marks:

• When we teach, nurture, baptize new believers, we proclaim the Good News.
• When we respond to human need by loving service, we proclaim the Good News.
• When we seek to transform unjust structures in society, we proclaim the Good News.
• When we strive to guard, sustain and renew creation, we proclaim the Good News.

As we celebrate this first Mark of Love and look for new and creative ways to proclaim the Good News of God’s love, we might ponder these words, which are often attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi: “Preach the Gospel at all times. When necessary, use words.”

We proclaim the Good News by our words and by our actions. We do this because our lives have been transformed by this Good News and we can’t help letting others know! Catch the life and spread the Good News!

Tips for Listening Activity
Some of us may turn away when we hear the words “evangelism” or “proclaiming the Good News.” We connect these words with simplistic or shallow methods of evangelism that rely on manipulation or that seem insincere or false. But sharing Good News can be a very natural and genuine act. We speak of things we know, of God’s love and care, of the hope and healing we have found through believing, of the ways our lives have been transformed.

Spend some time now thinking of people who are or have been channels of God’s Good News to you, not just by their words, but by their loving actions. People who radiate love and light, simplicity and joy. People who embody humility and peace. People who, perhaps, have borne suffering well, or who have in some other way inspired you by their devotion. Name some of these people now.

Questions to Ponder · Visit 5marksoflove.org to watch the videos

• What difference has having a relationship with God made in your life?
• What is God doing in your life? How can you be an evangelist of the Good News?
• What special memories of God are you carrying with you today?
• What can you let go of to foster “the Kingdom within”?
• How can you make a difference in your own life, and in the lives of others?
**Listening Hand**

In the space below, you will find a hand with five fingers. Drawing from your list of names of people who are or have been channels of God’s Good News to you, choose one name to write on the tip of each finger. During the week, try to contact each of these people - in person, or by email or phone. Ask them to share their story with you. How did they come to know God’s love? What, for them, is “the Good News of God’s Kingdom”? How does this Good News shape the way they live? As you listen, record significant ideas, words or phrases on the palm of the hand drawing. Share these thoughts in your group, or with a friend.

Take a moment to “proclaim” to these five people what you have seen in their lives. Tell them how they inspire you and how their lives radiate Good News. Express your gratitude.

**Closing Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you reveal to us the Good News of God’s Kingdom. You are the incarnation of God’s love, the channel of God’s forgiveness, the messenger of God’s hope and healing. May we, like you, spread this Good News by our words and by our actions, day by day. Amen.

**Watch · Answer · Share #5marksoflove**
Teach
Teaching, baptizing and nurturing believers

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19-20)

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God - what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2)

Have you ever seen an empty lot, all grown up with weeds, and thought of the possibilities of what it could be? Or recognized the hidden charm and character of an old abandoned house? Or dreamed of something being made new and fresh? With time and care, these dreams can become reality.

Have you ever felt exhausted and worn down by life? Maybe you have eaten poorly and neglected your body, or spent too many late hours at the office with little rest. The possibilities of what ‘could be’ are still there. With care and discipline, health and balance can be restored.

Does your spirit ever feel broken down and abandoned, overgrown with weeds? Are you longing for a fresh beginning? A kind of restoration for the soul, perhaps? God offers us this gift of renewal through Baptism. In Baptism we are “marked as Christ’s own” and are adopted into God’s love forever. Baptismal waters provide new life and direction for the weary soul.

Having received this gift, we can continue to nurture it and draw strength from it. As individuals and communities, we are invited to grow deeper in the practice of our faith. So we go to Christ, the source of life and love, our teacher and caregiver. We follow his way as disciples - learning, growing, and living into God’s Kingdom here on earth.

We are not meant to do this alone. Following his baptism, Jesus invited others to join him and to accompany him on the way. In the early Church, communities of believers shared food and prayers, time and space. They grew in their faith together. They supported one another. In our own communities of faith, we are called to do the same. Every time we celebrate the sacrament of Baptism, we give voice to our promise to support the newly-baptized in their life with Christ.

What does a community of faith look like? How can we build and nurture caring, loving Christian communities today? How can these communities witness to Gospel values such as caring for the poor, honoring the dignity of every person and guarding the environment? How can we further one another’s conversion so that we all may become what God dreams for us to be?

As we move into this second Mark of Love – baptizing, teaching and nurturing new believers - pray that your heart will be open to the fullness that Christ has in store for you, in and through community.

Questions to Ponder · Visit 5marksoflove.org to watch the videos

· How have you experienced God’s Love? How does that experience inform how you love others?
· How have you experienced God in and through worship?
· In what ways are you helping form others? In what ways are you being formed?
· Who in your life can you help by bringing the baptism of the Spirit to them?
· What is the core of the Gospel (“Good News”) for you?
**Well of Life**

**“Prayer for the Day” column:** Each morning, write a short prayer based on that day's question from the Baptismal Covenant (for example: “Today, Lord, help me to see and to serve Christ in every person I meet.”) Watch for signs and opportunities that indicate how this prayer might be answered in the course of the day.

**“Reflection” column:** At the close of the day, record your findings in the third column. Describe ways you are living into (or hope to live more fully into) this particular aspect of the Baptismal Covenant.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Baptismal covenant</th>
<th>Prayer for the day</th>
<th>Reflection</th>
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<tr>
<td>Will you continue in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?</td>
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<td>Will you persevere in resisting evil, and whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?</td>
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<td>Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?</td>
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<td>Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?</td>
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We cannot live this covenant by ourselves. We need one another, just like Jesus and the apostles did. Pray for those who are on the journey with you. Be on the lookout for opportunities to nurture and care for one another.

**Closing Prayer:** Loving God, you are the ever-flowing source of new life. Cleanse and renew us. Make our lives a refreshing stream of love for others, and grow us into a community of faith that goes deep. Amen.

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Christ is already everywhere present in the world. He is with those who suffer in body, mind, or spirit. He is present in communities of poverty and despair. He is with those who live on the margins. He is with the lonely, the neglected and the sick. We are not called to bring Christ to people in need; he is already there. We are called to join him there – physically, if we are able, and by our prayers and gifts. We are invited to be in relationship with him where he is already present.

In order to love Christ, we must love our neighbors. In order to serve Christ, we must serve our neighbors. In order to be transformed by Christ’s love for all living beings, we must open our hearts and spread our arms wide. We must make room in our hearts for all those whom God holds in God’s heart, even our enemies and those who wish us harm. God loves each and every one – no exceptions!

Our hearts will become as wide as God’s heart only if we are willing to allow ourselves to be vulnerable; only if we come to listen and learn from those we would serve; only if we are willing to embrace and share with them our own hurts, struggles, joys and dreams; only if we are willing to be humbled and changed in the process. There is no place for pride or haughtiness in the service of Christ. There is no place for condescension, sympathy or pity. We come as fellow pilgrims on the way, willing to set aside our own needs and our own preferred ways of helping, in order to listen – and to listen deeply – to those who seek our help.

Wouldn’t it be easier to just send in a donation to a nonprofit organization? Or serve a meal once a month at the local soup kitchen? Donating time and money to worthy causes is laudable, but it can sometimes distract us from the deeper questions we ought to be asking. It can allow us to stay comfortably within the status quo. It can keep us from asking ourselves what sort of service might really stretch us, make us uncomfortable, challenge our assumptions about ourselves or others, or expose our biases?

As we consider the third Mark of Love – responding to human need by loving service – we are challenged to explore what this Mark truly means. We are summoned out of our comfort zones, and invited to open ourselves to the transforming power of Christ, the servant of all.

**Tips for God Sighting Map Activity**

*Service begins with relationship. It grows out of an awareness of others and their stories. Recall the ways in which Jesus related to people, seeing them as they were and welcoming them into his presence, perceiving their need and responding in love. Whom will you notice today? Where will you see Christ, alive and at work, as you move through your day? Throughout this week, look for “God Sightings” at home, at work or school, and in your community.*

*Early in the week, look close to home. Take a fresh look at the people with whom you live, or at your closest friends. Pay attention to their words and actions; notice their concerns; learn about their joys and struggles. How is Christ present in their lives? How might you serve one another in love?*

*In the middle of the week, focus on your neighborhood. Who lives near you? What do you notice or observe about them? How well do you know their stories, their hopes and dreams, their worries and fears? How might you be of service to them?*

*Towards the end of the week, expand your radius. What and whom do you notice in the community around you? Pay attention to the person in the grocery line, the stranger passing you on the sidewalk, the child or elderly person who glances your way. Try to imagine how Christ might be present in their lives. Strike up a conversation. Look for ways to be of service to them.*

**Questions to Ponder**

- How are you already responding to human need?
- For what place or situation in the world will you devote yourself to pray?
- What is the balance between your listening and your speaking?
- Who is “washing your feet”? How are you “washing” others?
- What is your unique way of participating in God’s Mission?
God Sighting Map
Mark your “God Sightings” on the map below. Start close to home, then move out into your neighborhood and community.

Create symbols that represent the kinds of needs you encounter in those around you. Mark them on your map. In a similar way, indicate places where you have noticed signs of hope and growth or renewal. Who or what has been a sign of God’s love to you today?

Closing Prayer: Gracious God, you are here. You are present with us and among us and within us. Help us serve and care for one another as we would care for you. Amen.

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What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

When the leaves and bark of a tree look sickly, it’s likely that there is something wrong deep within its trunk and roots. Pulling away the dead leaves won’t solve the problem. When skin develops a rash, there is typically something ‘off’ in the body that needs to be addressed. Putting ointment on the rash may offer temporary relief, but may not affect the underlying cause.

Getting to the root of a problem can be an exhausting process. It can take considerably more time and effort than dealing only with the surface symptoms. It often requires change, which is seldom easy. But in the end, it is the only path that leads to wholeness and health.

Where do we see signs of sickness in our communities and in our society? Where do we see situations that call for speaking the truth? Where are the wrongs that need to be made right? Where is there an obvious need for reconciliation and healing? Where do we see God already at work?

God was at work in Jesus, so we begin with him – with who he was, with what he said, with how he lived. He lived in this world but insisted that he was not of this world. He turned away from riches and honor to embrace the role of a servant. He called the poor “blessed,” and sought out the outcasts and strangers. He reminded his followers that the first would be last and the last first, and that the greatest among them would be the servants of all. By his words and his actions, he consistently “brought down the powerful” and “lifted up the lowly.” He turned the status quo upside-down.

Jesus is the Incarnation of God, and God is a God of justice, and of liberation, and of peace. God dreams of a world that is renewed and restored, and of a people who are healed and made whole. Where God reigns there is no oppression; no exploitation; no hatred, violence or injustice. This was the vision of the prophets. It was the vision of Jesus. It is this reign of God for which we pray when we say, “your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.”

The building of this reign of God begins with each of us. It begins with the awareness of how we comply with and benefit from unjust structures, and the willingness to change. It begins with honestly assessing our own fears, prejudices and hatreds, and eliminating every form of violence from our own lives. It begins with the cultivation of peace – in our own hearts, in our families and communities, in our churches and in our workplaces. And then it spreads – to our neighbors, to our fellow citizens, and to our world. Let God do this work in and through you.

Questions to Ponder · Visit 5marksoflove.org to watch the videos

- What desire do you feel within yourself to change the world for the better?
- How have you seen the power of God transforming unjust structures in society?
- What’s the one small thing you can do today to transform unjust structures, to pursue peace and reconciliation, and to challenge violence of every kind?
- What choices have you made that have contributed to the suffering of others?
- Where have you seen a spirit of mission that is respectful and curious?
Icons of Hope

How can we tear down our “idols” and create alternative visions rooted in truth? Let’s start with icons! Icons are images that open us up. They act as windows, letting the light of God shine in.

What are some images that would be suitable “icons” for the Kingdom of God? A picture of a garden could represent food security for all. An image of children playing could remind us of God’s desire for peace. In the window below (or on a larger sheet of paper), draw or paste pictures that help you recall God’s vision. Use photos from magazines or pictures from the web to create a collaged “icon” - a window that lets the light shine in!

Closing Prayer: You are light, and in your light we see light. Free us from the enslaving idolatries of our day. Open our hearts to a true vision of wholeness and peace, the eternal and abundant life which is your desire for us. Amen.

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God created this wonderful world in which we live – the fish and the birds, the trees and the fields, the rocks and the hills, and every living thing. And God created each of us, fashioning us in God’s own image and breathing into us the breath of life. “For you yourself created my inmost parts,” writes the psalmist. “You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I will thank you because I am marvelously made…” (Psalm 139:12-13). Life is a gift to be celebrated and shared.

But we often forget this wonderful truth. We begin to see life as a game in which we are all competitors. We begin to grasp, to cling, to hold. We defend what we have and look for ways to get more. When we see the world from this perspective, we view people and natural resources as objects to control or consume, or as obstacles or enemies to destroy.

In God’s great economy, however, all are worthy of respect. Every human being bears God’s image. Every living creature, every plant, every animal, reflects God’s glory. The whole creation sings God’s praise. When we recognize and acknowledge God as the Creator and Giver of Life, we come to realize that we are brothers and sisters in God’s great design.

And yet, often we are far from realizing this truth. Our greed and possessiveness have stripped the earth of its resources and spoiled its beauty. We have depleted it and drained it, polluted it and destroyed it. And now we find ourselves teetering on the brink of ecological disaster, having pushed the earth and its resources to their very limits. What must repentance look like now? Can we, will we, preserve and heal the planet that sustains our very life?

God’s mission is to renew the life of the earth. God is “making all things new” in Christ, and invites us to catch the dream of a reconciled and restored creation, and to give ourselves whole-heartedly to cooperate with God’s design. Jesus taught us to “consider the lilies of the field and the birds of the air,” to value their beauty and their worth. He taught us to limit our possessions, to share what we have, and to care for those who are in need.

Embracing the Mission of God means pledging ourselves whole-heartedly to this fifth Mark of Love – to strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and to sustain and renew the life of the earth. Once again, with humility we kneel before the Creator to seek wisdom and guidance and strength, recalling that the work is God’s. With gratitude and dedication, we take up our part in God’s work.

Questions to Ponder · Visit 5marksoflove.org to watch the videos

- How will choices that you are making today affect the web we are all part of?
- Have you discounted the power of prayer with regard to the restoration of creation?
- How do you really view creation – as “I-it” or as “I-Thou”?
- What is it in creation that captures your passion?
- How can we foster a sense of creation as “sacred”?

Tips for Creation Activity

For most people, relationships are what matters most in life. Our lives are enriched and sustained by loving relationships, and much of what we know about God we learn through our relationships with others. Healthy relationships require effort and commitment. The time and energy we give to sustaining healthy relationships reflects the value we place on them. We see our friends as gifts to be treasured and appreciated, and not taken for granted. We nurture and honor one another in love.

What if we were to value our relationship with the Creation in a similar way? What if we were to view every created thing as a gift to be treasured, appreciated and preserved? What if we were to imagine them as equal partners, sharing in the love of our Creator? What would a personal relationship with Creation look like?
Date with Creation

Nurturing a healthy relationship with the Creation takes time and intention. Start by scheduling a few “dates” with Creation this week! Find a favorite spot in nature to return to each day – perhaps sitting under a tree in your yard or walking to a nearby park.

In the space below you will find an image of Creation. A different cue is provided each day as a point of focus. The cues suggest ways of nurturing your relationship with Creation. Record your thoughts and feelings in the spaces provided throughout the week.

Listen: Sit quietly and listen to the sound of creation. What do you hear?

Offer thanks: Find a way to express your gratitude to the natural world. What could you say or do?

Protect: Stand up for the natural world. Find a way to care for the earth.

Be present: Heighten your awareness of the Creation. Touch the ground. Feel the wind. Connect.

Pray: Join your voice to the voices of all creation and offer God praise.

Closing Prayer: We praise you and we bless you, God of all Creation. With the mountains, we praise your glory. With the wind, we declare your power. With the birds, we sing to your Name! Thank you for creating us! Preserve in us the awe of wonder. Amen.

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Further Resources

The Brothers of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist are men of prayer, helping people pray their lives.

Start your day with “Brother, Give Us a Word,” a short daily email message from the Brothers. Dive deep into “Monastic Wisdom” and “Grow a Rule of Life.” Come on retreat with the Brothers, either at the Monastery in Cambridge or at Emery House in West Newbury, MA. To learn more, visit: www.ssje.org

The Center for the Ministry of Teaching at Virginia Seminary exists to support you, the wider church, living life marked as Christ’s own. Learning to live as individuals, households, and faith communities marked by Christ’s love is a lifelong and life-wide endeavor. We are here to provide resources and training for thoughtful, innovative Christian formation for all ages. Let us know how we can help you.

www.vts.edu/cmt - our home page: contact us, research, publications, reviews
www.buildfaith.org - proven practical resources for ministry with children, youth, and adults. Search, subscribe, contribute your content!

Virginia Theological Seminary’s Center for Anglican Communion Studies (CACS) exists to “promote and practice deeper community for the Communion.” The Center lives into this charge through three programmatic imperatives: Reconcile, Reflect, and Resource. CACS promotes reconciliation through intercultural and interfaith partnerships and events throughout the Communion.

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The Office of the Anglican Communion
The Five Marks of Mission first originated in 1984 from the Anglican Consultative Council and have significantly shaped thinking and practice on mission within the Anglican Communion and beyond ever since. Their beauty is that they are simple and yet profound. They have given dioceses, parishes and churches a practical language to engage with mission in a world needing hope which the Gospel of Christ brings. To learn more visit: