



# SAINT STEPHEN'S

## EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Saint Stephen's Rhythm of Life:  
Tuning My Heart Toward God™

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## Rhythm of Life: Tuning My Heart Toward God

With a deep desire to love God with all my heart, all my soul, all my mind, and all my strength--and to love my neighbor as myself--I prayerfully commit to do my best to order my life around the practices in this Rhythm of Life. I recognize the wisdom of reviewing my Rhythm of Life on a periodic basis to help maintain the discipline of the practice and to fine tune it. I will be gentle with myself when I fall short of my intentions and resume or adapt these practices as necessary as best I can. I see the purpose of a Rhythm of Life as more about my relationship with God, myself, and all of the created order, and less about rules.

A Rhythm of Life should be approached with humility. As a follower of Christ, we are to:

- Recognize God is God
- Accept God's desire for love, justice, and mercy as best for us and for the world
- Willingly receive direction
- Endure, even when facing challenges, and not grow weary
- Acknowledge our faults
- Learn to be content with less than the best
- Let go of a false sense of self
- Learn from community, history, and tradition
- Listen to those we might be tempted to call lesser than ourselves
- Speak kindly to, and about, others.
- Accept with serenity God's love which casts out all fear.

\*Adapted from *Spirituality and Practice 2020 Advent Series* with Joan Chittister

### **Why?\***

The first step to create your personal Rhythm of Life is to identify why having one is important to you.

What are you yearning to deepen your relationship with God?

What benefits do you anticipate in having a framework (similar to a trellis for plants) for your spiritual growth? How will relationships, health, and your life in Christ be impacted?

\*Adaptations from *Living the Way of Love* by Mary Bea Sullivan, Church Publishing, 2019.

### **Spirituality**

*"Be still and know that I am God."* Psalm 46:10

God is with us at all times and in all places. Setting aside intentional time for prayer, study, and worship enhances our awareness of God's presence. Returning again and again to receive and then offer God's love, with God's help, we grow in love. Being specific about how we incorporate these practices in our daily lives increases the likelihood that we will actually follow through.

How and when will you set aside time to pray and learn with God?

How often and in what way will you study scripture?

What practices of personal prayer will you commit to and when? What practices sustain you? Are you curious about other practices?

How often and in what way will you regularly worship?

Do you intend to set aside certain times to go away on retreat? And/or will you create the space for a private retreat at home?

Are you engaged in volunteer/community work of some kind? Is there a way you are already, or desire to, give back to your community?

How will you incorporate sabbath rest and play in your days/weeks/months?

### **Relationships**

*“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrong doing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-7*

Sometimes we are overwhelmed by tending to many different or complicated relationships in our lives. Other times we feel a sense of isolation and loneliness and perhaps desire more meaningful connections with others. Cultivating healthy relationships helps us to continue to better understand ourselves and others. Jesus chose to travel and teach in community. We, too, need community. Cultivating community requires time and attention. Balancing the need for solitude and community is an ongoing wisdom practice.

What relationships are most important to you?

How will you continue to/or begin to prioritize your time with those who are most important?

Where are you expending time and energy in ways that are contrary to nurturing your primary relationships?

Where might you be called to say “no” to be able to say “yes” to those who are priorities in your life?

The ability to offer and receive forgiveness is foundational to healthy relationships. Do you fully receive the forgiveness God has offered and continues to offer you? How do you practice forgiveness of others in your life? Do you struggle with forgiving yourself?

What support—spiritual director, therapist, etc. might enhance your ability to nurture healthy relationships?

### **Physical**

*“...do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you...?”*  
1 Corinthians 6:19

Jesus chose to become incarnate in a human body, sanctifying all of creation. How would we treat our own and others' bodies if we honored the sanctity of each and every one of us? We each have unique bodies and abilities—all beautifully and wonderfully made. The messages we were given about our bodies when we were growing up from our parents, the culture around us, even our faith communities, greatly impacts our sense of our bodies. Too much focus on our body can become a source of vanity or pride; too little or even lack of caring for our bodies a source of dishonoring the gift of life from God.

What messages were you given when growing up about your body? Sexuality?

How do you, or will you, regularly care for your body?

Exercise?

Nutrition?

Rest?

Is there a belief about your body that is harmful to your wellbeing? If so, what support might be helpful to heal this pain in your life?

How do you practice care of the body of creation—earth, our planetary home?

### **Financial/Organizational**

*“For where your treasure is there your heart will also be.”* Matthew 6:21

All that we have is a gift from God. How we approach our financial lives reflects our sense of gratitude to and trust in God.

How would you describe your relationship with money?

What percentage or amount of your financial resources do you or will you return back to God by supporting faith communities, non-profits, and people in need?

What percentage or amount of your financial resources do you or will you save for future needs such as education, weddings, retirement?

Is there a place in your life that is calling for organization or simplicity? When and how and with what help could you move toward organizing or simplifying?

### **Vocational**

*“Because we know that this extraordinary day is just ahead, we pray for you all the time—pray that our God will make you fit for what he’s called you to be, pray that he’ll fill your good ideas and acts of faith with his own energy so that it all amounts to something. If your life honors the name of Jesus, he will honor you. Grace is behind and through all of this, our God giving himself freely, the Master, Jesus Christ, giving himself freely.”* 2 Thessalonians 1:11 The Message Bible

Is the work/schooling/volunteer service that you are doing in line with your values?

Do you have a sense of purpose and meaning about the way in which you offer your gifts to the world?

Would you say that you have a healthy balance between time spent on your vocation and time for other aspects of your life? Or are you too busy? Are you desiring more vocational stimulation? What one step could you take to re-balance if necessary?

How do you plan to grow in your vocational competence?

### **Notes**

It is with gratitude that we recognize the foundational work of the Living Compass Spirituality and Wellness Initiative in the creation of this Rhythm of Life resource. [www.livingcompass.org](http://www.livingcompass.org)