



# Commoners Rule of Life

## Introduction

A Commoner is a baptized person who has committed to God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) in the ordinary activities of our lives. A Commoner recognises that our status in life is not important but rather our space and commitment to love God and love others is our driving motivation. We are people who live in and amongst the communities of which we are a part, sharing the Kingdom of God from within. Commoners share in the spiritual life together, drawing from the same well of devotional rhythm.

We pursue a life in Christ and in service to the world around us through the creation of space for God to transform us by His Holy Spirit with his Grace and in turn, to use us for his purposes. We do so with the following disciplines:

### 1) Immersion

The Commoner will seek to immerse her/himself in the mystery of Christ through...

- a. **Word:** the Commoner will engage in ongoing study of the four canonical Gospels, alone, in a small-group setting, or in a formal class. The goal of this is not intellectual knowledge so much as the nurture of a warm and living love of Christ and a further exploration of the mystery of Christ as presented in Scripture. Study of the whole Bible, as well as of other rich Christian writings is also highly encouraged.
- b. **Sacrament:** the Commoner will affiliate with an established Christian community (church) in which the celebration of Holy Communion is practiced. The Commoner will attend church services regularly in the chosen congregation and participate actively in the worship life of the church, paying special attention to the celebration of Holy Communion however it may occur.
- c. **Service:** the Commoner is to be open to opportunities to serve in activities of mercy and compassion available through their chosen congregation or other avenues.

### 2) Common life

- a. The Commoner will be knitted into a Common Band of other members who are engaged in the Commoners Rule of Life, the daily rhythm of prayer and following the Guidelines for Common Bands. If one is not available the Commoner will seek or create, whenever possible, a small-group setting where a real shared life in Christ may be lived. Such small group communities may change or come and go as time goes on.
- b. The life of the Commoner is not meant to be restricted to one specific state of life. The Commoner is to strive to form authentic Christian community with those whom she/he lives. This shall be a life based on prayer, hospitality, service, and love in charity. A first step in living Common Life is naming and declaring blessed those communities of which the Commoner is already part, whether familial, professional, or intentional, and infusing their life together with Common Christian values as expressed in the life of Jesus Christ recorded in scripture.

### **3) A life of prayer**

- a. The Commoner will enter the rhythm of daily prayer available in Common Prayer where possible. If Common Prayer is not available the Commoner will find other sources to pursue a healthy rhythm that involves daily praise, self examination, silent meditation, confession, Bible reading and prayer for others.
- b. The Commoner shall practice intercessory prayer as an essential part of her/his vocation, and shall pray for those in need.
- c. The Commoner shall pray for other Commoners, those within the church congregation they are a part of, for peace in troubled parts of the world, repentance from the ways of violence and power, and for the poor and the oppressed.

### **4) Fasting**

Jesus encouraged fasting as a humble discipline and since then it has been a central element of the Christian life and the practice of the Church. Therefore the Commoner shall follow the words of Jesus and the spirit of this discipline in the heritage of the Church by honoring the tradition of fasting. The Commoner is invited to knit the practice of fasting into their life in a way that is appropriate and not detrimental to one's health.

There are many reasons in Christian tradition for fasting. One honored reason is fasting in solidarity with those who suffer hunger or injustice. Such fasting may be undertaken with a larger call to fast in regard to a particular cause or event.

It is to be remembered that fasting is a tool and aid, never a goal, and is to be mitigated or discontinued whenever it seems to threaten physical, mental, or spiritual health.

There are many methods of fasting and these can be discussed in the Common Bands. One regular method is that encouraged by John Wesley and used by the early Methodist Movement. It involved going without solid food after the evening meal each Thursday until mid-afternoon each Friday and using that time as a focus for prayer.

However one chooses to do it, the Commoner is encouraged to weave fasting into their pursuit of the Common Life.

### **5) Accountability**

- a. The Commoner is to regularly share in their Common Band about the joys, sorrows, and challenges of the life undertaken in the Rule and where we have encountered God.
- b. The Commoner shall practice Reconciliation and seek to live a reconciled life, accepting the free gift of the mercy of God and living at peace and wholeness with others.
- c. The Commoner is encouraged to actively engage in confession with a trusted, mature Christian.
- d. The Commoner shall seek to be a reconciling presence in the world, courageously witnessing to the Prince of Peace at all times.
- e. The Commoner is to remain aware that all things spring forth from God and are to be given back to God joyfully. The Commoner shall embrace giving to the local congregation where the Commoner has taken spiritual root. A regular donation to work amongst the poor is also strongly encouraged. If the Commoner is not already engaged in such giving, the work of TEAR Fund ([www.tearfund.org.nz](http://www.tearfund.org.nz)) is recommended.

## **6) Service and witness for justice**

- a. The Commoner shall regard deep awareness of the real-life sorrows, joys, and struggles of the world as intrinsic to her/his rhythm of life.
- b. The Commoner shall pray for a more just world, seek to raise her/his consciousness of the struggle of the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed, and seek ways in which she/he may actively work on behalf of justice. Christ may be encountered on a picket line or in a politician's office as readily as he may be in prayer.

## **7) Pilgrim identity**

- a) The Commoner shall remember that he/she is a pilgrim on earth, and will seek ways to "tread lightly", remembering that the true home of the Christian is in Christ.
- b) The Commoner shall observe simplicity in her/his use of the world's good, remembering that the life of a religious is meant to mirror the truth that true happiness is found in Christ, as well as the fact that most of the world lives in hunger and want in order that the privileged may live in luxury. Excessive accumulation or consumption is antithetical to the life and witness of the Commoner.

## **Conclusion**

This Rule of Life is not a set of laws. It acts as a guide for the endeavour to open space in our lives for God to transform us through his Grace and to use us for his purposes. It is understood that not all of the practices set forth will be adhered to all the time and we trust in God's mercy to carry us in our low times. We therefore also extend that mercy to each other.