

The Customary of The Companions of St. Luke, OSB

Guidance for the Community and Its Members



January 19, 2023

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The Customary of The Companions of St. Luke – OSB

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I. Our Customary and Charism

The Constitution of The Companions of St. Luke provides an overview of the nature of our Christian Community, authorized by The Episcopal

Church (Title III, Canon 14). *The Customary of The Companions of St. Luke*, in turn, articulates expected practices of our dynamic and dispersed community and its members that reflect our intent to abide by the broader principles included in the Constitution and to be responsive to changing needs. Supplemental details related to implementation of these expected practices are provided in Appendices 1-6 of this Customary.

Our community, The Companions of St. Luke (CSL), was formed to exemplify Benedictine spirituality and practices in a manner consistent with our times under the Rule of St. Benedict. We are committed to the rule's core tenet of *preferring nothing whatever to Christ*. This unadorned version of our vision and essential commitment is what bonds our members together in community.

A. Monastic Vows. We are also committed to fulfilling our vows of stability, obedience, and *conversatio morum suorum* (fidelity to monastic life). These vows have been defined by many monastics over the ages and reflect the spiritual journeys of those individuals and communities who have gone before us. We are called to embrace these vows as our own as we listen to God and one another with open hearts and minds and pursue a way of life often viewed as countercultural.

B. Spiritual Practices. The CSL's mission of being Benedictines as a dispersed community, integral to our charism and vision, is and always has been a life devoted to Christ in constant prayer, in *lectio divina* (sacred reading), and in service.

1. The *Opus Dei*. Nothing is to be preferred to the work of God (*Opus Dei*), which includes prayer and, when possible, participation at the Eucharist. Professed members vow to be bound to the recitation of the four-fold Divine Office and oblates promise their recitation of Matins and Vespers from the Divine Office. As a dispersed community, the CSL has established an

electronic application of the *Opus Dei* (www.benedictineprayers.org) that contains the complete Divine Office.

2. The Oratory. St. Benedict tells us that the oratory is set apart for prayer and nothing else is to be done there. Each member should try to set aside some quiet place for prayer and meditation.

3. Lectio Divina. This special type of sacred reading is inseparable from our personal prayer and meditation. Each member is expected to set aside ample time for both.

4. Service. Our ministries will take various forms as we are called to serve as witnesses for the Benedictine rule of life in our local communities and beyond, and, in the spirit of our patron, St. Luke, we all bring healing through contemplative prayer and associated responses to a wounded world.

II. CSL Membership

Our community, founded in 1992, consists of professed members and oblates. These categories relate to different expectations regarding church affiliation, formation requirements, and recitation of the daily office. Overlaying the basic eligibility requirements is the expectation that all members are seekers of God and are called to be part of the CSL's Benedictine community.

This significant expectation is equivalent to a mutual covenant between members and the community. Members (from their initial acceptance onward) are to discern (while studying, praying, and 'living in community') whether the discipline, expectations and responsibilities of Benedictine life is truly God's call for them. Concurrently, the community's responsibility is to discern (through the formation process) if the member understands these expectations and responsibilities of the call to become a Benedictine religious (*see* Appendix 1).

A. *Professed Membership*. This type of membership is available for those candidates who have made their profession as Benedictines or who are preparing to take that step with the CSL *and* are baptized or received as Episcopalians or Anglicans in communion with the See of Canterbury and are active in their parishes. The superior shall confer with the bishop visitor if persons apply for membership and are members in good standing with a church in communion with The Episcopal Church (TEC), but not with the See of Canterbury, before processing their applications. Candidates must be able to attend CSL convocations and to read, write, and speak English. They also: must be 21 years of age or older; are not under vows in another religious order or

community, and; have been interviewed and have completed an application for vowed member-ship. Upon acceptance as a candidate for professed life, the candidate is welcomed into the community and supported by a senior member during a period of formation and discernment. This and other professed stages and full oblation (*see below*) are earmarked by rites of passage as identified in *The Rituale for The Companions of St. Luke, OSB*.

1. Welcome. The candidate is welcomed into the community as a postulant. Postulancy is a period generally of at least one year for individuals to discern, with the help of a formation guide, if God is truly calling them to live under the Rule of St. Benedict as a professed religious.

2. Novitiate. The novitiate is the stage following postulancy. It continues the member's discernment and includes the assumption of a monastic habit and a religious name. As part of the ceremony of clothing and naming, the candidate for the novitiate donates clothing to the CSL. This represents the moving away from the secular world towards the life of a Benedictine religious.

The novitiate is a two-year period of study and prayer. Its purpose is to build and strengthen the novice's recognition of the religious vocation and to engender love for the monastic lifestyle and community. Formation guides assist members with deeper exploration of the religious experience and their intentions. Novices may, with the approval of their formation guide, petition the superior to make annual profession — or pursue other options (*see Section VI below - Change in Member Status*).

3. First Profession. Annually-professed members are those who make their first profession which is renewed annually for two years. This is a three-year period of intense discernment and completion of a related project and study. This discernment phase is supported by mentors and is to result in a decision about whether the annually professed are to live the rest of their lives dedicated to God and to fulfilling their CSL monastic vows or to proceed otherwise (*see Section VI below - Change in Member Status*).

4. Life Profession. Taking life-professed (solemn) vows is the final and most important step for a CSL member who has been praying, studying, providing service, and developing deeper relationships with both God and community members – for at least six-years. After completing the required CSL formation and discernment, gaining approval by the superior, and being ratified by life-professed members, life profession is made as an expression of commitment to both God and to the CSL community. Special notice by the community is to be taken every ten years on the jubilee anniversary of a life-professed member.

B. Oblation. Oblate members are important to the expression of Benedictine religious life. They have a vocation defined by their own tradition and history and contribute, together with professed members, to the diversity and vitality of the CSL. Oblate membership is available for those baptized candidates who are members of any Christian church; are able to read, write, and speak English; are 21 years of age or older; do not hold dual membership with another community without permission of the CSL superior; and have completed an application for oblate membership after an initial interview. Novice and full oblate members are expected to attend the spring convocation. However, for non-residents of the USA, Canada, or Mexico who are unable to travel to convocation, reception can be accommodated in a special online service. Further, attendance by all members is required at online CSL Chapter meetings; and all members are encouraged to attend available online prayer services (*see* Appendix 1).

1. Novice Oblation. Upon acceptance, the candidate is received as a novice oblate, enters into a formation process of study, prayer, and discernment for a minimum of two years, and receives support and supervision from the dean of oblation or an oblate formation guide.

2. Full Oblation. Upon completion of the formation process and approval of the superior, the novice oblate has a formal reading of promises and is clothed and named as a full oblate. As for life-professed members, special notice by the CSL is to be taken every ten years on the jubilee anniversary of a full oblate.

Note that continuing education for potentially life-long CSL Benedictines is an important activity to deepen one's relationship with Christ and the body of Christ. Full-oblate and life-professed members are encouraged to participate in programs to be developed as part of implementation of *A Five-Year Plan for The Companions of St. Luke* (*see also* Formation, Section III.D below).

III. Formation

As a dispersed community, the CSL's formation programs for both professed and oblate members are distance-learning opportunities with set curricula. The program requirements are defined in formation manuals created for each type of membership and are provided, as applicable, to members who are supported by an assigned formation guide or approved mentor. In addition, some online group-based options are available as a complement to what is provided by the formation manuals.

A. True Formation. The formation process is not an intellectual exercise; it is a

spiritual process of growth and transformation. The formation programs are designed to help each person discern if the CSL's form of Benedictine life is truly God's call, and to transform one's concept of faith and response to that faith by living into the Rule of St. Benedict. Each program is an expression of our Benedictine vows and is a balance of prayer, study, and work.

B. *Daily Prayer.* Prayer is to begin and end each day as well as these daily activities: practicing *lectio divina* (sacred reading); reading segments of the Rule; studying selected books to explore and expand their faith and their understanding of the Rule and Benedictine spirituality; and reporting on what has been discovered, faithfully and in a timely manner.

C. *Rigorous Formation.* Challenging programs are key to growth. Formation for both Benedictine profession and oblation is centered on formation manuals

developed for both forms of membership. Additional support and guidance are provided by a formation guide assigned to the member. For the members wishing to be in life profession, the formation program is three years of study and reflection, followed by three years of focused discernment centered on a project or guided work. For those called to be full oblates, their formation program is two years of study and work. However, it is understood that as a dispersed community, with members living and working in the world, unanticipated events or situations may develop that will affect the ability of members to maintain the study schedules as described in their formation syllabus or plan. In dealing with a special circumstance, as applicable, the formation guides and deans of professed and oblates are to work with members to develop a formation schedule that supports the formation process and to advise the superior of the adjusted schedules.

D. *Lifelong Journey.* A lifelong process of formation is essential for member transformation and the superior, the CSL Council, and the deans of formation shall make suitable provisions both for continuing formation and education for the community as a whole and for all members to grow in knowledge, service, and love of their respective vocations and of the community.

IV. Member Precedence and Use of Initials

One way of acknowledging the relationship among CSL brother and sister monastics is to make note of how long a person has been a member. For example, the precedence or order in which members are seated for group prayer at

convocations is ordinarily determined by their date of entrance as a member of the CSL and not by their age, gender, vocation, or other identifier. Another way of facilitating introductions is by the use of post-nominal initials on name tags or written signatures that relate to vocation and stage of formation. For professed members: postulants follow their names with p/OSB, novices with n/OSB, and the professed with OSB. For oblates: novice oblates follow their names with nObl/OSB and full oblates with Obl/OSB.

V. The Monastic Habit

The habit is an outward and visible sign of our consecration to Christ in the monastic life and represents the yoke of Christ we have accepted. It is one way that the CSL brothers and sisters have to serve as witnesses to the larger world and to promote stability and solidarity within the community. The basic Benedictine habit consists of a tunic and scapular and is traditionally black in color. It is blessed at the time a member first receives it and is to be cared for and worn appropriately.

- A. ***Professed Habit.*** The basic habit worn by members in profession or in formation for profession is modified in various ways depending on gender and stage of formation. Professed members wear a black tunic and a hooded scapular. Women who are in formation for profession may choose to take the black veil and wear a scapular without a hood instead of wearing a hooded scapular. After annual profession, sisters may elect to wear a white cap under the veil. Black belts are short for novices and long for the professed. A *cuccula* is a unique outer garment worn, if determined appropriate by the superior, as part of the Ceremony of Making Life Profession. In addition, members who are life professed and are not ordained clergy may wear a white collar behind a black 'monastic's collar' to cover the notch in the collar of the tunic. This is necessary to minimize confusion with clergy who always wear a white collar under their shirts or cassocks.
- B. ***Oblate Habit.*** The habit for both men and women in full oblation consists of the tunic, without any white at the neck, a short black belt, and the scapular without a hood. Women oblates do not wear the veil.
- C. ***Symbolism.*** Consistent with the symbolism of the black monastic habit and expected behavior while wearing it, shoes and clothes beneath the habit should be black. Accessories and other things that draw undue attention to the person should be avoided.

D. *Wearing the Habit.* Some restrictions apply to when the habit may be worn. All members are to wear their habits at online CSL meetings and at convocations. Professed members, with their local clergy's permission, also may wear them at their local churches when doing ministry work, but generally not when engaged in secular activities. Oblates, with both the superior's and their local clergy's permission, also may wear them for worship and ministry but not for secular work. Professed and full oblate members may be buried in their habits. If members attend a funeral for a brother or sister, it is appropriate to wear their habit at the service. If a parishioner of a parish has passed on, with the priest's approval, the member may wear their habit at the service. It is important to confirm that the symbolism of the habit (worn alone or in combination with clergy attire) is useful and edifying in a given circumstance and does not become an occasion for unnecessary strife or confusion.

VI. Change in Member Status

Sometimes either by a strong call of the Holy Spirit or because of changes in a member's situation, a member may request or be required to make a change in membership status. One example of changed circumstance is a professed member who is no longer an Episcopalian but who has the option of becoming an oblate member.

A. *Professed Life to Oblation or Vice Versa.* After petitioning the superior, having discussions, and receiving approval of the superior, a member may move from the professed-life track to the oblation track – or vice versa. Based on the formation stage exited, the member will transition to an appropriate new stage of formation as detailed in procedures administered by the formation deans.

B. *Transfers from Other Religious Communities.* The CSL shall consider persons who are living as a religious in another community for membership provided certain conditions are met.

1. Transfer Eligibility. Requirements for professed membership include those identified in Section II of this Customary, together with additional required information, documentation, and interviews.

2. Formation, Naming, and Clothing. Specifics for the transferred member are dependent on the stage of spiritual formation achieved in the transferring community. For example, if the religious is in annual vows in the first community, the transferred member shall be received as a postulant and begin the postulant formation program identified in the CSL's formation manual, with assistance of an assigned formation guide. However, the novitiate program and

the annual vows process may be restructured and shortened at the discretion of the superior after consultation with the applicable dean. The superior and formation deans should be consulted for more specific details related to the process for members transferring from another religious community.

C. *Probation and Leave of Absence.* Specific behavior or personal circumstance may result in a suspension of regular membership status.

1. Probation. All members are considered to be in good standing unless they have been put on probation by the superior due to serious infractions of the Rule of St. Benedict, the Constitution, this Customary, or other serious infractions that have disrupted the community. The superior is to consult with the CSL Council by appropriate means before imposing probation. A member can return to good standing after reconciliation with the community and removal of probation status by the superior, who has consulted with the CSL Council.

2. Leave of Absence. The superior may grant a leave of absence to any member of the community after conferring with the CSL Council. The petitioner's reasons for the request and any conditions placed on the petitioner are to be noted and kept on file. During the approved absence, which shall not exceed three years, the religious remains subject to the authority of the superior and to the obligations of promises or vows made for the duration of the leave of absence; and the religious shall not exercise any Chapter rights during the approved leave.

D. *Separation and Secularization.* Despite best intentions at the beginning of a member's spiritual journey with the CSL, voluntary or involuntary reasons for separation from the community may emerge. Requirements for discharge are dependent on stated reasons and membership category.

1. Postulant, Novice, Oblate, and Annually-Professed Member Separation. Members who discern that religious life with the CSL is not God's call for them may petition the superior for release from their promises or vows. The superior has the authority to dismiss or release a postulant, novice, oblate or novice oblate at any time after conferring with the CSL Council. Annually-professed members may be separated from the community provided they live under their vows until the year is complete, at which point the vows, not being renewed, are no longer binding. Otherwise, they may petition to be secularized as well as separated from the community if they determine that continuing to

live in accordance with their vows for the remainder of their term is impossible.

2. Life-Professed Member Voluntary Separation. Those members who have taken life-profession vows and no longer can be faithful to them may petition for separation from the community and for secularization. The gravity of this crisis means that the members must embark on a process of discernment of at least six months to discover whether the vocation with the CSL is beyond resuscitation or whether it can be healed. During this period, the member is to be placed on a leave of absence. Release from CSL membership is by the superior or and release from the Benedictine vows is by the bishop visitor. If the separation is because of a desire to become a solitary or to transfer to another community, the member's vows will be held by the designated clergy. If the separation is because there is no desire for religious life, secularization procedures are managed by the bishop visitor.

3. Life-Professed Member Involuntary Separation. A life-professed member may be dismissed upon recommendation of the superior and then secularized by the bishop visitor. Dismissal is to be resorted to only after other remedies have been pursued. Dismissal will be considered for seriously divisive, disruptive, or violent behavior exhibited at convocation or elsewhere. Such behavior may include abuse or disrespect of others, fiduciary misconduct, or conviction for a felony under civil law. Given the severity of this remedy, due process procedures and the right of appeals to the bishop visitor are available. If dismissal is decided, separation from the community is immediate after any appeals are resolved; the bishop visitor then shall initiate secularization. Note that special provisions exist for dismissal, if necessary, of the superior of the CSL. Specific details related to involuntary separation of both professed members and of the superior (*see* Appendix 4) are available in documents on file with the CSL community.

VII. Community Leadership

Leadership for the CSL is provided by elected and appointed brothers and sisters from within the community. The key positions of superior, prior, deans and treasurer (together with their terms of office) and of elected CSL councilmembers are identified in broad form in the CSL Constitution. The official leadership and the community are dependent on engaged and supportive CSL members and also on guidance available in core and related documents.

A. *The Superior.* The CSL organization structure reflects the relatively unique

nature of our Benedictine community in that it is collaborative and consensual while being spiritually guided and administratively led by the superior. The superior, an elected and unpaid CSL member called abbot or abbess, is assisted by appointed and elected unpaid members to provide inspiration and guidance for the community. The superior is a life professed member at least 35 years of age. The term of service is five years, and the superior cannot serve a second consecutive term (*see* the CSL Constitution, Section III). At the end of the superior's term, the community will not ask him/her to assume any leadership role for one year.

Spiritual leadership by the superior includes interpretation of the Rule of St. Benedict and teaching by example. Mutually beneficial connections with TEC and other Christian or Benedictine communities, with assistance by the bishop visitor, are to be developed and maintained to ensure the CSL is a viable member of and witness for the 'body of Christ'. Within the community, the superior has a key role to fulfill in supporting the formation and growth of all its members from initial contact with the community through their potentially life-long membership.

Administrative leadership by the superior includes facilitating a collective vision for the future of the community, appointing the prior, deans and treasurer, fostering future leaders of the community, leading CSL Council meetings, approving decisions related to new and existing members, envisioning the direction of convocations (*see* Section IX below), overseeing financial matters, and ensuring the availability of the CSL's core documents. Additional expectations of this position may occur as the community evolves.

B. *Appointed Leadership.* The superior is empowered, after consultation with the CSL Council, to distribute leadership and to share administration by choosing subordinate officers and allocating specific areas of responsibility to CSL brothers and sisters. These senior leadership positions include, but are not limited to, a prior, deans for professed life and oblation, and a treasurer.

1. The Prior. The prior serves primarily as the deputy administrator for the community. The prior chairs CSL Council meetings in the absence of the superior, currently serves as the coordinator of the CSL semi-annual convocations, oversees availability and maintenance of administrative documents, and contributes in other ways to the community, as requested by the superior. The prior, in turn, is assisted by others as needed.

2. Deans. The deans assist with the management of designated aspects of community life. They may be assisted (as illustrated in the items below) by other members to fulfill the deans' areas of responsibility. To ensure continuity and availability of information, the deans are expected to facilitate the development and implementation of appropriate policies and procedures, program manuals, or other documents that provide guidance for the efficient and effective administration of the community. The term of each dean ends 90 days after the blessing of a new superior.

Dean of Professed Life. This person, a life-professed member appointed by the superior after consultation with the Council, is responsible for development and maintenance of the formation and discernment programs offered to members moving into life profession. The dean is also responsible for the training and support of formation guides. The dean may appoint an assistant to help with these tasks.

Dean of Oblation. This person, an oblate member appointed by the superior after consultation with the Council, is responsible for development and maintenance of the formation and discernment programs offered to members moving into oblation. The dean is also responsible for the training and support of oblate formation guides. The dean is expected to develop continuing education programs for oblate members, and is a member of the Formation and Education Committee described below in Section D.

3. Treasurer. The treasurer is appointed by the superior after consultation with the CSL Council. The treasurer manages income, disbursements, and investments; and maintains all financial records including pledging, and financial reports as defined by good accounting principles. The treasurer also develops financial planning for the community. The treasurer is supported by a Finance Committee, and with the approval of the superior and Council, may appoint an assistant.

C. *The CSL Council*. The CSL Council is led by the superior and currently has four appointed members: the prior, two deans, and a treasurer. The prior, deans, and treasurer serve during the tenure of the superior who appointed them, plus an additional 90 days into the term of the next elected superior. There also are four members elected by the membership during the winter Chapter meeting: two members are to be professed, one a novice member, and one an oblate member. Their terms are for one year beginning February 1. An elected member may serve three consecutive terms.

Council Duties include ratification of appointments by the superior; review of the annual budget; and approval of unbudgeted expenditures and identified borrowings. The superior and Council are responsible for the implementation of the CSL's Five-Year Plan as recommended by the permanent committees (*see below*). In addition, the Council makes recommendations to the superior related to human resource issues, certain violations of the Constitution or Customary, and proposed changes to the Customary.

Any member who has an issue for consideration by the Council is invited to present the issue to any councilmember. Minutes of the Council's meetings are to be kept and distributed to all members, in the spirit of full disclosure of business conducted.

D. *Permanent Committees.* These are committees created by the superior and Council to develop and manage member support and the spiritual, educational, and financial needs of the community. Other committees may be created and approved by the superior and Council, if deemed necessary and feasible.

1. Worship Committee. This committee develops and delivers religious services and guidance for Convocations and regional meetings and for online gatherings and prayer. The committee implements worship programs defined in the CSL's Five-Year Plan and assists with the maintenance of the *Opus Dei* online site by providing content to be incorporated into services, the prayers, and readings. This committee is chaired by the prior and is made up of members of the community. The superior is an *ex officio* member of the committee.

2. Member Support and Outreach Committee. The scope and definition of this new committee is evolving. The committee consists of members of the community, including a chair and councilmember liaison. Its charge is to develop and implement programs identified in the Inreach and Outreach segment of the Five-Year Plan for 2023-27 – including member support options unavailable elsewhere and the exploration of Benedictine spirituality opportunities with the Episcopal Church and other interested partners and seekers. The superior is an *ex officio* member of the committee.

3. Formation and Education Committee. This committee is co-chaired by the dean of professed life and the dean of oblation. The committee membership includes formation guides. The committee implements programs defined in the formation segment of the CSL's Five-Year Plan; and will contribute to the maintenance of all formation and discernment programs, online classes and

presentations at convocations, and will assist in the development and planning of continuing education programs for senior members. The superior is an *ex-officio* member of the committee.

4. Finance Committee. This committee is chaired by the CSL's treasurer. Its members are selected by the treasurer and confirmed by the superior and Council. The committee is to assist the treasurer in creating and reviewing the budgets, managing investments, and reviewing special financial requests. The superior is an *ex officio* member of the Finance Committee.

E. ***Other Appointments***. These positions include appointment by the superior of individual CSL members to assist the Council and CSL community with effective communications and administration. This list may be amended as deemed necessary by the superior.

1. Facilitator of CSL Prayer List. The facilitator (with member offerings) maintains weekly prayer lists for member and community prayers.

2. Porter. At the discretion of the superior, a senior life-professed member may be appointed as the porter for the community. The porter is to respond to inquiries about membership with the CSL and to prayer requests sent to the community via our website or Facebook page. *Prayer requests* (each for less than one week) will be forwarded to the prayer list facilitator. *For inquirers*, the porter shall meet with the person on Zoom or by telephone, and as appropriate, shall send the inquirer an application for membership and advise the superior of the person's intent. The superior will work with the inquirer moving forward.

3. Coordinator of Safe Church/Community Programs. This professed member and coordinator helps new members take the required Praesidium courses, informs and supports members to take required refresher courses, and maintains records.

4. Manager of Electronic Communications. This member manages our bulletin board (LIST_SERV), Zoom Account, and any future web-based tools.

5. Manager of CSL Websites. This person maintains CSL website registrations, works with web designers to implement changes to our website and *Opus Dei*. Content for these changes is to be provided by the appropriate committee(s) and the manager of websites is to work with committee representatives to assure that the content is web ready.

6. Manager of Facebook (FB) Accounts. This manager is responsible for maintenance of our public and private FB accounts and for control of their content.
7. Editor of CSL's e-Newsletter and Literary Journal. This member provides leadership for the production and delivery of these items.
8. Archivist. The CSL archivist collects and collates records, photographs, video and other content of the CSL and stores this content with the National Episcopal Archives.

VIII. CSL Core and Other Documents

Essential and supplementary documents of the CSL exist for study by postulants and novices and for reference by more senior members. These documents complement guidance by the CSL leadership and help to define how we are expected to live both as Benedictine individuals and as a dispersed community.

A. *Core Documents.* The Rule of St. Benedict provides the underlying basis and framework for our community. Several publications of the Rule are available. See the booklist in the CSL formation manuals or the *Rule of St. Benedict* within the *Opus Dei* online application. Translating the Rule into terms that speak to the existence and nature of our community is *The Constitution of The Companions of St. Luke – OSB*. This document is somewhat timeless and requires approval by life and annually-professed members before any changes to it are made. (See Section VII of the CSL's Constitution.)

Guidance as well as key information that flows from both the Rule and the Constitution and relates to expected practices of CSL members is provided by *The Customary of The Companions of St. Luke – OSB*. Changes to the customary to keep the document current and accurate may be proposed by a member, a committee or workgroup, the Council, or the superior at any time. After review by the Council, the proposal may be authorized and approved by the superior. Note that copies of the Constitution and Customary are included in all formation manuals and may also be obtained by contacting the superior; however, they may not be shared with non-members or other communities without approval of the superior.

B. *Formation Manuals for Profession and Oblation.* These documents are developed by the deans of each form of membership, are supported by the Formation and Education committee, and are approved by the superior. They

are made available to active members in formation and to their formation guides.

- B. *Other Documents.*** *A Five-Year Plan for The Companions of St. Luke* (June 2022), available from the superior, was developed to serve as a bridge between current practices and opportunities for the sustainability and well-being of our dynamic community. Additional documents used primarily for administration of the community include various records and reports, procedures, and manuals prepared by the superior, prior, deans, or treasurer (*see* Appendix 2 of this Customary).

IX. Community Meetings and Elections

As a form of new monasticism, the CSL is called to be imaginative as it creates and maintains opportunities for its members to meet face-to-face and online to worship together, to grow in fellowship together, and to conduct business.

- A. *Convocations.*** As a dispersed Benedictine community, the CSL is especially dependent on its week-long spring and fall convocations for its members to meet face-to-face and as a group for spiritual sustenance, fellowship, and conducting essential business. These convocations, approved by the superior and coordinated by the prior, include participation by each of the members assembled. Details about travel, lodging, and scheduled events are provided before each gathering. All members are expected to attend these convocations unless given permission by the superior to be absent. Members unable to travel for various reasons have the option of attending any livestreamed hybrid services.

Spring Convocations are highlighted by praying the daily offices and celebrating the Eucharist. Shared meals and other opportunities for fellowship are complemented by periods of silence for personal meditation and study. As part of the formal worship and service times, rites of passage for members reflective of their stage of monastic formation are honored by the community. These rites are identified in the *Rituale* referenced in Appendix 2 of this Customary. These special formation milestones are also celebrated more informally, such as during other times of fellowship and through CSL newsletters.

Fall Convocations have a special appeal for many CSL members. Although highlighted by praying the daily offices and celebrating the Eucharist and member-formation milestones (as are spring convocations), fall convocations

are more contemplative in nature and are less focused on conducting business. New members can often play a more visible role at these gatherings and more senior members have time to experiment with different spiritual practices and to lead discussion groups or be bathed in silence.

- B. *Chapter Business Meetings.*** The CSL convenes online Chapter meetings at least three times a year. Upon meeting the 51% quorum requirement, the Chapter approves the minutes of previous meetings and financial and other reports before additional items are presented for discussion and resolution.

The CSL Council presents a slate of candidates for elected Council representatives at the winter meeting. (*See* Section VII.C about the Council.) Members attending chapter may nominate a member from the ‘floor.’ If no nominations are offered, a vote on the slate of nominations from the Council are voted upon by attendees. NOTE: The chairperson may present a resolution allowing the prior to cast one vote for the entire slate. If a nomination is presented to Chapter, a vote is taken on the revised slate of candidates.

The timing of election of a new superior in a special Chapter meeting during convocation varies depending on availability of the bishop visitor. The election of a superior is to be called by the bishop visitor during the final year of the current superior’s term or if the current superior resigns, dies, or is removed.

- C. *Election or Removal of a Superior.*** Election of a new superior generally occurs as part of a special Chapter meeting held during convocations. Life and annually-professed members receive advance information regarding the slate of candidates and the process to follow for placing their votes. NOTE: Novices who have been approved for their first profession, but not yet received, may participate in the election. Section IV of the CSL Constitution identifies member voting rights and additional information about Chapter meetings and the election process that is maintained by the prior. Both the election and removal of a superior are serious decisions and specific procedures apply that include oversight of the processes by the bishop visitor, sufficient notice given to eligible voting members, and secured balloting provisions (*see* below and Appendix 3 of this Customary).

1. Election of a Superior. The bishop visitor will notify the community when a new superior is to be elected because of expiration of the five-year term of office of the current superior, the superior's resignation or death, or because of forced removal of the superior from office. All eligible and willing life-professed members over 35 years of age will be placed on the ballot.

The election takes place in the Oratory. All ballots are secret. Ballots are cast by eligible life-professed, annually-professed, and novices approved for their first profession. Absentee professed members may vote if they notify the bishop visitor before the meeting.

Up to three ballots are offered. For the first ballot, a member needs a two-thirds majority of the vote. Failing that ceiling, a second ballot is to be made that includes up to three members receiving the highest number of votes. A member who receives a two-thirds majority of the vote is elected. If no member reaches or exceeds that ceiling, a third ballot is presented, with the two members receiving the most votes on this final ballot. A member who receives a simple majority of the vote (51% or more) is elected as superior.

The bishop visitor will ask the elected member if (s)he accepts election. If the member accepts election, the community shall assemble in the oratory and all members in turn, following seniority, shall present themselves to the new superior for the superior's blessing. If the member elected does not accept election, the member with the second-highest vote will be considered elected and the bishop visitor will ask this person if (s)he accepts election.

2. Removal of a Superior. The removal of the superior is a serious decision that may have important consequences for the whole community. Therefore, the process should only be begun for the most grievous offenses. These include: a pattern of behavior not in accordance with the Rule of St. Benedict; violation of the canons and constitution of TEC and/or the CSL; neglect of the duties of the office of superior; misuse of community finances and monies; sexual harassment and/or inappropriate sexual behavior; and abuse of the authority of the office of superior (*see* Appendix 4, Safe Church Policy definitions of various forms of abuse). Based on a substantiated complaint and action by the bishop visitor, a two-thirds majority vote of the CSL Council, and a concurring Chapter vote by a three-quarters majority, the superior shall be removed from office.

X. Relationships and Communications

Effective ways of being a vital Benedictine community for our members and for those we serve is an ongoing challenge for the CSL – dispersed and everchanging.

- A. *Clergy Support.*** The CSL, although independent of any other Christian or religious community, is not an isolated entity and is very much connected to TEC and to the larger world (*see* CSL Constitution, Section I). For example, all CSL professed members are expected to be active members in their local Episcopal or Anglican churches. In addition, the CSL relies on clergy support provided by both a bishop visitor and a chaplain as referenced in the CSL Constitution, Section V.

The Bishop Visitor. The bishop visitor, elected by a two-thirds majority vote of the Chapter on the motion of the superior, serves for at least a five-year term as an essential bridge between the CSL and the greater church and as the ultimate guardian of the community. As required by TEC, the bishop visitor is to visit the CSL during a convocation at least once a year. During the visit, private interviews are offered and at least one sermon is delivered during a Eucharist. The bishop visitor is expected to provide ongoing spiritual guidance to the superior and to oversee the election and removal of the superior, as necessary. Member formation responsibilities include being informed of all professions to vowed life and ratifying any petitions for secularization or release from life profession. Additionally, the bishop visitor is to receive and hear appeals from members without hindrance from the superior, but is to make relevant decisions only after consultation with the superior and the CSL Council. Additional administrative duties include the approval of any changes to the CSL's Constitution.

The Chaplain. Unlike the bishop visitor position, which is required by TEC, the position of chaplain is one authorized and contracted by the superior on behalf of the community. This appointment is to be held by a non-member priest. The chaplain's responsibilities include visiting the community during convocations and meeting in confidence with any member who wishes to do so. The chaplain also serves as celebrant for the Holy Eucharist and shall participate in Benedictine rites if the bishop visitor is unavailable.

- B. *Safe Religious Community.*** An example of a CSL policy that reflects the community's witness and dual presence in the larger world and among Christian communities is the Safe Community Policy (*see* Appendix 4). This policy is not only required by the Episcopal Church (*see* Constitution Section V) but is necessary for the well-being of the CSL. It reinforces the Christian value of respecting the rights and dignity of all of God's children. The

minimum expectation is that abuse, be it sexual, emotional, or physical of any other person of whatever age, and member of the community or not, will not be tolerated and must be reported to the superior. All members are expected to read and become familiar with this policy (distributed to all members) and to complete required training. Members are also expected to be familiar with and to be in full compliance with the safe church policy of their home churches. A professed member, appointed by the superior, oversees the required training, maintains records, and facilitates implementation of the policy.

C. *Communication Tools and Services.* Effective communications are especially challenging in today's global and mobile society. For the CSL to thrive and meet the needs of both the community and our dispersed brothers and sisters, it is essential that all contribute, regardless of their personality type, perceived talents, or local obligations. The superior, CSL Council, prior, and deans and treasurer are available to support and facilitate the transfer of information and the exchange of ideas. Both in-person and technology-based communication vehicles and services are to be maintained and to be made available for the community.

1. *In-Person Communications.* Options that exist to promote face-to-face interactions and mutual relationships include: CSL spring and fall convocations (see Section IX of this Customary); regional member gatherings or retreats approved by the superior and the Council; and representation of the CSL by superior-appointed members at annual National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities (NAECC) meetings.

2. *Technology-Based Communications.* More extensive and technology-based options exist for remaining connected with others and nurturing the spiritual wellbeing and diverse ministries of CSL's membership. These include: our customized internet-based *Opus Dei* prayer and study application that allows CSL members to pray and study together 'in spirit' as well as on-line for some services; our web site (www.csl-osb.org); an audio-video conferencing tool; group email services; a public and private social media presence; and more conventional vehicles such as a newsletter, printed brochures, and use of phones and posted mail. Additional community relations efforts related to support of members and outreach to our local parishes and spiritual seekers continue to be explored as part of implementation of *A Five-Year Plan for The Companions of St. Luke*.

XI. Financial Resources and Stewardship

The CSL is guided by the principles of simplicity and hospitality and of balance and moderation expressed in the Rule of St. Benedict. In practice, the CSL's financial programs and services promote fiscal responsibility and stewardship of budgets and resources invested for the near- and long-term common good and purpose of our Benedictine community.

A. *Community Finances and Reporting.* As a religious organization, the CSL is accountable not only under the canons of TEC but is also accountable to various governmental regulations and authorities in the United States (*see* Appendix 5). These include the necessity for our community to be incorporated as a nonprofit entity and to be appropriately recognized by the Internal Revenue Service. It is the responsibility of the CSL leadership, especially the superior and the treasurer and finance committee to ensure sufficient monies are available to cover operational expenses and liquid assets the community owns and to timely report to the applicable authorities, as required. In the event of dissolution of the CSL, the assets and property not personally held are to be administered by the Council, as described in the Articles of Incorporation of The Companions of St. Luke, on file at the Secretary of State's office in Chicago, IL

1. Personal Pledges and Legacies. All CSL members contribute to the community financially and/or with gifts of their time and talents.
2. Membership Benefits. Benefits of membership include: spiritual support through formation programs and guidance; availability of semi-annual convocations, with community-provided lodging and some assistance with travel (*see* Appendix 6 for expense-related financial support for the superior and members); access to an array of communication tools and services (*see* Customary Section X); and opportunities to develop nurturing relationships with fellow Benedictines and spiritual seekers.

B. *Member Contributions.* Members contribute to the community and to their own development in ways that reflect their talents and circumstances. Some minimal expectations include daily prayers and study; serving as faithful representatives of the CSL within their local churches and the larger world; actively participating in CSL convocations and available work groups; and contributing financial resources in the form of delivering on their pledges and promised legacies.

1. Pledges. Annual member pledges are not considered as membership dues, but as thank offerings for God's generosity in bringing us together as part of the CSL community. All members are expected to offer a pledge of financial support to the community based on their personal and family financial situations. Guidelines for pledged amounts are available from the superior. Each member is to submit a pledge card to the treasurer yearly indicating the level of planned giving. These pledges are essential for budgeting and payment of expenses. Note that members are obliged to meet their own individual financial responsibilities, including payment of taxes and personal insurance premiums.
2. Legacies. By the time of life profession or making a full commitment as an oblate, it is hoped that members will be thoroughly inculcated with a spirit of simplicity and generosity that can and will discern those things essential for a lifestyle that lends itself to hospitality to all and care for the environment we share with all of God's creation. This is consistent with traditional expectations of Benedictines and with the implicit renouncing of all possessions and behavior that prevent full knowledge of God. Upon reflection, members are encouraged to express their intent (by providing a signed copy to the superior) to leave any legacies, stipends, trusts, endowments, or other gifts to their CSL spiritual home and community. The superior and the CSL Council shall seek competent advice for how best to invest and protect such gifts that, however defined, shall be considered as free-will gifts.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – A Summary of Community Expectations

Jesus said, “The first commandment is this: Hear, O Israel – The Lord our God is the only Lord. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.” [Mark 12:29-31]

St. Benedict expressed these great commandments in his Rule. The Companions of St. Luke build upon this Rule of life through our Constitution and this Customary. This Appendix provides a summary of key expectations of members and of our Benedictine community that are included in the several sections of the Customary.

Expectations of All Members

- Members are expected to live into the Rule of St. Benedict through daily prayer, meditation, and study, and to read our Constitution and Customary.
- Members are encouraged to participate at least once a week in online prayer services offered by the community.
- Members are expected to participate in our online Chapter meetings that are held at least three times a year.
- Members will be asked to assist in doing the work of the community. Those in formation will need to obtain permission from their formation guide before beginning the work.
- Members are expected to become familiar with the CSL’s safe community procedures and to complete required training offered by Praesidium and coordinated by a CSL professed member.
- Members will be asked to support the community financially. No set amount or percentage of income is demanded nor expected. Each member determines the amount to be given over the course of the year. Pledges are held in confidence. Financial issues that may limit or prevent giving should be discussed in confidence with the superior.

Additional Expectations for Postulant, Novice, and Novice-Oblate Members

The first years of CSL membership is a period of serious discernment by each person to determine if Benedictine life is truly God’s call. This is a critical activity for both the member and the community. In addition to the personal discernment concerning living into the Rule of St. Benedict, this is also a period of discernment for the community as represented by the member’s formation guide. Fulfilling the requirements stated here and in formation manuals are key ways for the formation guide to understand the member’s seriousness to become a Benedictine religious.

The formation programs are designed not only to educate about Benedictine life and spirituality; but, to develop the discipline of prayer, meditation, study and communication with others within the CSL.

- Members in formation are expected to complete their reports and reflections on a regular and timely basis, by following the appropriate syllabus schedule. Minor adjustments can be made after discussions and approval by their formation guide. Serious changes will need to be approved by the appropriate dean and the superior.
- Members in formation are expected to communicate regularly with their formation guide. They are expected to inform their formation guide of unexpected or important issues that may affect their formation program as soon as possible.
- Members in formation are expected to attend Chapter meetings, online education sessions, and other meetings called by their deans.

Additional Expectations for Our Members in Annual Profession

- Members in annual profession are expected to regularly discuss their discernment efforts with their mentor and, at the appropriate time, advise their mentor if they wish to make their life profession.
- Members in annual profession are expected to communicate regularly with their mentor and report their progress in completing their project as directed by their mentor. The member is to inform the mentor of unexpected or important issues that may affect their work as soon as possible.

Expectations Related to Our Convocations

The Companions of St. Luke meets twice a year as a community – traditionally at Conception Abbey in Conception, Missouri. For members and candidates for membership, the community covers the direct cost of the convocation. The member is responsible for travel expenses. The convocation is a full week between a Monday afternoon through a Saturday morning.

As a disbursed community, our convocations are an important focal point for community prayer, fellowship, and person-to-person meetings with formation guides and others. The spring/summer convocation is especially important because that is when we formally welcome candidates into the community and members transition to new levels in their formation and/or make either their first profession or life profession.

Because of the importance of these meetings to establish and maintain the CSL as a Benedictine community, we expect members to attend at least one convocation each year.

If you are in formation for profession, you should plan to attend the spring convocation each year you are in formation so you may be received into community, clothed as a novice, and move into the annual profession process.

If you are in formation for novice oblation, you should plan to attend the spring convocation each year you are in formation so you may be received into community and move into full oblation.

Special Circumstances Related to Convocation Attendance. If due to age, personal or family health issues, or family finances a professed or oblate member cannot travel to convocation, the member is to discuss the situation with the superior. It is hoped that the member will be able to meet other expectations described above. The superior and the member will discuss the situation and the superior may give dispensation of the attendance requirement. *Note: Members who have been excused from convocation attendance before October 2022 will continue to be excused from attending convocation.*

For Residents Beyond Canada, the United States, or Mexico. It is recognized that persons not living in North America may be unable to travel to our convocations. Therefore, oblate membership is possible in these situations. An exception for persons applying for oblate membership or who are in formation as a novice-oblate or who are in full oblation may be granted if the member or applicant agrees to these requirements:

1. Discusses the issue with the superior either by telephone or via Zoom audio-video conferencing.
2. Agrees to attend a special virtual service to be received as a novice oblate and later full oblation.
3. Agrees to attend either online Matins or Vespers services with the community once a week. The CSL will work to offer service times to accommodate time zone issues.
4. Agrees to attend online Chapter meetings – currently three times a year on a Saturday at an appropriate time to accommodate time zone differences.

Appendix 2 – A Summary of Administrative Documents

Documentation of processes and maintenance of records that implement the guidance provided by The Companions of St. Luke' (CSL's) Constitution and Customary is necessary to ensure continuity and effectiveness from one administration to the next.

A. *Information routinely distributed to members* is listed below. The items are distributed under the authority of the superior but the superior, prior, applicable dean, or treasurer may be contacted about these items.

- Annual and Multi-Year Budgets and Income and Expense Reports;
- Convocation Registration and Schedule Details;
- CSL Constitution and Customary;
- Formation Manuals by Member Category;
- Minutes of Council Meetings;
- Membership Directory;
- Notification of *Opus Dei* Application Changes and of Online Services; and
- Safe Community Policy and Procedures.

B. *Information related to the internal operation of specific offices* is outlined below. The extent and nature of information continues to evolve and to reflect ongoing organizational changes. Questions or requests for information about specific areas or processes should be directed to the superior who will follow-up with the prior, applicable dean, treasurer, or other community member.

- Administration and Communications:
 - > Community Historical Records, including legal documents and archived records;
 - > Convocation Materials, including Psalter; Special Services information such as the Rituale; Supplies Inventory; Convocation Planning; and Guidelines for Election of a Superior and Council Representatives;
 - > **Copyright** Approvals;
 - > Electronic Resources, including Website and *Opus Dei* Maintenance and Updates; and Social Media, Group Email Services, and Audio-Video Conferencing Guidelines;
 - > Five-Year Plan for the CSL, including Its Development and Implementation;
 - > Guidelines for Committee Work; and
 - > Memberships and Contacts related to: TEC; NAECC; Clergy; and Financial Reporting and Reviews.
- Finance:
 - > Annual and Multi-year Budgeting and Cash Flow Records;
 - > Church, State, and Federal Required Reports;
 - > **Guidelines** for Committee Work and for Financial Support of the CSL's 5-Year Plan Implementation; and
 - > Plans and Processes for Gifts and Bequests, for Investments, and for Internal Reviews.
- Formation:
 - > Guidelines for Committee Work;
 - > Manuals and Related Procedures and Supplementary Information for Formation Guides and Mentors;
 - > Member Status and Development Records;
 - > Monastic Habit Procurement;
 - > Processes Related to Inquirers; and
 - > Safe Church Training Records.

Appendix 3 – Election of a Superior

Election of a superior, occurring infrequently, is a significant event that affects the life of our community and its members as well as The Companions of St. Luke's (CSL's) connection with The Episcopal Church (TEC). As protector of the community and key bridge between the CSL and TEC, the CSL's bishop visitor manages the election process, serves as chief teller, and is supported by the CSL Council.

Process Summary

An overview of the process is included here as well as in the CSL's Constitution (*see* Section IV – Community Meetings and Elections) and in Section IX of the Customary. The following list provides additional detail about the election of a superior, who is to be a professed member in good standing and is at least 35 years of age.

1. When a new superior is to be elected, the bishop visitor shall notify the community at a Chapter meeting that an election shall occur at a special Chapter meeting during the next convocation or at another appropriate time that the bishop visitor and the CSL Council may agree upon.
2. Six months prior to the abbatial election, the current superior is to assign to the prior, a dean, or a life professed member the responsibility for assisting the bishop visitor in preparing for the election.
3. All eligible life professed members will be placed on the ballot for potential election as superior – unless physical or mental condition or another grave cause renders a life-professed member unable to carry out the office if elected.
4. Members in good standing who are life and annually-professed members or novices approved to make their first profession will serve as electors of a new superior.
5. An eligible elector who cannot participate in person in the election may submit a request by e-mail to the bishop visitor for an absentee ballot. The bishop visitor shall direct the prior or designated dean to e-mail the ballot to the member. The member shall print out the ballot, make his/her vote, place the ballot in an envelope, and sign and seal it. The ballot is to be mailed so that it is received by the bishop visitor no later than three (3) days before Convocation. Additionally, the CSL Council shall devise and implement appropriate procedures allowing absent eligible members to vote on subsequent ballots.
6. Immediately after Matins on the day selected for the abbatial election, the current superior shall place the shepherd's crook on the altar and announce that he/she is no longer the superior of the community. If the superior is too ill, has been involuntarily removed, or has died, the prior shall simply place the shepherd's crook on the altar.
7. The Eucharist (*A Votive of the Holy Spirit*) is then celebrated. After the Eucharist, the electors are given a charge by the Bishop Visitor.
8. Eligible electors shall gather in the Oratory to vote in person or by absentee ballot. Other members of the community shall gather in another meeting room.
9. The bishop visitor shall preside at the election and shall function as chief teller. He/she shall be assisted by two members of the community chosen by the bishop visitor. All shall be bound by the strictest secrecy.
10. Ballots shall be distributed with each eligible elector receiving one ballot.

11. A ballot box with a list of eligible electors next to it shall be set up on the altar.
12. Following prayerful consideration, each elector shall cast his/her ballot and place it into the ballot box and sign next to his/her name on the provided list.
13. The chief teller and his/her assistants shall open absentee ballot(s) and the name(s) of eligible electors voting shall be checked off the list and the ballots placed in the ballot box. After everyone has voted, the chief teller and his/her assistants shall compare the number of signatures on the list and the absentee ballots with the number of ballots in hand. They shall then count the votes.
14. For an election on the first ballot, it is required that a brother/sister receive at least two-thirds of the votes cast. Only if a two-thirds vote is achieved is the name of the superior-elect announced by the bishop visitor, who shall then make an announcement that a member has been elected. Should the first ballot prove indecisive, a second ballot is to be held similarly with those receiving the three highest number of votes in the first round being considered in the second balloting. If an absentee elector wishes to vote on the second or third round of the election, the teller or the members assisting are to call or otherwise contact the absentee electors to get their second vote. As before, it is required that a brother/sister receive at least two-thirds of the votes cast. Only if a two-thirds vote is achieved is the superior-elect's name announced.
15. Should the second ballot prove indecisive, a third and final ballot is to be held similarly with those receiving the two highest numbers of votes in the second round being considered in the third balloting. Election in the third round will be by a simple majority (51%) vote. Should a tie occur, the member having the longest tenure in the CSL is to be preferred.
16. Following the announcement of the result of a decisive ballot, the brother/sister elected signifies to the bishop visitor his/her acceptance of the office of superior.
17. When the brother/sister elected accepts election, he/she immediately becomes superior of the community.
18. The bishop visitor shall announce the member elected as superior to the community.
19. The community shall assemble in the oratory and the bishop visitor shall lead the superior to his/her chair and give him/her an episcopal blessing. All brothers and sisters in turn, following seniority, shall present themselves to the superior, acknowledging his/her election and asking for a blessing.
20. A mutually agreed upon date shall be set for a public blessing of the superior by the bishop visitor.

Appendix 4 – Safe Community Policies and Procedures

The Episcopal community of The Companions of St. Luke (CSL) is committed to being a safe and respectful community. This policy and related procedures are based on the principles published by The Episcopal Church (TEC) and the Rule of St. Benedict. The welfare of all persons is of primary concern:

- All persons, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, socio-economic status, religious belief, and/or sexual identify have the right to be safeguarded from abuse.
- It is everyone’s responsibility to report any concerns about harassment or abuse to the superior or prior, and it is the responsibility of the CSL leadership to conduct a full investigation.
- All incidents of alleged poor practice, misconduct, and abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All personal data will be processed in accordance with the requirements described within this policy and the Data Protection Act 1998. (*From the Episcopal Church policy on abuse – 2018*).

† St. Benedict uses individual instruction, excommunication within the community, and finally separation from the community to deal with behaviors that are harmful to individuals or the community. As the primary rule of life for members of the CSL, the Rule of St. Benedict as it relates to the treatment of each person complements the standards established by TEC.

A. Policy Statement. The CSL† recognizes that all people regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation have an equal right to protection from all types of harm or abuse†† and is committed to safeguarding the welfare of all members.

† Best practice is that safeguarding duties extend to whole organization policies, values, and ethos and include all staff. It is better to be broad in scope as a provider in order to ensure a safer environment. (*From the Episcopal Church policy on abuse – 2018*).

†† Definitions:

Recognition of Abuse or Neglect: Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a member through a variety of actions, inadequate policies, procedures, and failures to act.

Physical Abuse: May involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a member or anyone else.

Psychological Abuse: Includes bullying, emotional abuse, threats, humiliation, intimidation, coercion, and verbal harassment.

Sexual Abuse: Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the person is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve non-consensual or unwanted physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving people in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging people to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. If an intimate relationship develops between a person of authority and another member, the person of authority must resign from the position of authority.

Discrimination: Discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, age, or disability is prohibited and is considered abuse. Comments or language either verbal or electronic that include racist, sexist, and other forms of derogatory communications about all persons will be considered as harassment.

Inhibited or Being Inhibited: Is used to limit communication between a member and the community. For the purposes of this policy, it is imposed on a member by the superior to protect the accused and the accuser from verbal or electronic communications that could be hurtful or harassing and to prevent extraneous communications that could cloud or confuse the investigative process.

B. Background Checks and Safe Church Training

- i. Candidates for professed life and oblation must have a background check done before being received into the community. This report is the final step before being received. The new member will receive instructions on initiating the background check. The cost of the background check is borne by the candidate.

ii. After being received into the CSL community, all members, on an ongoing basis, are expected to contribute to maintaining CSL compliance with TEC requirements related to safe and respectful religious communities and to manifest Benedictine principles related to hospitality and avoiding potentially harmful behaviors (with their associated negative consequences). A minimum expectation is that all members residing in the United States or residing in other countries must complete the online Safe Church Training courses referenced by the CSL and to be regularly recertified.

To meet this expectation, members are to:

- (1) Contact the CSL Safe Church Coordinator for registration information and note that the cost is borne by the CSL;
- (2) Advise the CSL Safe Church Coordinator that they have completed the online training program; and
- (3) For members of TEC whose dioceses utilize the Praesidium platform for their training and the log-in information and training requirements for the CSL is the same as for the local diocese, the CSL members will not be required to take the training multiple times. CSL members who are not in TEC will continue to be required to take CSL Safe Church Training, in addition to whatever they are required to do in their own church.

To ensure compliance with this expectation, the superior is to:

- (4) Advise new members when they have to complete the program and to advise the CSL community when the certification/recertification period begins as well as its duration;
- (5) Respond (together with the Council) to any notification by the Safe Church Coordinator that a member has failed to comply with the training requirement – by providing necessary assistance or taking appropriate disciplinary action; and
- (6) Confirm, together with the Council and any investigative body, whether or not the member has completed the required CSL Safe Church training (by contacting the safe church provider, Presidium) for purposes of investigation and resolution of a complaint of abuse filed against the member (*see* Section C below).

C. *Reporting and Processing an Alleged Incident of Abuse.* If members feel that they have been subjected to physical, psychological, sexual, or discriminatory abuse (as defined above), by another member of the CSL, the member is to notify the superior of the event in writing providing specific information including a description of the event, where or how the event occurred (i.e., in person or within a group, via email, telephonically, Facebook, etc.), date and time, and other pertinent information. In the event the abuse is alleged to be against the superior, it must be reported to the prior. Alleged incidents by a CSL member occurring in a church, diocese, or other locations are generally communicated to the superior by authorities.

i. Initiating an investigation of a member accused of abuse

- (1) When a written report alleging abuse is received, the superior after consultation with the CSL Council will decide if police involvement is necessary and act accordingly. The alleged abuser is to be put on leave of absence by the superior or prior after consultation with the CSL Council. The superior shall initiate an investigation (as described below) of the charge. The member shall be inhibited from communicating with the accuser and members of the community except the superior and/or the superior's designate. Pastoral care will be extended to both the accuser and the accused; opportunity for outside pastoral care will be made available. The accused cannot attend Convocations. If the member breaks the inhibition, the member shall be immediately separated from the community.
- (2) If the superior is accused of abuse, the prior after consultation with the CSL Council will decide if police involvement is necessary and act accordingly. The prior shall initiate an investigation of the charge; the superior will take a leave of absence and be inhibited from communicating with the accuser and members of the community. The CSL Council shall appoint a guardian for the community. Pastoral care will be extended to both the accuser and the superior. If the superior breaks the inhibition, the superior shall be immediately separated from the community.

- (3) If an accusation of abuse is reported to the superior or prior against a member of the CSL from a church, diocese, or civil authority, the investigation of the charge is carried out by that entity and the superior or prior is to confirm that police have been notified. The CSL leadership shall determine the response of the community upon receiving a report, including the outcome from the church, diocese, or civil authority.

ii. Investigative process

- (1) The investigative process is to be initiated within 10 days of the receipt of the written allegation. The investigation shall be completed within 45 days following the receipt of the written allegation by the investigator(s). Additional time may be granted by the CSL Council upon request. The superior/guardian after consulting with the Council may appoint a committee led by a senior member, or hire an outside investigator to investigate the charge. If an outside party is to be involved, the Council must recommend and approve a budget to cover this person's work.
- (2) The internal investigation shall include in-person or Zoom interviews with the accuser, the accused, and any third-party witnesses or persons named as part of the complaint. (No email communications). The investigation shall also include reviewing relevant emails between the parties, relevant Facebook posts, and/or other media content.
- (3) All meetings of the superior, the superior's designate (including the outside investigator), or the guardian with the CSL Council about this matter are to be done in closed (non-public) sessions; therefore, all minutes, relevant emails and records, and recommended outcomes of the investigation are to be closed. Informal discussions by any CSL member, including the superior or guardian, and the CSL Council with the accused that include, but are not limited to, individual impressions, advice, and the direction of the investigation are prohibited.

iii. Results of the investigation

- (1) **Member:** A report of the investigation discussing the merits of the accusation shall be prepared for the superior and the CSL Council. The report shall include recommended actions concerning the accused member. However, if outside investigators are involved, their report shall only include the findings of the investigation. The superior and the Council shall determine the outcome and action. The action shall be one of the following
 - **Exoneration.** The accusation is minor or without merit. A recommendation is presented that the member is to be restored as a member in good standing. The committee may also recommend mediation and support for the accuser and/or the accused.
 - **The accusation is confirmed and has merit; but it does not rise to the level of separation.** A recommendation is presented that if the accused accepts responsibility and is open to mediation by a third party as a step towards reconciliation, the member moves from leave of absence status to probation status. The duration of probation is determined by the superior and the CSL Council. If the member does not accept responsibility or mediation, this will result in immediate separation from the community. If another written allegation of the offense is received and confirmed by investigation, the member will be immediately separated from the community.
 - **The offense is serious and confirmed.** A recommendation is presented that the member is to be separated from the community.

The superior and the CSL Council shall take the report and recommendation under advisement. The Council shall vote to recommend the report and outcome to the superior, or they may recommend the report to the superior but with a different outcome.

- (2) **If the Superior** is the accused, a report of the investigation discussing the merits of the accusation shall be prepared for the CSL Council by the guardian or the investigative committee. However, if outside investigators are involved, their report shall only include the findings of the investigation. The guardian and the Council shall determine the outcome and action. The recommended action shall be one of the following:
 - **Exoneration.** The accusation is minor or without merit. A recommendation is presented that the member is

- to be restored as a member in good standing and resumes active duty as the superior of the community.
- **The accusation is confirmed and has merit; but does not rise to the level of separation.** A recommendation is presented that if the accused accepts responsibility and is open to mediation by a third party as a step towards reconciliation, the member is to resign as superior and moves from leave of absence status to probation status. The duration of probation is determined by the guardian and the CSL Council. If the superior does not accept responsibility or mediation, this will result in separation from the community. If another written allegation of the offense is received against the superior and is confirmed by investigation, the superior will be immediately separated from the community.
- **The offense is serious and confirmed.** A recommendation is presented that the member is to resign as superior and is to be separated from the community.

The guardian and the CSL Council shall take the report and recommendation under advisement and the Council shall vote to recommend the report and outcome to the guardian, or they may recommend the report to the guardian but with a different outcome.

iv. Notifications. The bishop visitor has no role in the process unless the accused files an appeal. The superior or guardian is to advise the bishop visitor of the situation and the decision. Both the accuser and the accused shall be notified by the superior or guardian within 48 hours after the CSL Council meeting. If the decision is that the accusation has merit, the member has to decide if (s)he accepts probation and mediation. If mediation is a part of the decision, the member will be advised how the mediation is to work.

v. Right of appeal. The accused has the right to appeal the decision of the superior/ guardian to the bishop visitor. The accused is to email the superior or guardian that the decision is to be appealed. The superior or guardian advises the bishop visitor of the possible appeal and sends the bishop visitor pertinent records of the investigation upon request. The accused must write the bishop visitor requesting the appeal within 10 days of receiving the notification of the decision of the superior/guardian. The bishop visitor acknowledges the request and advises the appellant what information is needed and schedules in-person or Zoom meeting(s) with the appellant. The bishop visitor shall advise the superior or guardian and the appellant about the decision of the appeal in writing within seven days. The superior or guardian will advise the Council of the bishop visitor's decision. The superior or guardian and the Council will discuss and respond to the bishop visitor's decision:

- If the bishop visitor affirms the superior/guardian's decision, the action previously approved by them shall be implemented.
- If the bishop visitor determines that the response to the accusation is inappropriate, the superior/guardian and the Council shall reevaluate the response and any recommendations from the bishop visitor.
- If the bishop visitor determines that the response to the accusation is wrong, the superior/guardian and the Council shall review the bishop visitor's report and either decide to initiate a new investigation or exonerate the accused.

Appendix 5 – Church, State, and Federal Reporting Requirements

The Companions of St. Luke (CSL) is recognized as an independent Christian Community by the Committee for Religious Orders and Communities of The Episcopal Church (TEC). We are not connected nor affiliated with any Episcopal diocese. Therefore, we have unique reporting requirements that are not usually associated with church organizations. This Appendix lists the church, state, and federal reporting requirements to maintain our legal status with a range of authorities.

A. *Episcopal Church Reporting.* Routine reports expected by TEC are included in the following list:

1. Annually, the CSL is to complete the *Annual Communities/Orders* form. This form is e-mailed to the superior in Q1 each year and is to be submitted

to the Committee on Religious Orders and Communities by March 1.

2. Annually, the CSL should review its listing in the Episcopal Church's 'Red Book.'

3. Bi-annually, we are to update our listing in *The Anglican Communities Yearbook*. The publisher in the United Kingdom will send us a copy of the current listing for us to review and edit. The updated copy is to be submitted by the beginning of Q2 each year.

4. Although not required by TEC but consistent with good financial practices, the CSL's Finance Committee recommends that an external financial review be completed every three years beginning in 2022. This recommendation was approved by the CSL Council and the superior. The CSL council may recommend a special external financial review when a new treasurer is appointed.

B. *State Incorporation Registration.* We are registered as a non-profit corporation in the state of Illinois. To maintain this designation, we must:

1. Identify a person who is a resident of Illinois to be a contact person for mail from the Secretary of State's office; or appoint a legal firm to receive and process the forms.

2. Complete the annual corporation registration form and submit it to the secretary of state's office before July 1 with a check to cover the registration fee. The form is available on the internet and can be completed by the dean of finance (treasurer) and signed by the superior.

C. *Federal Internal Revenue Service.* We are registered as a 501c.3 tax-exempt nonprofit religious organization, and as such we are not required to complete IRS form 990 (or EZ990 or equivalent e-form) and to submit it to the IRS before May 15 each year.

Appendix 6 – Financial Support for Members

This is a guide for members and the leadership concerning financial support for:*

- The superior,
- For members to meet the convocation attendance requirements,
- For members to represent The Companions of St. Luke (CSL) at national Episcopal or Anglican Church of Canada meetings,
- For members attending meetings with other monastic communities and Benedictine interest groups, and
- Other authorized events and member costs.

***Important Note:** The Finance Committee must ensure that any reimbursements are supported by receipts.

The Superior: The responsibilities of being the superior of the CSL require both a time and financial commitment to meet the expectations of the membership, the Rule of St. Benedict, and the constitution of the CSL and its customary. Since this position is non-stipendiary, the costs of doing this work should be borne by the community.

- To support the superior's spiritual health and development, the community shall cover all costs for up to two monastic retreats during the five-year term as superior. The superior is to make a request for taking a retreat to the Council, to define the schedule, the costs and other details related to the retreat. The Council shall authorize the expense. For planning purposes, an estimated cost should be included in the five-year budget.
- Computer hardware or software required to do community work. This need is to be defined and authorized by the Council before purchase.
- The cost of travel to convocation. This expense should be reviewed by the superior and the treasurer. For planning purposes, the estimated expense should be included as a line item in the five-year budget.
- If the superior is authorized to represent the CSL at national meetings of The Episcopal Church (TEC) or the Anglican Church of Canada, expenses for these meetings are to be covered by the community.
- If the superior feels that it is important to attend meetings of the National Association of Episcopal Christian Communities (NAECC) or of a North American (Canada, United States, Mexico) Benedictine order or Benedictine interest group, the superior shall review the purpose and expected benefit of attendance with the Council. If recommended by the Council, the cost of attendance shall be borne by the community.
- The superior may be expected to attend an ordination of a member to Holy Orders or to attend a funeral of a member. The superior shall advise the Council of the need and obtain authorization for the expense. To expedite the process, the authorization process may be completed by email.
- Other travel for CSL business is to be presented to the Council for review and authorization.

Members: It is understood that a member of the community may need assistance to attend convocations or to represent the CSL at national meetings in the United States, Canada, or Mexico. Financial support of these requests is important to emphasize the inclusive approach of the community and to further the growth and development of the community as a whole.

- A member may request financial assistance to attend convocations. The request shall be made to the superior. The superior shall discuss the situation with the treasurer and a decision on the request shall be forwarded to the member by the superior or the treasurer. Financial support for member travel to convocations should be planned as a line item in the budget. The guidelines for financial support for convocation travel are:
 - Support for travel is for North American (Canada, United States, and Mexico) travel only,
 - The maximum level of support is \$500. Support beyond that level requires Council approval,
 - The member can receive support for one convocation during the year, and
 - The member cannot receive support two years in a row.
- If a member either requests or is asked to attend a NAECC meeting or a Benedictine coalition or interest group meeting, with the approval of the Council, the cost of attendance including travel is to be borne by the community.
- When members transition from being a postulant to a novice or from novice-oblation to full oblation, the community will buy their first habit. * The member will pay for the habit and the community will reimburse the member for the cost, upon receiving a receipt of the purchase. Financial support for the cost of habits should be planned as a line item in the budget.

***Important Note:** The habit purchased for a member must be returned to the CSL if the member leaves the community before making their first profession or full oblation.