

# Q & A FOR SEEKERS AND INQUIRERS



*For seekers and inquirers, this is a glimpse into the Order of Saint Luke's life and spirituality: who we are, what we do, and how you can learn more about our life as a inclusive, dispersed religious community. The following questions address some basic concerns and queries you might have if you've heard about us. If you don't find the answer to your question, or if the answers here lead to further questions, you can contact our Companion for Inquirers and Final Discerners, Br. Jim Dufriend, or any member of the Order you've met. We encourage you to get to know us, and if our way of life as religious calls to you, we invite you to become an Inquirer. You can reach Br. Jim via email at [br.jimosl@gmail.com](mailto:br.jimosl@gmail.com)*

**Q: Who makes up The Order of Saint Luke?**

A: The Order of Saint Luke is a dispersed ecumenical religious order dedicated to sacramental and liturgical scholarship, education, and practice. We are women and men, lay and clergy, married and single living in many countries. We were founded in 1946 by members of the former Methodist Church. For the founders, the moving and sustaining force was that of John and Charles Wesley, who sought to bring about a revival within the Church (The Church of England) that was both sacramental and evangelical.

Today our Order includes United Methodists, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Baptists, members of Holiness movement churches, and many others in the Christian churches. Our focus is on sacramental and liturgical scholarship and practice, and on ongoing spiritual formation guided by our rule, **the Rule of Life and Service**. While most of our members are in The United States, we have a growing number of members in other countries, including the Philippines, Singapore, and Europe. We are clergy and lay, married and single. We've been around for over seventy-five years.

We are sometimes confused with another order: The International Order of St. Luke the Physician (now referred to as "OSL"), an interdenominational healing order. While we embrace the ministry of healing within the sacramental life of the church, it is not the primary focus of our life and work.

***Q: Why are we called The Order of Saint Luke?***

A: Luke, the evangelist, the writer of the gospel bearing his name and the Book of the Acts of the Apostles has a special place for us. Romey Pitt Marshall, one of the founders of the Order of Saint Luke, wrote of the original “Brotherhood”,

“The name was selected after much discussion among the original organizers, and was suggested by the Rev. William Esler Slocum in order to put the emphasis where it seemed to belong—upon service, instead of upon ceremonial. St. Luke was the ‘Beloved Physician/and followers of him will need to emphasize the whole Gospel: Salvation from sin, healing of the body and soul, service to the needy, and cultivation of the spiritual life through prayer and the sacraments. Mr. Slocum spoke with some authority, have made his ministry center around these things for many years.”

(quoted from “The Story of The Order of Saint Luke” by Br. Hoyt L. Hickman, OSL)

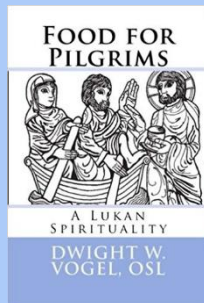
From the beginning the Order was focused on liturgy and life as service to God and neighbor.



Luke’s writings highlight both worship and compassion for all in need of healing and inclusion. The canticles—Zechariah’s song, Mary’s song, the angels’ song (the Gloria), and Simeon’s song are found in the early chapters of Luke’s gospel. These canticles form our praise and prayer in praying the daily office and focus our liturgical and social vision. The shape of Christian worship on the Lord’s Day (Luke 24:13-35) is given to us in the Emmaus story. The spirituality of Luke with emphasis on inclusion of the poor, the sick, and

the excluded shapes us. While we affirm that the whole Bible points us God's self-disclosure in scripture, we draw upon Luke's work and spirit for shaping our understanding of our vocation as Lukans.

*Q: What do you mean by Lukan?*



A: In the history of religious communities, each order refers to their spirituality in terms of the founder or the person whose life and “rule” gives focus to their aspirations and spirituality. So, for example, those who claim Benedict of Nursia as their patron, they claim a Benedictine spirituality. Those who follow Augustine of Hippo, call themselves Augustinians. Those of Ignatius of Loyala, claim an Ignatian spirituality. Brigittines follow the rule of Saint Brigit of Sweden. In our case, we base our **Rule of Life and Service** on St. Luke, the evangelist, and so we claim and seek a distinctly Lukan spirituality.

*Q: What is the Rule of Life and Service?*

A: Traditionally, religious orders are characterized by persons covenanting together, to live in community – either physically or spiritually – under a common “rule” of spiritual discipline. Religious and monastic orders have also formed to perform a specific task (or work) or to develop a discipline for spiritual growth and ministry. “The

Rule of Life and Service” is central to our discipline as an Order. ARTICLE IV of the Constitution states:

DISCIPLINE—Members of The Order agree to live in accordance with the Rule of Life and Service as interpreted by The Order in plenary session. There are six simple intentions in our rule:

- We affirm the Apostolic Hope
- We live for the Church of Jesus Christ
- We promote the corporate worship of the Church
- We magnify the sacraments
- We seek the sacramental life
- We accept the call to service

We have a commentary on the Rule which is accessible [at The By-Laws of the Order of Saint Luke \(saint-luke.net\)](http://The-By-Laws-of-the-Order-of-Saint-Luke/saint-luke.net)—(read Section 2).

The commentary was revised in 2000 and illuminates the meaning of each of the rule’s clauses.

***Q: Why is this Rule so different from other rules like The Rule of St. Benedict?***

**A:** A rule of life is a commitment to live one’s life in a particular way. Individuals sometimes craft a rule for themselves through discernment and prayer. Monastic communities dating back to the early centuries of Christian practice developed something called a “rule” for how the community would conduct its common life. The Order of Saint Luke as a dispersed community has a rule that

shapes our “common” practice for the many places and situations in which we live. Unlike the Rule of St. Benedict, our “Rule of Life and Service” is brief and focuses on our central values as commitments to *what we will do*: affirm the apostolic hope, magnify the sacraments, etc.

Our rule does not give specific attention to how the Order conducts its organizational life. Those details are covered in other sources that have evolved over the years, namely: **The Constitution** and our **By-Laws**, and our **Daily Office**. The Constitution and By-Laws are available on our website under “About Us” at [The Constitution of the Order of Saint Luke \(saint-luke.net\)](http://The Constitution of the Order of Saint Luke (saint-luke.net)).

What we hold, in common with all monastic and religious orders, is the intention to be made perfect in love for God, neighbor, and the creation. Our specific charism related to the centrality of the liturgy and the sacraments is never to be separated from the gospel imperative of loving God and God’s world. Indeed, we understand that each is fulfilled and enriched by the other.

***Q: Does member of the Order wear a distinctive garb?***

A: A religious habit is the distinctive garments worn by members of a monastic or religious order. The habit of the Order of Saint Luke—the distinctive garments we wear are ceremonial. Unlike some orders we do not have a distinctive 24/7 garb. Why? Because we are an apostolic order dispersed in the world of daily life. We are not cloistered except when

on retreat or convocation. You can find out about our habit on our website at [Habit of the Order \(saint-luke.net\)](http://Habit of the Order (saint-luke.net).).

It is important to note that you, whether seeker, Inquirer, Friend of the Order, or member, are welcome to attend any gathering of the Order without having or wearing our habit. Talk with a member about what, when, and where wearing and not wearing the habit means to him or her.

The habit is worn only by professed members of the Order.

*Q: Why don't those who see themselves as "religious" (members of an order) live together in a monastery?*

A: Throughout Christian history, beginning with the Acts of the Apostles (See Acts 2:42-4:37) Christians have banded together for a "common life"—that is, sharing and fellowship in the things they have in common. Luke, the evangelist, wrote of the early church:



Photo above, left to right: Br. French Ball, Abbot Elizabeth Moore, Br. Daniel Benedict, and icon of St. Luke.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Awe came upon



everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

In some situations, this dynamic life *in common* has led to resident communities who live together under a rule of life with an abbot as temporal and spiritual leader. In other circumstances and vocations, Christians have banded together as “religious” to live a dispersed vocation. Whether Dominican preachers or Methodist circuit riders or other “apostolic” orders, some Christians have given themselves to a life in common with others to accomplish a vision and vocation that they share. The Order of Saint Luke is such a community of “religious”. In monastic orders, like Benedictines and Cistercians, contemplation can be said to be an end. In apostolic orders, like The Order of Saint Luke, contemplation and the religious life’s purpose is fulfilled in action. Our Lukan temperament is grounded to active life in the world.

***Q: Who can be a member of the Order of Saint Luke?***



A:  
“Membership  
in The Order is  
open to all  
Christians,  
regardless of  
denomination,  
who seek to live  
the sacramental  
life in  
accordance



Newly professed members at the 2016 retreat.

with our Rule of Life and Service, in community with  
and acceptance of their brothers and sisters in The  
Order.” (The Constitution, Article V)

***Q: How does a person become a member?***

A: Since membership in The Order of Saint Luke involves making a covenant to live by the Rule of Life and Service in relationship with all others in the Order, we invite you to enter a time of discovery and discernment to know if you are called to this life. To live into this vocation as a fulfillment of your baptismal covenant, we welcome you to several “times” or periods of reflection in companionship with members of the Order.

There are several stages or times of membership described in the Constitution (See Article V—Sections 1-4):

- Seeker (time of initial contact)*
- Inquiry
- Final Discernment
- Professed Membership
- Life Membership

The **Time of Inquiry** is just that: a period of weeks or months of discovering what the Order of Saint Luke is like with the intention of discernment of call to consider *final discernment*. During this time a member of the Order will companion you. The Constitution doesn't name this time, but we have discovered that it is an essential step. There is no pressure for anyone to enter final discernment because of inquiring. Any who don't discern a call to *final discernment* are welcome to become a "Friend of the Order" or to simply continue their Christian journey in association with other religious communities. If you discern that you are prompted to enter a **Time of Final Discernment**, you can so indicate to Br. Jim Dufriend, our Companion for Inquirers and Final Discernment. He will guide you into this time and provide resources for your journey of inquiry.

The **Time of Final Discernment**: during this time persons make a serious commitment to live the sacramental life in accordance with the Rule of Life and Service, the Constitution and By-Laws. Traditionally, this is the period called the *novitiate*. During this time, further prayer, reading, discovering and experience in companionship with an experienced member of the Order, allows discernment of readiness to profess annual vows. The horizon of this time is the public Service of Profession within the General Chapter or a Chapter.

The **professed membership** is ongoing. Membership in the Order is continued by making annual renewal of vows and communicating this

renewal to the Chancellor-General and professing this renewal at a General Chapter or local chapter (whenever possible) in a **Service of Profession**. Most of our members continue as “annually vowed members.”

Members *may* become **life-vowed members** when they have re-affirmed the Rule of Life and Service annually for at least three years. They discern a life-long vocation to keep the Rule of Life and Service under the guidance of abbot and in companionship with another life vowed member. It is normative that the profession of Life Vows take place during a meeting of the General Chapter. ([See the Constitution — Article V: Section 3](#))

The Service of Profession for annually vowed and life-vowed members is found in *The Book of Offices and Services of The Order of Saint Luke*.

***Q: What is the Time of Inquiry for?***

A: As a religious order we are a covenant community bound together by our rule—the Rule of Life and Service. As with any family, entrance into the family takes time and experience. Or, to use another image, if you were to immigrate from one country to another, you would need to consider your circumstances in making the decision: What is prompting me to leave my country? What am I seeking? Can I find what I seek in the new country? What will be expected or required of me in the new country?

Those who discover the Order of Saint Luke usually have a lot of questions. Sometimes the answers lead quickly to saying, “Nope! That isn’t what I am looking for in my life journey.” Others say, “Well, I’m interested in knowing more” or “For some reason I don’t feel I understand why I am drawn to what I’ve learned so far. How do I discover more of what it is like to be in your community?”

We welcome all inquiries and seek to respect and honor your search for God’s call to you, whether it leads elsewhere or prompts you to consider **final discernment** so that you can make an informed decision.

We invite you to check us out.

***Q: What is a “Friend of the Order”?***

A: In some cases, persons want to be associated with the charism (purpose and work) of the Order without making or continuing to make a profession of vows. We welcome such persons to be **Friends of the Order**, maintaining friendships with members, subscribing to our publications, participating in retreats, convocations, and chapter or association meetings. The aim is to maintain relationships with Christians who are interested in the Order but are not called to live the Rule of Life and Service.

***Q: Is the Order of Saint Luke an alternative or substitute for membership in a local congregation or belonging to my denomination?***

A: No. Baptized into Christ and the Church, catholic and local, members of OSL “*live for the*

*church of Jesus Christ*” and seek to strengthen the worship and witness of the church in the places where we live. As a dispersed order we understand that God calls us to live the gospel deeply where we are “planted.” The Order is a living community ordered by our **Rule of Life and Service** that includes our being active and invested in our local Christian community and in our neighborhood and local community, and the larger denomination of which the local church is a part.

*Life in the Order of Saint Luke is not a superior way of life; it is a specific vocation for living the baptismal covenant.* We do not espouse two-tier Christianity, but we do seek what Dietrich Bonhoeffer called “costly grace” and the reform of the church adhering more closely to the gospel of Jesus Christ. If our common life and retreats are separations from the world and the church that is too often worldly, it is for reengaging the church and the world more critically illumined by the gospel. In this way, our membership in our churches becomes a reforming leaven. Greg Peter’s in his book *The Monkhood of All Believers* calls this interiorized monasticism outside the desert and the walls of the monastery.

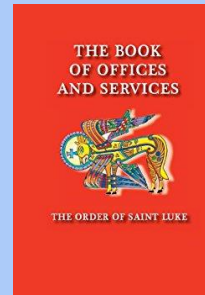
***Q: What are the distinctive practices of the Order of Saint Luke?***

**A:** Praying the daily office, gathering to celebrate Word and Table (the Eucharist), making retreats with others in the Order of Saint Luke, and practicing mutual accountability for the Rule of Life and Service, and heeding the call to service. You will

discover what those practices are as you participate and explore life with the Order.

**Q: What is the daily office and why is this a central practice?**

A: The **Daily Office** refers to a historic pattern of daily prayer in the life of the Church which identified certain times or “hours” for prayer; thus, it has also been called “the liturgy of the hours.” An office is a task or responsibility with which we are entrusted; the responsibility here is to fulfill the Church’s task of prayer day by day.



The Daily Office is the prayer of the Church, and thus is always a communal act. Even though we pray the daily office alone or in the “domestic church” (one’s family), we do so in community with sisters and brothers and with all who keep *the liturgy of the hours*. When we pray the hours together at a retreat, we recognize how powerful this communal experience is. Either way, alone or in the physical presence of others, we know we are part of a larger community praying the church’s prayer.

The Order of Saint Luke offers specific prayer forms for morning and evening, as well as mid-morning, mid-day, and mid-afternoon. The *basic forms* are available in *A Lukan Book of Hours* and *A Lukan Book of Feasts*. More fulsome forms are available in our *Book of Offices and Services*. However, the Order does not require use of these forms. It is the practice of praying the daily office using some

form that is expected. These books can be ordered from <https://www.oslpublications.org/>.

We understand that praying the daily office differs from “personal devotions” or “private prayer.” It is *always an act of the whole Church* prayed throughout the ages and around the world. It celebrates who we are and what we are called to be in Christ. As Br. Dwight Vogel writes in *Food for Pilgrims*:

“We become a community by what we do in common. Without common action, there is no community. For example: whether a group like the Order of Saint Luke is a religious community or just another organization is dependent on what is done together, and that has its most frequent and consistent expression in praying the Daily Office.”  
(pages 36-37)

We expect that those who enter a Time of Inquiry and continue in a Time of Final Discernment will experiment and explore this practice in their daily life.

***Q: Why is sharing in celebration of Word and Table—Holy Communion—a central practice in the Order of Saint Luke?***



A: The Order of Saint Luke began and continues as a reform movement within the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. Begun by clergy who were concerned that the Sacrament of Holy Communion was infrequently and poorly celebrated, recovery of weekly Holy Communion was a primary concern—especially in The Methodist Church of the



Photo: Holy Communion at the 2017 OSL retreat at the Franciscan Renewal Center in Scottsdale AZ. Sr. Barbara Troxel with the cup is serving Sr. Cynthia Astle. Br. George Crisp was the presider.

late 1940s. Whenever members of the Order gather face-to-face, Eucharist is an expected part of the agenda. Though meeting “digitally” is increasingly common, we do not do what some call “virtual communion,” which is contrary to the historic understanding of the “real presence” of Christ in both his eucharistic and ecclesial body.

***Q: When and where does the Order hold retreat for members, inquirers and friends of the Order?***

A: The General Chapter (the Order’s meeting of all attending members) and regional/local chapters hold retreats. The General Chapter hosts a retreat ever October around the Feast of Saint Luke (October 18) and its Council meets every spring. All members are welcome and urged to attend either or both.

Inquirers can best discover our life and work by attending the “fall” retreat or the spring council meeting. Local chapters, whether in the US or other countries, hold retreats according to their needs and customs. Check with our Sr. Heather Josselyn-Cranson, our Provincial General, for local chapters or General Chapter information and contacts email Br. Brett Isernhagen ([brettisernhagen@vaumc.org](mailto:brettisernhagen@vaumc.org)).

***Q: Are there ways I can learn and participate online?***

A: Yes. We have an open Facebook page for the Order of Saint Luke: [\(20+\) The Order of Saint Luke | Facebook](#) You can also request to join a private Order of Saint Luke group [at \(20+\) The Order of Saint Luke | Groups | Facebook](#) where you can request to join.

In addition there is a special Facebook group of “Seekers, Inquirers, and Discerners.” See the next Q & A.

***Q: What do I do if I have questions that weren’t answered here?***

A: You can do several things.

- You can contact our Companion for Inquirers, Br. Jim Dufriend at [br.jimosl@gmail.com](mailto:br.jimosl@gmail.com).
- You can go to the [Facebook Group for Seekers, Inquirers, and Discerners](#). Check out the “Files” available there.
- You can explore our website our website at [The Order of St. Luke \(saint-luke.net\)](http://The Order of St. Luke (saint-luke.net)) You can attend an upcoming retreat or convocation of

the General Chapter or a local chapter or association. Br. Jim and our Provincial General, [Br. Brett Isernhagen](#) (Provincial General) , can help you find members or a chapter near you, or connect you with a companion member or online group

This Q and A was prepared by Br. Daniel Benedict, OSL. Br. Daniel was abbot of the Order from 2009-2016. He serves as the Team Leader for the Novitiate.