

## The Lay Contemplative Associates (LCA)

- Purpose: The Lay Contemplative Associates (LCA) is a fellowship of men and women of diverse backgrounds united by their love of God and their response to God's call. That loving response is characterized by communion (koinonia), self-emptying (kenosis), service (diakonia) and transformation (metanoia). It is Christ-centered and in harmony with the Cistercian tradition. That tradition is lived out in the life contexts in which each member finds himself or herself, through fidelity to the Gospels and the Rule of St. Benedict, as expressed through this Way of Life.
- Practices: The LCA Way of Life is a commitment to living in a spirit of true conversion through a life that is obedient, faithful, and stable in seeking God through adherence to the following:
  - Prayer. Prayer is at the heart of the Benedictine and Cistercian traditions.
    - Frequent attendance at Mass; non-Catholics must faithfully participate in their Church worship.
    - Daily recitation of Morning and Evening Prayers of the Liturgy of the Hours or recitation of five decades of the Rosary.
    - Daily practice of contemplative prayer.
    - Daily practice of lectio divina.
    - Frequent reception of the sacrament of reconciliation (for Catholics).
    - Prayer for the members and their loved ones, the Lay Contemplative movement, as well as the needs of the Church and the World. In respect for our roots, members are asked to pray for the Cistercian family in general, and the Abbey of the Genesee in particular.
  - Spiritual Formation: A serious commitment to participate in the assigned readings and other designated formative activities, as required of committed members or as appropriate to level of LCA formation.
  - Spiritual Direction. Receive spiritual direction on a regular basis. The member is free to choose his or her own spiritual director from among clergy, religious or lay persons who are trained in this ministry.
  - Service. All members should give expression to their love of God and neighbor through some form of Christian service. It is deeply rooted in Benedictine and Cistercian spirituality, that prayer and labor (service) are integral (RB48). While

prayer can be a form of service in itself, St. Benedict still enjoined six to eight hours of labor per day upon his monks. Thus, members should undertake various forms of service appropriate to their life circumstances. Contemplative mindfulness should be a characteristic of all labor/service.

- Attendance at the Annual Retreat. Quarterly gatherings of the LCA will be held in various locations convenient to the LCA members. All members should attend at least one of the gatherings, preferably the gathering at which the annual LCA retreat and business meeting is held. At least one of the meetings each year should be held at the Abbey of the Genesee, preferably the annual meeting.
- Members. The membership of the LCA includes those eligible persons who have been admitted to membership and have confirmed their membership through a free act of commitment appropriate to their level of LCA formation.
- Eligibility. Any adult Christian who accepts the purpose of this association and is willing to pursue that purpose in accordance with the norms laid out in this "Way of Life" is eligible to apply for admission as an associate.
- Entrance. Individuals interested in pursuing their Christian vocation as a LCA should contact the Vocation Director. The Vocation Director will obtain such information deemed necessary to judge the applicant's interest and capacity for LCA commitment. It is expected that the applicant will meet with the Vocation Director or a delegate prior to acceptance. The Vocation Director will provide the Coordinating Council with information on the applicant sufficient to judge the applicant's interest and capacity for LCA commitment and a recommendation for or against acceptance. A vote of the coordinating council is required to accept new members.
- Formation and Reception. A commitment to contemplation, integral with a life of faith, hope and charity requires an on-going process of formation. The LCA formation process includes postulancy, the novitiate, and committed membership.
- Formation Team. A team comprised of the Postulant Director, Novice Director, Committed Member director and other knowledgeable persons appointed by the Coordinating Council, shall establish the content of formation at each level of formation and pedagogical techniques by which it is presented. Formation must

include the development of skills in the spiritual disciplines of reflection, lectio divina, Liturgy of the Hours, meditation and contemplative prayer; as well as appreciation of the Cistercian charism. The general formation plan (curriculum) for content and pedagogical method is to be approved by the Coordinating Council. Once approved, the plan may be implemented by the appropriate directors and those assisting them.

- Postulants
- Postulancy is an initial period of mutual discernment in which one begins to learn of the Benedictine/Cistercian tradition and appropriate LCA leaders discern one's ability to live in accordance with that spirituality and mission.
- After approval by the Coordinating Council, the applicant becomes a Postulant on the following March 1. If an applicant is not approved for membership by March 1, he or she must wait until the following March 1 for admission as a postulant, the Coordinating Council may waive the additional waiting period.
- The Postulant Director will assist postulants in the fulfillment of their duties and in their formation in living according to the spirit of the LCA Way of Life.
- At least two months prior to entering the novitiate, the Postulant must write a "Review of Life" which outlines his/her spiritual progress as an LCA and submit it directly to the Postulant Director.
- At the same time the "review of life" is submitted, the Postulant must also submit a statement to the Coordinating Council through the Postulant Director that he/she has read over the requirements for being a novice and is determined to be faithful to them. The postulant is to request entrance into the LCA novitiate in this statement. If he/she does not feel capable of fulfilling these requirements for any reason, he/she will be allowed to remain a Postulant for one more year. At this time he/she will have to either enter the novitiate or withdraw.
- Upon approval by Coordinating Council and the Postulant Director, the Postulant is ready to enter the novitiate during the next Annual Retreat or at a quarterly meeting approved by the Coordinating Council for this purpose..
- Postulants have no voting privileges and may not hold office.
- Novices:

- The novitiate is a period of discernment in which the novice comes to a better understanding of their calling to the LCA way of life and more fully experience that manner of living within the LCA community. This is a two-year period beginning immediately upon admission into the novitiate, and concludes with the first act of commitment.
- The novice is assisted by the Novice Director who assists the novice to grow in the knowledge and love of the Associate Way of Life and to be faithful in fulfilling the duties of a novice.
- At least two months prior to the retreat during which he or she will make the act of commitment:
- The novice must write a "Review of Life" which outlines his/her spiritual progress as a LCA Novice. This is sent to the Novice Director.
- At the same time that the "review of life" is submitted, the novice must write a letter of petition to the Coordinating Council requesting to make the act of commitment. A form will be provided to assist in submitting the petition and documenting compliance with formation requirements.
- Upon approval by the Coordinating Council, the Novice may make his/her first act of commitment during the following Annual Retreat or quarterly meeting designated by the Coordinating Council for this purpose.
- Novices do not enjoy voting privileges, with regard to elections or setting of policy, and may not be elected to office in the LCA. Novices do enjoy an active voice in any discussions and may hold appointed office.
- Committed Members
- Committed members have completed their postulancy and novitiate, and have made at least their first act of commitment. They strive toward an ever-increasing fidelity to the LCA way of life.
- Committed Members renew their act of commitment each year at the Annual Retreat or quarterly meeting designated by the Coordinating Council for this purpose. The act of commitment is good for one year with three year renewals thereafter.
- Committed Members are to take part in those on-going formation activities as required by the Coordinating Council.

- At least two months prior to the renewal of the act of commitment at the Annual Retreat, the Committed Member must write a "Review of Life" which outlines his/her spiritual progress during the year.
- At the time that the review of life is submitted to the Committed Member Coordinator, a letter of petition by the committed member also must be sent to the Coordinating Council via the Committed Member Coordinator requesting to renew the act of commitment, if the member wishes to renew his or her commitment as a LCA.
- Committed members have voting privileges and may serve in any appointed or elective office in the LCA for which they are qualified.
- Transfer
  - Members of other lay associate organizations may request to transfer their membership to the LCA. Such persons shall contact the Vocation Director requesting transfer to membership in the LCA.
  - A transfer of membership and the level of formation at which one is accepted is at the discretion of the Coordinating Council.
- Leave of Absence
  - From time to time, a Postulant, Novice or Committed Member may find that full participation in the life of the community is temporarily impossible. Such a member shall contact the Coordinating Council and obtain permission to take a leave of absence for an agreed upon duration.
  - A member on leave of absence may return to full active membership by notifying the Coordinating Council of his or her desire during the agreed upon period of leave of absence. If he or she does not request activation of membership within the agreed upon period, the Coordinating Council is to determine the intention of the member on leave of absence regarding his or her continued LCA membership and take appropriate action either to extend the leave of absence, reinstate to full membership or remove from LCA membership.
  - A member loses voting rights while on leave of absence and is no longer counted among eligible voters for the purpose of holding office, elections and considering amendments to the Way of Life.
- Separation

- At any time, a postulant, novice or committed member may submit a resignation from the LCA in writing to the Coordinating Council. Upon acceptance of the resignation by the Coordinating Council the person will no longer be a member of the LCA and subject to the rights and obligations of its members.
- If a member fails to make an act of commitment, appropriate to his or her level of formation, at the annual retreat, or to request in writing that the act of commitment is made by proxy, he or she shall be placed on leave of absence for no more than one year. During the leave of absence a Coordinating Council representative will contact the member and inquire as to his or her desire to remain a member. If at the end of the leave of absence the member has not requested that his or her act of commitment be made or renewed at the annual retreat in person or by proxy, that person will no longer be a member of the LCA and subject to the rights and obligations of its members.
- For a grave violation of the Way of Life or public offense (delict) against the law of the Church, any member may be removed by a 2/3 vote of the Coordinating Council.
- Given the central role of the reflection papers and review of life in the spiritual support and growth in holiness of its members, failure to submit the reflection papers and review of life represents a significant departure from the spirit and letter of the LCA "Way of Life". A reflection paper may be submitted in writing, orally or in electronic media as long as it effectively expresses the reflection of the member on the assigned topic. If a member fails to submit at least one of the required reflections or review of life within a calendar year without permission of the appropriate formation director, he or she will be warned in writing that failure to meet this obligation will result in loss of membership. If the member fails to submit at least one of the required reflection papers or review of life within the following calendar year, this will be taken as an expression of his or her desire to no longer be part of the LCA. At the end of the calendar year the member's name will be removed from the membership list and he or she will no longer be a member of the LCA and subject to its rights and obligations. 5) Those persons who are formally separated from LCA membership are no longer eligible voters for the purpose of holding office, elections, and considering Way of Life amendments.

- Return
  - Members who resign from the LCA or transfer to a similar organization may return to full active membership in the LCA within one year of resignation or transfer simply by requesting readmission and providing a written statement of commitment to the LCA Way of Life.
  - After the completion of a full calendar year away from the LCA, readmission to LCA membership must be approved by the LCA Coordinating Council.
  - Persons who are readmitted to LCA membership return at the same formation level at which they left, except that the Coordinating Council may require readmission at a different level if circumstances warrant and the Council feels that it is prudent.
- Death If a LCA member or the spouse or child of a member dies each member is to provide for the remembrance of that person in prayer. This may be accomplished through having a Mass said or through undertaking the ministry on one's own through a rosary, novena or other appropriate spiritual act of mercy.
- Governance.
  - Coordinating Council
    - Responsibilities. The Coordinating Council is responsible for the governance of the LCA.
    - Primary among its responsibilities is to encourage, promote and support the growth in holiness of the LCA members.
    - It is to see to the administration of the LCA in accordance with the requirements and within the limits of this Way of Life.
    - It is to provide for the sound teaching of its members in Catholic theology and spirituality, as well as the Benedictine/Cistercian tradition.
    - Members. The Coordinating Council is comprised of an elected representative from each of the following regions: West/North Central, South-East, North-East, and Central,. It also includes four appointed members and three at-large members.
    - Regions. The membership of the LCA is organized into four regions. The geographic areas included in each region shall be determined by a two-thirds vote of the Coordinating Council and shall reasonably reflect the geographic region of

the United States for which they are named. Additional outlying areas may be included with an appropriate region. At the time of the establishment of the LCA those regions established under the authority of the GLCA Way of Life shall continue in effect until changed by the LCA Coordinating Council.

- Regional Directors. Every two years the Coordinating Council will call for an election among the Committed Members of each region in which they select a Director for that region. The latter will arrange for regional meetings, encourage Committed Members of their respective regions to be faithful in fulfilling their duties and represent them on the Council and see to it that the monthly mailings are distributed promptly.
- Appointed members. The Coordinating Council may appoint no more than four LCA members to serve on the Coordinating Council for two year terms. A person may be appointed to serve additional terms of office. The appointed members should serve in an appointed office critical to the effective operation of the LCA or possess experience or knowledge important which significantly contribute to the purpose of the LCA. While one person may hold several appointed offices, that person may exercise only one vote on the council.
- At-Large Members. Every two years the Coordinating Council will call for an election among the Committed Members of three LCA members who are to serve on the Coordinating Council as at-large representatives.
- Elections.
- Eligible voters include only those committed members who have not had their voting rights suspended as a result of separation from the LCA, imposed penalty by the Coordinating council, or leave of absence status.
- Elective offices are for two year terms.
- Elections for regional coordinators are held among the LCA members in each region prior to annual meetings every other year.
- At large members are elected at the appropriate business meeting on alternate years from the regional representative elections.
- If a vacancy occurs between meetings the Coordinating Council may appoint a qualified person to complete the term, unless other provisions are made in the Way of Life.

- Terms of office. Terms for all LCA offices shall be two years. Persons may serve in office for more than one term, if maintained in office by the electing or appointing authority via re-election or a formal decision to reappoint, as appropriate to how the person came to serve in the office.
- Council action.
- No action requiring the approval of the Coordinating Council according to this Way of Life may be undertaken by members of the council or its agents without prior approval by the Coordinating Council. All decisions of the Coordinating Council are by majority vote of the full membership of the council, except as provided for in this Way of Life. All decisions of the Coordinating Council must be maintained in the LCA archives.
- Since the wide dispersal of members makes regular face to face meetings of the Coordinating Council difficult, at the discretion of the chairperson, council business may be conducted through other means, such as conference calls, mail, email, electronic polling and similar means of communication.
- All questions or calls for action placed before the council members must be clearly stated in unambiguous terms, calling for an affirmative or negative vote.
- All council members must be provided with full documentation necessary to prudently reach a decision in the matters before it.
- The secretary must maintain full documentation supporting the decisions made and inform the members of the results of the process.
- LCA Officers
  - Elected.
  - Chairperson. He or she chairs meetings of the Coordinating Council and gatherings of the LCA. The chairperson acts as spokesperson for the LCA in relating to external organizations and authority. The chairperson also signs documents and acts of the Coordinating Council as its agent and representative. The Coordinating Council may assign additional responsibilities to the chairperson.
  - Treasurer. The treasurer handles the financial transactions and accounts of the LCA under the authority of the Coordinating Council. The treasurer shall be a signatory on LCA checks along with another officer designated as co-signatory by the Coordinating Council. The treasurer shall maintain an accurate accounting of

all LCA funds received and expended in accordance with accepted accounting practices. The Treasurer shall maintain a complete inventory of LCA property, its location, and disposition. An accounting shall be provided to the Coordinating Council and the general membership at least once per year.

- Secretary. The secretary is to maintain an accurate and complete record of the minutes of the annual LCA business meeting, all meetings of the LCA Coordinating Council, and all juridic acts of the Coordinating Council. Documentation of other LCA events and activities of historical value shall also be maintained by the secretary. The secretary shall maintain a current and complete listing of all LCA members. The secretary shall act as notary/witness for all juridic acts of the Coordinating Council.
- Appointed. The Coordinating Council may appoint qualified individuals to offices established in this "Way of Life" or established at its discretion. The following appointed offices are established in this Way of Life.
- Vocation Director. He or she is responsible for promoting LCA membership and responding to inquiries regarding the LCA. The Vocation Director reviews the petition for membership of applicants and interviews them. The Vocation Director recommends whether an applicant will be accepted or not to the Coordinating Council, who shall consider the recommendation in reaching a decision.
- Postulant Director. He or she is responsible to orient and mentor the postulants as they prepare for entry into the LCA novitiate. The postulant director also facilitates the reading, reflection paper and review of life, as noted in the section on formation. The Postulant Director recommends to the Coordinating Council those Postulants who seem ready to enter the LCA novitiate. In order to be able to make such recommendations the Postulant Director is to maintain regular and appropriate communication with the postulants.
- Novice Director. He or she is responsible to oversee the formation of LCA novices, as called for in the formation section of this Way of Life. The novice director mentors and encourages the novices. The Novice Director recommends to the Coordinating Council those novices who seem ready to enter the LCA as committed members. In order to be able to make such recommendations the

Novice Director is to maintain regular and appropriate communication with the novices.

- Media Coordinator. He or she is responsible for facilitating and supporting efficient communication among the LCA members as a means of promoting a rich LCA community life. Among his or her duties is the publication of the LCA newsletter, developing and informing the members of a phone tree, as a means of rapid communication, developing and maintaining an LCA website and serving as moderator of the LCA e-group.
- Chaplain. He or she is responsible for the promotion of the spiritual well-being of the LCA members at every level. This can be accomplished through encouragement, exhortation, the sharing of inspirational resources, correspondence and conversation. A chaplain with adequate training and skill may provide spiritual direction to those members who wish to use this service. A member may submit a review of life to the chaplain rather than the normal formation director. The chaplain is bound by confidentiality when acting in this role. The chaplain may attend all meetings of the Coordinating Council, whether physical or virtual, and be given an opportunity to speak on all matters before the Council. However, the chaplain does not vote. Anyone appointed to this office must have adequate theological and pastoral formation in order to fulfill its responsibilities.
- Monastery Representative. This office is filled at the discretion of the Abbot of the Abbey of Our Lady of the Genesee. The person holding this office is a monk appointed by the Abbot to serve as a liaison between the Abbey and the LCA. The holder of this office exercises no authority within the LCA but is a resource providing advice, spiritual support, and instruction as requested by the Coordinating Council and at his discretion.
- The Coordinating Council may create additional offices, appoint assistants to aid any appointed office holder or create committees to perform specific tasks necessary to the administration and purposes of the LCA.
- Eligibility. Except for the Monastery Representative, only committed LCA members who are eligible voters may hold office. This restriction does not apply to assistants or committee members.

- Election of officers. Elections for Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary will be held every two years at the annual business meeting following the election of the regional representatives. Nominations will be accepted for the offices of Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary only for persons who have been elected or appointed to serve on the Coordinating Council. Any committed member may nominate or vote. Election to office is by majority of committed members present at the meeting. Votes will be submitted in writing.

The current chairperson will chair the nominating and voting process, as well as provide for other details of procedure. Two tellers will be appointed to gather and tally the votes. Election by acclamation is also allowed if not opposed by a voting LCA member at the annual meeting. Upon completion of the voting process, the new officers assume office.

- Removal.
  - Those elected or appointed to office serve for the term of office, with the exception that for grave reason a two-thirds vote of the Coordinating Council may remove them from office.
  - Anyone serving in office, appointed or elective, may resign. The resignation is not effective until it has been received in writing and accepted by the Coordinating Council.
  - Removal from office, whether appointed or elected, is not effective until it is received in writing by the person being removed from office.
- Acts of Administration. An act of administration is any action within the LCA or representing the LCA which has legal effect. Such acts are subject to the requirements of canon law.
- Annual Meeting. The LCA will hold its annual meeting at least once each year at the Abbey of Our Lady of the Genesee, though other venues may be determined by the Coordinating Council if circumstances do not permit use of the Abbey. Other LCA business and teaching meetings may be held in other locations throughout the year at the discretion of the Coordinating Council. The frequency and location of regional meetings are at the discretion of the LCA members in each region.

- Temporal Goods
  - All LCA members are expected to pay dues each calendar year or to contribute an equivalent amount of time and resources in support of official LCA ministries. The amount of dues expected is to be set by the Coordinating Council.
  - Each year the treasurer will provide a financial report for the fiscal year just ending.
  - No LCA funds may be obligated or expended without prior authorization from the Coordinating Council. Prior authorization may be in the form of an approved budget for regular expenditures throughout the calendar year or by means of a special act of the Coordinating Council.
  - The Treasurer is authorized to accept gifts and donations to the LCA apart from annual dues from members and non-members alike. All such gifts and donations are to be expended with respect for the stated intention of the donor, if any such intention is made known..
- Amendments and Complementary Norms
  - Effective. The LCA is established and this Way of Life becomes effective at such time as a minimum of 11 people commit themselves to the LCA Way of Life. Commitment to the LCA Way of Life shall be in writing.
  - Amendment.
    - The Way of Life may be amended at such time as an amendment is approved by 2/3 of those committed members eligible to vote.
    - Any proposed amendments must be reviewed by the Coordinating Council and approved for presentation to the general membership. A detailed explanation of the proposed amendment along with arguments for and against must be provided to the membership. The Coordinating Council may decide on the most appropriate form and venue for voting on the proposed amendment. An amendment is passed only when two-thirds of all committed members have voted in favor of the amendment.
    - If mail is used as the medium for voting on an amendment, all votes are good for only one month from the postmark date of the call to vote. If a 2/3 majority of those committed members eligible to vote have not approved the amendment by

that point in time, the matter is dead. The amendment may not be placed before the membership again for at least one year.

- Complementary Norms.

The Coordinating Council is authorized to establish specific policies and norms by which the principles laid out in this Way of Life can be implemented effectively.

- Dissolution.

- The LCA shall cease to exist as a result of a 2/3 majority vote among all committed members at the time the vote is called.

- Any assets remaining after the liquidation of all LCA obligations and liabilities shall be given as a donation to the Abbey of the Genesee.

- Archives and LCA physical property will be disposed of at the discretion of the Coordinating Council.

- Transition.

- The structures and procedures laid out in the Way of Life shall become effective at such time as the LCA is established above, except that:

- All committed members shall act as a committee of the whole for a period of three months from the effective date of this Way of Life, during which regional elections are to be held among all persons who have committed to the LCA Way of Life in a manner appropriate to their level of formation and are eligible to vote.
- At the end of three months, an interim Coordinating Council will be formed of the four regional representatives and those persons serving in the appointed offices of Postulant Director, Novice Director, Committed Member Coordinator and Media Coordinator at the time of the dissolution of the GLCA. The chairperson, secretary and treasurer of the GLCA at the time of its dissolution will also serve on the Coordinating Council in place of the at large members. This shall apply only to those former GLCA members who commit to the LCA Way of Life. The interim Coordinating Committee shall elect officers as called for in the Way of life at this time.
- At the time of the first annual meeting following the establishment of the LCA, an election will be held for the at large members of the Coordinating Council.

- Within one month of the election of the at large members to the Coordinating Council, the Coordinating Council must determine and approve the four appointed members of the Coordinating Council as called for in this Way of Life.
- All offices are for two year terms and shall continue on this staggered basis from this point onward.
- Former Genesee Lay Contemplative Associate (GLCA) members may enter the LCA at the same level of GLCA formation applicable at the time of commitment to the LCA. This is applicable to all former GLCA members for the first year of LCA operation, after which the requirements for readmission apply.

Given this day September 17, 2005, in Piffard, New York, we the charter members of the Lay Contemplative Associates do set our signatures as evidence of our commitment to the Blessed Trinity and the Way of Life described herein.