

The Order of Saint Luke

Companion Overview and Guidelines



This is a call to service. We are calling you to consider being a companion for someone who is inquiring about life in the Order of Saint Luke. We are asking you because we sense that you live your profession as a member of the Order and that you have the gifts and graces to be a companion to someone who wants to explore our common life as Lukans.

As you know, we have shifted from a sort of “membership on demand” (“fill out the form; you’re in” approach) to a process of discovery and discernment. As Sr. Carol Gathagan (our first Companion for Inquirers and Final Discerners) put it, people who think they like what they see, need to try on the “new shoes” to see if there is a good fit. In another way of putting it: we are seeking to “tradition” those who come to us. “*Traditio*” in Latin means to hand on, to pass on. We want to welcome seekers and pass on our spirituality, communal life, disciplines, mission and practices.

Traditioning—welcoming people into the traditions, practices and communal life of the Order—is best accomplished in relational experiences. We are inviting you to be ready to relate to another who is inquiring and to share your experience, knowledge, and understanding of the Order of Saint Luke with an Inquirer. In this way, they will have someone to talk to, ask questions of, and make discoveries with. In time, together you will discern if they are ready to become a Final Discerner (in the parlance of religious orders, *a novice*).

A caution: Each seeker comes to us as a unique individual with a lifetime of experience, no matter their age. Each has her unique needs, understandings, and sense of direction. Your work is not to push them through a course of study, but to be a guide for them on *their* journey. Discern with them how they are prompted to explore.

What we expect of you as a companion is listed at the end.

Note: durations for the various stages of Inquiry and Discernment are only approximations; they are not prescriptive, and may be much shorter, and, sometimes longer.

Outline of the Journey:

First, it may be helpful to you to overview the new way we are welcoming and forming members. There are three periods or times in our new approach to welcoming and forming members:

- initial contact (a short time)

- the Time of Inquiry (a longer time)
- the time of Final Discernment leading to first public profession (a few months up to a year in duration)

These are sequential. At the point that Final Discerners makes their first public profession of vows, they become members who renew their vows annually. (See the Constitution—Article V on the [website](#))

1. Initial contact—When a person makes initial contact with the Registrar, whose task is to offer conversation and resources to familiarize the seeker with whatever information and understanding of OSL that they seek. If the outcome of the initial contact moves toward desire for deeper engagement with the Order, the seeker completes an Application for Admission to a Time of Inquiry. If the application and subsequent conversation indicates sufficient motivation to observe and share our common life for a season, the Registrar admits the seeker as an Inquirer. This is the *formal beginning* of the process.



The Registrar then does the following to initiate the Time of Inquiry:

- Provides the Inquirer with a packet of resources--digital and print, or both—and assists in securing the following:
 - *Food for Pilgrims*
 - *The Book of Offices and Services*
 - *A Lukan Book of Hours*
 - OSL Publications offers a bundle of these books for a minimum cost.
- Contacts the Companion Coordinator who finds a companion who is a seasoned member of the Order
- Adds the Inquirer to the OSL Facebook group (a closed group) for Inquirers and Discerners
- Adds the Inquirer to the Registrar's list of Inquirers to monitor the progress and notate the outcome of the process.
- Provides the companion with the Service of Welcoming an Inquirer to be used within a chapter/association or other setting, including an online Welcome.

2. Time of Inquiry—What is it? What do we expect to happen?

Inquiry (several weeks to a few months) is a time to explore the direction of the Inquirer's intentions and commitment through reading, study, and experience of our common life. In traditional religious parlance this is the time of *postulancy* or

exploration. This is the trying on of “new shoes” to see if there is a fit. *It is not walking around in them*; that is for the Time of Final Discernment.

Inquirers may end the Time of Inquiry at any point without compunction. If there isn't a “fit,” then we seek to help them interpret their sense of vocation and support them in their pilgrimage. If there is a fit, you help guide them to discernment of calling to the time of Final Discernment.

The question on the horizon during Inquiry is “*How is God prompting me in relationship to the Order of Saint Luke? Is God calling me to participate and know what it means to share the Order's sacramental life and work?*” To address those questions, we ask that you, as a companion, accompany them. Your task is to attentively introduce them to the Order of Saint Luke.

Some activities, relationships, reading, and experience during Inquiry will help the Inquirer know:

1. Who we are—
2. What we do—
3. How we live and stay in love with God, neighbor, world
4. How I am being called in my pilgrimage of living the baptismal covenant

What are some suggested activities for Inquirers (with reflection on all of them with the companion)

- Keeping a journal
- Praying the daily office regularly and reflecting on this discipline (sometimes with others in chapter / association or online group)
- Formation by working through the Modules (see below)
- Sharing with your Inquirer in the sessions of the current Cohort (five ZOOM sessions)
- Participating in the life of the Order in ways as available, including:
 - Local chapter or association meetings or retreats
 - Facebook group page for Inquirers and Probationary Members
 - General Chapter Retreat or Spring Council Meeting
 - Personal retreat at a monastery (this to aid in getting a deeper sense of religious life, even though it is not the Order of Saint Luke)
 - Regular Eucharist (Word and Table) and reaffirmation of the baptismal covenant in their local church
 - Reflection on their calls to service in the world

3. Time of Final Discernment (novitiate)

What is this time? This is a time for training and testing prior to taking first public annual vows. It is a time to “try on the shoes” by *walking around in them* for a while and to know if the fit is right. It is a time of discernment of whether the Discerner is called to vowed religious life in the Order of Saint Luke. It includes times of study, prayer, living in community (retreat, chapter meetings or some other form of communal life—such as the Facebook OSL group or one of our online associations), studying the vowed life, deepening one's relationship with God, and deepening one's self-awareness. It is a time of living into a new way of being in the world: “embodying Christ’s healing grace for all creation”.



Service of Profession at a chapter meeting in Perkins Chapel at SMU.

Final Discernment may last from a few weeks to a year or more. *It is a time of intensification of the sense of calling discovered in the Time of Inquiry.* It is "Sabbath time" to deepen one's relationship with God, to intensify the living out of the Order’s mission and charisma, and to grow in knowledge and appreciation of our traditions, customs, and manner of life. The companion listens to and guides the Discerner in study, regular Eucharist, prayer, discernment,

and action.

During this time, the Discerners examine their vocation for life in the Order and readiness to make a first public profession of vows. The question on the horizon is *“Am I ready to commit to life in the Order of Saint Luke by making my first public affirmation of the Rule of Life and Service?”* The text of the Service of Profession in *The Book of Offices and Services of The Order of Saint Luke* (pages 87-91) is the horizon to be considered throughout the time of Final Discernment. “The Rule of Life and Service” is available on the OSL website (see the Constitution and Bylaws) or on pages 314-316 in *The Book of Offices and Services of The Order of Saint Luke*.

Discerners may end their pilgrimage at any time, notifying their companion of the decision. If the companion determines that the Discerner does not demonstrate serious intention, they should discuss whether there is desire and willingness to continue.

Mutual discernment of readiness to make a first public profession is reported to the Registrar and the Novitiate Team Leader, including completion of the appropriate first affirmation form. (See the Novitiate Directory)

The companion for the time of Inquirer may continue to be companion during the time of Final Discernment. Additionally, we strongly encourage those who enter Final Discernment to find and work with a spiritual director.

Having reviewed the process of our way of welcoming and forming members of the Order of Saint Luke, now consider the areas of formation.

Second, an overview of the areas of Inquirer formation will help you see the path your companionship for an Inquirer might look like. Entrance into the Time of Inquiry begins with a *Service of Welcoming an Inquirer*.

See **Formation Approaches for the Time of Inquiry** One-Page Quick Overview and **Novitiate Overview: The Times of Inquiry and Final Discernment** for approaches to companioning your Inquirer/Discerner.

Concluding the Time of Inquiry:

The Time of Inquiry concludes when:

1. **The Inquirer indicates that he or she has discerned call and readiness to become an “Discerner”** (a novice). To move to the Time of Final Discernment there should be a sense of mutual discernment (by both the Inquirer and companion) that the Inquirer is called and ready for the next step in the process. Encouragement is appropriate, so long as there is no pressure to take the next step. You will find guidelines for the Time of Final Discernment in “GUIDE FOR THE TIME OF FINAL DISCERNMENT”.
2. **Or the Inquirer indicates that they have discerned their call is elsewhere** and wishes to end the Time of Inquiry.

As companion you report your understanding and concurrence with the Inquirer’s decision to the Registrar.

Expectations: what does a companion do?

1. Remember that *the one you guide is a unique person who is ready to go on a journey with you*. If you are part of an active chapter of the Order, then remember that the members of the chapter are part of the mentoring team. Engage them in praying for and attending to the Inquirer.
2. Pray regularly for the Inquirer assigned to you.

3. Invite the Inquirer to be in contact with you, leaving the responsibility for follow through with them. If you are prompted to reach out if you have not had contact for some time, follow the prompting.
4. Listen deeply and guide them as the Spirit prompts you. Lead contemplatively.
5. Live the Rule of Life and Service alongside the Inquirer as a companion.
6. Maintain appropriate boundaries. Recognize transference or other warning signs.
7. Aim toward mutual discernment of how God is calling the Inquirer relationship to the Order. If you have concerns or reservations, find ways to reflect on the concern with the Inquirer.
8. Send brief update reports (monthly) to the Registrar and the Novitiate Team Leader. Indicate progress in the approach followed (modules, cohort, or chapter) and any other developments or concerns.
9. Communicate your discernment of the Inquirer's readiness to conclude the Time of Inquiry and what their sense of calling is: either to become a "Final Discerner" or *find another path for continuing pilgrimage and formation.

* Part of the Time of Inquiry could include exploration of other religious communities as alternative possibilities. For example, if an inquirer's temperament is oriented to service and social justice, relating them to a third order Franciscan community might be more suitable.