

# Common Elements of DOJCC

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Common Elements Of The Disciples Of Jesus Covenant Community What does it mean to be a 'Disciple of Jesus'?

**Charismatic Grace** The Disciples of Jesus Community arose within the context of the Charismatic Renewal and has experienced constant outpourings of the Holy Spirit which leads to transformation of life and the use of charismatic gifts. The experience of Baptism in the Spirit and commitment to Christ are foundational to our way of life. Baptism in the Spirit brings renewal to the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation, empowering us to live more fully the grace of these Sacraments. We recognise that this is a grace given for the building of the Body and we readily promote and encourage the proper use of the gifts which flow from this grace.

**Mission** The desire to bring people to know Jesus Christ is a consequence of His action in our individual and corporate lives, and an act of gratitude for His mercy towards us.

The Disciples of Jesus Community seeks to foster a missionary outlook in its people. This mission includes evangelisation, service and works of mercy.

We have a particular commitment to evangelisation. Everyone in the Community is involved in evangelising their own contacts and networks. Furthermore we evangelise as a Body at local, state, national and global levels.

Commitment to works of mercy manifests itself in many forms, including openness to the poor, disadvantaged and marginalised.

**Relationship with the Church** We are a Catholic Community with canonical status and aim to be authentically Catholic and in submission to the Catholic Church. This is effected by having formal statutes with the Bishop/Catholic Fraternity. The Community is recognised locally as a Private Association of Christ's Faithful and as a member of the Pontifical Association of Christ's Faithful via the Catholic Fraternity. We seek to foster an ecumenical attitude in keeping with Catholic guidelines and, hence, welcome members of any Christian denomination.

**Branches** The Disciples of Jesus Covenant Community is a body of people united in mutual commitment to each other and a way of life. We have a vision to live out this commitment in branches. These branches are not autonomous, separate communities, but groupings of the Disciples of Jesus. Although the Community may be 'seen' in the branches, it is greater than the sum of the branches. We have a vision to start branches wherever and whenever the opportunity arises, following a process of prayer and discernment within the Community and with people in the proposed location.

**Leadership** The gift of leadership is exercised by men and women throughout the Community.

Small groups have designated leaders who take responsibility for the proper functioning of the group and deepening of relationships within it. Ministries have leaders who ensure that the vision and direction of the ministry is maintained. Leadership of ministries and small groups is exercised in collaboration with other leaders throughout the Community.

Each Branch of the Community is led by an Elder who takes pastoral responsibility for the local members. He exercises this role in collaboration with other qualified individuals (who may form a team). The Branch Elder has final responsibility to the Council of Elders for the implementation of the vision of the Disciples of Jesus Community at a local level.

The Community is governed by a Council of Elders. Elders are particular men called by the Lord to give their life in the pastoral care of the Community. This is only secondarily a management function. One member of the Council of Elders, the Presiding Elder, is vested with leadership of the Council and, hence, overall leadership of the Community. The final authority for decision making in the Community is the Decision Making Forum, which consists of the body of elders and other covenanted members.

**Mutual Commitment** Mutual commitment provides stability for Community life. This commitment arises from God's call on our life and is based on a lifelong ("Covenant") commitment, preceded by a committed period of discernment ("Underway"). This commitment is made before the Lord, to and between specific individuals. It includes a commitment to live a particular way of life, as understood by the essential elements and their implementation with these people.

Covenant members meet regularly as a group to strengthen their identity and deepen their vision and understanding of Community life.

The process by which people join the Community in "Underway" and make a lifelong Covenant is subject to a process of mutual discernment and reflection. This process is uniform across the Community.

**Sacramental and Spiritual Life** Members of the Community are encouraged to deepen their charismatic Catholic life and respond to the call to holiness in ways appropriate to their states of life. This would include (but not be limited to) daily prayer, regular participation in the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation, spiritual reading and acts of service and ministry. We endeavour to foster a Catholic devotion to Mary, the mother of our Saviour.

**The Lord's Day** We give honour to Sunday as both the day of the Lord's resurrection and the day which looks forward to His return. In the face of a humanistic world and in respect for the Lord we set aside Sunday for worship, family life and rest.

**General Community Gathering** The General Community Gathering (GCG) is a regular gathering of Community members to centre on the Lord and to celebrate our life together. It provides an opportunity to give honour to the Lord's Day, worship the Lord as a body, exercise charismatic gifts, outreach to others, serve one another, hear prophetic word, receive direction and input from the leaders, hear inspirational talks, intercede for the needs of members, and assist in the evangelisation and incorporation of children into Community life.

The GCG is usually held every Sunday under the responsibility of the Branch Elder, but is secondary to our personal Sunday Eucharistic celebration.

**Brotherhood and Sisterhood** The development of brotherhood and sisterhood is essential to the life of the Community. We desire to foster strong, intimate relationships of brotherhood and sisterhood and we encourage those activities which achieve this goal.

**Small Groups** Small groups are a fundamental part of Community life. They strengthen relationships and foster an environment in which people can open their lives to one another in trust and love.

Every adult member of the Community is allocated to a small group which meets at least fortnightly. The small group structure is in the form of men's sharing groups and women's sharing groups. A Branch/ Area has the freedom to form additional groupings in other forms, eg fellowship through 'Celebration Meals'.

**Formation Programme** The Lord calls us to holiness and to grow in maturity in Him. In order to develop our lives as Catholic Christians, and more fully live out our life in the Disciples of Jesus Community, we have a formation teaching programme which has a uniform content across the Community.

Individuals achieve minimum standards of formation before joining the Community and before taking the Covenant.

The formation programme has a specifically practical outlook and covers a range of issues in Catholic and Community life. We also recognise that individual formation occurs in many ways and through many channels and we endeavour to foster an attitude of personal responsibility for growing in Christ.

Elders take particular responsibility for forming Community members, but may delegate specific tasks to others. Whoever gives the formation talks must be fully formed in all aspects of the Community way of life.

Just as we need to persevere in our spiritual and other facets of our life, there is a continual need for individual and corporate formation.

We also recognise the need for formation programmes directed towards particular groups (eg. Elders, those giving pastoral care) and for service and mission in the Community.

**Individual Pastoral Care** Pastoral care is a consequence of an individual's stated desire to become a disciple of Jesus

and it bears fruit depending on their openness and responsiveness. Individual pastoral care provides an external source of practical wisdom as we endeavour to grow to maturity in Christ. It is not an authoritative role which could deprive people of their freedom.

Pastoral care is given in a range of ways, but, in particular, in the context of a one-to-one relationship. The goal of such pastoral care in the Community is to provide individual support for growth in the Christian life, so that people may become disciples of Jesus Christ. Members of the Community who are mature in their faith are delegated to provide pastoral care for other members.

Pastoral care usually would be given fortnightly in the initial years of Community life ("Underway") and at least monthly thereafter ("Covenant"). This pastoral relationship develops from a discipling type of role to a companioning type of role as the person grows in their grasp of the Christian life within the Disciples of Jesus Community and in their overall Christian maturity.

Family Life Families form the basis and provide the underlying stability to our common life. They are the places in which our children are nurtured and their social skills developed. We have a particular responsibility to evangelise our children, strengthen marriages and form families in the Christian life. In keeping with Catholic teaching, we recognise and encourage the evangelising influence of families. We value single parents in the Community and seek to offer them comfort and support at all stages of their family life.

Single Life We honour single life in the Community and support its different expressions. We recognise that this is not a time of aimlessness, but a time for specific, active service of the Lord, formation in Christian maturity and discernment of God's call on their lives. We are committed to building and strengthening the single members of the Community in their faith, fostering their involvement in a Christian environment and assisting them to discern and prepare for their state of life. We support them in living this out.

Consecrated Life The rise of celibate vocations in our midst is one of the clear signs that God is with us and that we are serving Him. We are committed to fostering and supporting these vocations whenever they occur, whether privately or as members of the Missionaries of God's Love.

Children and Youth We recognise the responsibility to train and form children and young people in Catholic faith and life. To this end we encourage families and seek ways in which we can strengthen this ideal.

Cluster Life We desire a rich life together. We foster an openness to living with and near one another. This gives rise to cluster life, which incorporates a range of living situations. It is our vision, where possible, to develop clusters of homes in particular locations where people can live a rich common life on a daily basis.

Financial Giving and Accountability We believe that the Lord calls us to generosity in all areas of our lives, including finances. For this reason, we encourage people to give generously - using tithing as a guide on which to base their giving - and to give alms to the poor.

The Community recognises its responsibility as stewards of all income it receives and institutes proper accounting standards and accountability by Branches to the Council of Elders.

## Community Logo

The Community logo is an expression of our common vision and life which helps to strengthen our common identity. This logo appears on all of the Community's publications, advertising, and outreach material.