The Anglican Rosary

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“Rejoice always,
pray without ceasing,
give thanks in all circumstances;
for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

– I THESSALONIANS 5

History ................................................................................................................. 1
Why? .................................................................................................................... 2
How? .................................................................................................................... 3
Including Specific Personal Prayers ................................................................. 4
Creating Your Own Rosary Prayers ................................................................. 4
Sample Prayers ................................................................................................. 5
  Trisagion and Jesus Prayer ............................................................................ 5
  Julian of Norwich Prayer .............................................................................. 5
  A Celtic Prayer ............................................................................................. 6
  An Evening Prayer ......................................................................................... 7
  A Second Evening Prayer ............................................................................ 8
  Come Lord Jesus Prayer .............................................................................. 9
  A Prayer of Petition ....................................................................................... 10
  A Prayer of Oblation ..................................................................................... 11
  A Prayer of Thanksgiving ............................................................................ 11
  Psalm 46:10 & Julien of Norwich Prayer for Calm .................................... 12
Holy Week Rosary Prayers ............................................................................ 13
  Palm Sunday ................................................................................................. 13
  Monday in Holy Week .................................................................................. 14
  Tuesday in Holy Week .................................................................................. 14
  Wednesday in Holy Week ............................................................................ 15
  Maundy Thursday ......................................................................................... 15
  Good Friday ................................................................................................ 16
  Holy Saturday ................................................................................................ 16
  Easter Sunday ............................................................................................... 17
Internet Resources .......................................................................................... 18
Books ................................................................................................................ 18
End Notes .......................................................................................................... 19

History
The use of beads or other counting device as a companion to prayer has an ancient history. Those early Christian monastics known as the Desert Mothers and Fathers were reported to have gathered up small pebbles and put them in their pockets. While walking, they would pray and toss a pebble into the sand each time they completed a prayer. When their pockets were empty, they would stop, gather more pebbles, and begin again. Beads or knots on a rope or string became a lot more convenient than having to gather pebbles all the time.

Every major religious tradition has used these aids to prayer. The earliest recorded examples are the Mala beads of the Hindu and Buddhist faiths. The Eastern Orthodox have a prayer rope with intricate cross-knots, and the Roman Catholics have the rosary with which most of us are probably familiar. There are also the Islamic prayer beads called the Misbaha or the Tasbih.

The use of the rosary as a focus for contemplative prayer and meditation experienced a revival in the Episcopal Church in the 1980’s. A specific Anglican Rosary was developed during this period. By design, it both reflects our emphasis on incarnational theology and is more flexible for personalized prayers.

Why?

Many people seek to deepen their prayer life. This search has taken many forms within the Episcopal Church in the past thirty years such as centering prayer, walking the labyrinth, and other varieties of meditation.

Praying the rosary is seen as a tactile aid to focus on prayer. My mind naturally tends to wander, and it helps to have something I can hold onto physically – for me, it is pleasant to carry my prayers in my hand. I always have the rosary in my pocket, and although I do not pull it out in the grocery store or while pumping gas, just its touch can remind me of the peace of prayer and put me in a prayerful frame of mind, whatever my activity.

Sometimes people express concerns about the rosary because of Jesus’ injunction found in Matthew 6:7 – When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. In my experience, any prayer can become empty phrases. I was raised in a religious tradition that allowed only unplanned, extemporaneous prayer, and I now serve as a priest in the Episcopal Church where liturgical prayer is more commonly heard. Any kind of prayer can become empty phrases. I have heard extemporaneous prayer that was beautiful, genuine, and uplifting and also liturgical prayer that came from the heart and brought me closer to
God’s presence. Unfortunately, I have also listened to extemporaneous prayers where the person constantly used clichés and catchphrases and was clearly not even paying attention to what she or he was saying. I also admit I have gritted my teeth as a bored lector droned through the prayers in the Book of Common Prayer. I think the difference lies in your heart, your focus, and your intent, more than in the form of the prayer. The rosary is only one of a number of types of prayer in which I engage.

How?

There is a great deal of symbolism woven into the design of the Anglican rosary. There are thirty-three beads representing the thirty-three years of Jesus’ life. The * Cruciform * beads form the cross and can also represent the four compass points of the earth. The seven beads of the * Weeks * can represent the seven days of creation, the day of the Sabbath, and the number seven is often used in the Bible as symbolic of perfection. To enter into prayer there is an * Invitatory * bead (pronounced * in-vî’ta-tôr’ē * ), much like we say a collect at the beginning of our services to invite us into worship.

The rosary can be prayed alone or with a group. It is recommended a person pray around the circle three times – a symbolic number for the Trinity. Doing so also invites you to go deeper as distractions fall away.

In general, the rosary is used in three basic ways:

1. Repetition of the same prayer or devotion.
2. Repetition of several different prayers in some pattern, sometimes interspersed with or accompanied by meditations whether spoken, silent or with music or chanting.

When praying, the idea is to be unhurried and calm. The goal is not so much to finish, as to develop a rhythm in prayer. I tend not to think of it as repetition, but sinking deeper with each meditation into the presence of God.
Including Specific Personal Prayers

When I have wanted to include my own specific prayers within a rosary prayer, I have tried three ways – they all work well:

**Pausing** – After a specific bead (usually the first Cruciform) I simply offer my personal thanksgivings, intercessions, and petitions, and then continue on with the regular rosary. If I think of other prayers as I go, I simply pause after the next Cruciform.

**Include Specific Prayers in the Weeks** – Certain kinds of prayer, such as intercessions for the sick, work right into some of the rosary prayers by just changing a word to the person’s name, e.g., in the “Jesus Prayer”, instead of saying, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner,” when you pray the Weeks, you could change it to, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on Fred.”

**“Dropping In” Specific Prayers** – While praying and using the words of the rosary I have chosen, I just spend awhile visualizing the loved one I wish to be healed, or I dwell on a particular blessing, or I allow myself to let go of a specific fear. I do not plan to insert these thoughts at any particular point in the rosary, I just let them surface however they wish as I immerse myself in the rhythm of the prayers. I have always referred to this as “dropping in” prayers because it feels to me like letting a single drop slide into a still pool causing ripples outward.

Creating Your Own Rosary Prayers

When learning the rosary, people often start with one prayer, and then learn another and another to give variety, for the change of the seasons, the time of day, or because of their particular needs. Once you are comfortable using the rosary as a companion in prayer, you might consider writing your own.

This can be as simple as substituting one or two prayers from the Book of Common Prayer or a different scripture you love within a rosary prayer you already know. It could also take the form of writing your own words and designing an entire set of prayers that are uniquely your own. Here are some steps you might consider:

1. Decide on the overall theme or need you wish to express in your prayer. Perhaps you wish to focus on healing, peace, faith, etc.
2. Gather prayer, poems, hymns, quotes, etc. that go with your theme or write your own.
3. Write your prayers for the Cross, the Invitatory bead, the four Cruciforms, and the Weeks. You might like to use the same prayer for each type of bead.
or use a different prayer on each type of bead (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th Cruciform for example).

a. The Cross might be an acclamation, a meditation, or a statement of faith.

b. The Invitatory might be some kind of thought that invites you deeper into prayer and quiets your heart.

c. The Cruciforms might reflect the overall theme you have chosen in a general way.

d. The Weeks might very specifically reflect the theme you have chosen.

Sample Prayers

**Trisagion**⁴ and Jesus Prayer

The Cross

*In the Name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*

Amen.

The Invitatory

*O God make speed to save me (us),
O Lord make haste to help me (us),
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.*

The Cruciforms

*Holy God, Holy and Mighty,
Holy Immortal One, Have mercy upon me (us).*

The Weeks

*Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,
Have mercy on me, a sinner.*

CONTINUED…

The Invitatory (Last time through)

*The Lord’s Prayer*

The Cross

*Let us (or “I”) bless the Lord
Thanks be to God.*

**Julian of Norwich Prayer**

The Cross

*In the Name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

The Invitatory
O God make speed to save me (us),
O Lord make haste to help me (us),
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.
Amen.

The Cruciforms
God of your goodness, give me yourself,
For you are enough to me.
And I can ask for nothing less that is to your glory.
And if I ask for anything less, I shall still be in want, for only in you have I all.

The Weeks
All shall be well, and all shall be well,
And all manner of things shall be well.
- or -
In His love He has done His works, and in His love He has made all things beneficial to us.

The Invitatory (Last time through)
The Lord’s Prayer

The Cross
Let us (or “I”) bless the Lord
Thanks be to God.

A Celtic Prayer

The Cross
In the Name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Invitatory
O God make speed to save me (us),
O Lord make haste to help me (us),
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.
Amen.

The Cruciforms
Be the eye of God dwelling with me,
The foot of Christ in guidance with me,
The shower of the Spirit pouring on me,
Richly and generously.

The Weeks
(PRAY EACH PHRASE ON A SEPARATE BEAD.)
I bow before the Father who made me,
I bow before the Son who saved me,
I bow before the Spirit who guides me,
In love and adoration.
I praise the Name of the one on high.
I bow before thee Sacred Three,
The ever One, the Trinity.

The Invitatory (Last time through)
The Lord’s Prayer

The Cross
Let us (or “I”) bless the Lord
Thanks be to God.

— Written by Sister Brigit-Carol, S.D., Solitaries of DeKoven

An Evening Prayer

The Cross
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

The Invitatory
Open my lips, O Lord,
and my mouth shall proclaim Your praise.
CONTINUED...
The Cruciforms
Guide us waking, O Lord,
and guard us sleeping;
that awake we may watch
with Christ, and asleep
we may rest in peace.

The Weeks
Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.
Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.
Jesus, redeemer of the world, give us your peace.

The Invitatory (Last time through)
The Lord’s Prayer

The Cross
Let us (or “I”) bless the Lord
Thanks be to God.

– KING OF PEACE EPISCOPAL CHURCH, KINGSLAND, GEORGIA

A Second Evening Prayer

The Cross

Glory to the Father. and to the Son. and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the
beginning. is now. and will be for ever. Amen.

The Invitatory

Open my lips. O Lord and my mouth shall proclaim Your praise.

The Cruciforms

Guide us waking. O Lord and guard us sleeping; that awake we may
watch with Christ, and asleep we may rest in peace.

The Weeks

Jesus, lamb of God, have mercy on us.
Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.
Jesus, redeemer of the world, give us your peace.

The Invitatory (Last time through)

The Lord’s Prayer

The Cross

Let us (or “I”) bless the Lord
Thanks be to God.

Bless the Lord

The Cross

In the Name of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Invitatory

O God make speed to save me (us),
O Lord make haste to help me (us),
Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: As it was in the
beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Cruciforms

Behold now, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord. You that stand in
the house of the Lord, lift up your hands in the holy place and bless the
Lord.
The Weeks

I lift up my eyes to the hills;
From where is my help to come?
My help comes from the Lord,
The maker of heaven and earth.

The Invitatory (Last time through)
The Lord’s Prayer

The Cross

Let us (or “I”) bless the Lord
Thanks be to God.

Come Lord Jesus Prayer

The Cross

"Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen." -Revelation 7:12

The Invitatory

"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble." -Psalm 46:1

The Cruciforms

"Bless the Lord, 0 my soul, and all that is within me, bless God's Holy Name." -Psalm 103:1

The Weeks

"Come Lord Jesus, draw us to yourself." -John 12:32

The Invitatory (Last time through)
The Lord’s Prayer

The Cross

Let us (or “I”) bless the Lord
Thanks be to God.

Lamb of God Prayer

The Cross

Recite The Lord’s Prayer
The Invitatory
"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your Sight, 0 Lord, my strength and my redeemer." -Psalm 19:14

The Cruciforms
Oh, Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world have mercy upon us,
Oh, Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world have mercy upon us,
Oh, Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world give us Thy Peace.

The Weeks
Almighty and merciful Lord, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless us and keep us. Amen.

The Invitatory (Last time through)
The Lord’s Prayer

The Cross
Let us (or “I”) bless the Lord
Thanks be to God.

A Prayer of Petition
The Cross
Lord, You know well what I desire, if it be Your will, for I want nothing save what is Your will.

The Invitatory
God of Your goodness, give me yourself, for you are enough for me.

The Cruciforms
Thy will be done.

The Weeks
(Pray each phrase on a separate bead)
I pray that I may be healthy in body, mind and spirit.
I pray that my spirit be nourished.
I pray that I may love and be loved.
I pray that I may triumph over temptation.
I pray that I may live in peace and harmony with all.
I pray that I may be Your faithful servant.
I pray that I may live in You in this life and with You in the
life to come.
The Invitatory (Last time through)
   The Lord’s Prayer

The Cross
   Let us (or “I”) bless the Lord
   Thanks be to God.

A Prayer of Oblation

The Cross
   In the Name of God. Father. Son. and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Invitatory
   And here I offer and present to You. 0 Lord. myself. my soul. and body. to be a reasonable. holy and living sacrifice to You.

The Cruciforms
   Accept, 0 Lord. my offering.

The Weeks
   (Pray each phrase on a separate bead)
   All from You. 0 Lord. and all for You.
   I give of my strengths and of my weaknesses.
   I give of my talents.
   I give of my treasures. the works of my hands.
   I give of my joys and of my sorrows.
   I give from the places of darkness within me as well as from the places of light.
   I give of my whole self. holding nothing back.

The Invitatory (Last time through)
   The Lord’s Prayer

The Cross
   Let us (or “I”) bless the Lord
   Thanks be to God.

A Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Cross
   For every good and perfect gift is from above. coming down from the Heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. -James I: 16-18.
The Invitatory
   Thank You, God, for the many gifts You have bestowed on me.

The Cruciforms
   I give You thanks, 0 Lord.

The Weeks
   (Pray each phrase on a separate bead)
   For the beauty of all creation-for earth and sky and sea.
   For home and family, friends and loved ones.
   For work to do and for time to rest.
   For the gift of health-sound body, mind, and spirit.
   For the freedoms I enjoy.
   For the patience and strength to bear witness.
   For the examples of the saints of God, past, present and future.

The Invitatory (Last time through)
   The Lord’s Prayer

The Cross
   Let us (or “I”) bless the Lord
   Thanks be to God.

Psalm 46:10 & Julien of Norwich Prayer for Calm

The Cross
   In the Name of God. Father. Son. and Holy Spirit. Amen.

The Invitatory
   O God make speed to save me (us),
   O Lord make haste to help me (us),
   Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:
   As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever.
   Amen.

The Cruciforms
   Be still and know that I am God
   Be still and know that I am
   Be still and know
   Be still
   Be
The Weeks
   *All shall be well, and all shall be well,*
   *And all manner of things shall be well.*

The Invitatory (Last time through)
   *The Lord’s Prayer*

The Cross
   *Let us (or “I”) bless the Lord*
   *Thanks be to God.*

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**Holy Week Rosary Prayers**  

*Palm Sunday*

On the cross
   *Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord... Hosanna in the highest heaven!* (Mark 11:9-10)

The Invitatory
   *Be strong and Let Your Heart Take courage, all you who wait for the Lord.*
   *(Psalm 31:24)*

The Cruciforms
   *Give thanks to the Lord for he is good semicolon his Mercy endures forever.* *(Psalm 118:1)*

The Weeks.
   *Come, Lord Jesus.*

The Invitatory (last time around)
   *God of our Salvation, help us to enter with joy into the celebration of those mighty acts by which you have given us fullness of Life ; through Jesus Christ Our Redeemer.* *(New Zealand Prayer Book)*

On the cross
   *Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.* *(Mark 11:9)*
**Monday in Holy Week**

On the cross

I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. (Isaiah 42:6-7)

The Invitatory

How priceless is your love, O God! Your people take refuge under the shadow of your wings. (Psalm 36:7)

The Cruciforms

A bruised reed you will not break, and a dimly burning wick you will not quench. (Isaiah 42:3)

The Weeks

Lord, help me to follow you; through this week, to the Cross and beyond.

The Invitatory (Last time through)

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. (Mark 11:9)

On the cross

The Lord’s Prayer

**Tuesday in Holy Week**

On the cross

I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach the end of the earth. (Isaiah 49:6b)

The Invitatory

In You, O Lord, have I taken refuge; let me never be ashamed.

The Cruciforms

For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:16)

The Weeks

Lord Jesus, draw me closer to yourself.

The Invitatory (Last time through)

Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out.
Wednesday in Holy Week

On the cross

The Lord's Prayer

Maundy Thursday

On the cross

The Lord's Prayer

The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near. (Isaiah 40:7-8a)

The Invitatory

You are my helper and my deliverer; O Lord, do not tarry. (Psalm 70:6)

The Cruciforms

Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, “Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.” (John 13:21)

The Weeks

Be pleased, O God, to deliver me; O Lord, make haste to help me. (Psalm 70:1)

The Invitatory (Last time through)

Lord, who is it who will betray you?

Maundy Thursday

On the cross

As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. (1 Corinthians 11:26)

The Invitatory

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:34-35)

The Cruciforms

If I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. (John 13:14)
The Weeks

O Lord, I am your servant; I am your servant and the child of your handmaid; you have freed me from my bonds. (Psalm 116:14)

The Invitatory (Last time through)

Jesus answered, “Unless I wash you, you have no share with me.” (John 13:8b)

On the cross

The Lord’s Prayer

Good Friday

On the cross

He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5)

The Invitatory

Be not far away, O Lord; You are my strength, hasten to help me. (Psalm 22:18)

The Cruciforms

Lord, put your laws in my heart, and write them on my mind. (Hebrews 10:16b)

The Weeks

Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner.

The Invitatory (Last time through)

It is finished. (John 19:30b)

On the cross

(Hold the cross during a time of silence.)

Holy Saturday

On the cross

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

The Invitatory

As waters fall from a lake, and a river waste away and dries up, so mortals lie down and do not rise again; until the heavens are no more, they will not awake or be roused out of their sleep. (Job 14:11-12)
The Cruciforms
   *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? (Psalm 22:1)*

The Weeks
   *Make your face to shine upon your servant, and in your loving kindness save me. (Psalm 31:16)*

The Invitatory (Last time through)
   *They took the body of Jesus and wrapped it with the spices in linen cloths, according to the burial custom of the Jews. (John 18:40)*

On the cross
   *(Hold the cross during a time of silence.)*

**Easter Sunday**

On the cross
   *Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

The Invitatory
   *Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the Lord for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. (Isaiah 25:9)*

The Cruciforms
   *The right hand of the Lord has triumphed! The right hand of the Lord is exalted! The right hand of the Lord has triumphed! (Psalm 118:16)*

The Weeks
   *You are my God, and I will thank you; you are my God, and I will exalt you. (Psalm 118:28)*

The Invitatory (Last time through)
   *O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you, I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure. (Isaiah 25:1)*

On the cross
   *The Lord’s Prayer*
Internet Resources

https://fullcirclebeads.com/ -- Purchase of beads available with general guidelines and some standard prayers.

http://www.kingofpeace.org/prayerbeads.htm -- A site sponsored by the King of Peace Episcopal Church in Georgia. Good basic history of the Anglican Rosary with directions to make your own beads, sample prayers, links to places where you can purchase rosaries, and even an online rosary you can pray.

http://www.franciscan.org.au/anglican-rosary/ -- The Society of St. Francis in Australia. Excellent history and thought behind the Anglican Rosary. Especially good advice on how to personalize prayers for your own rosary. An online store, but they apparently sell only one style of rosary made from wooden beads from the Holy Land.

http://www.solitariesofdekoven.org/store.html -- The Solitaries of De Koven are a group of Episcopal solitaries devoted to the practice of contemplative prayer. They support their work and lives through the sale of Anglican Rosaries.

Many other sites can be found on Google, and searching for “Anglican Rosary” on Amazon.com produces 108 results including both beads and books. Anglican rosaries can also be found on Ebay, but my experience has been you have to look at them closely to be sure they are actually Anglican. Rosaries rather than the standard Roman Catholic rosaries

Books

The Anglican Rosary by Lynn C. Bauman; Praxis Publishing, TX, 2003

A Circle of Prayer: The Anglican Rosary for All of God’s People – 2nd Ed.; The Convent of the Transfiguration; Click “Contact” and E-mail them for ordering information at www.ctsisters.org
End Notes

1 "Incarnational Theology is basically the understanding that our physical lives truly do matter to God. This is shown in scripture by Jesus’ concern for the poor, the sick and suffering, and is attested to by Jesus becoming human in the first place. God speaks to us through human means by our own individual human experiences and through the human community, especially the church. Incarnational Theology has been the major impetus behind the focus in the Episcopal Church on caring for the disadvantaged in our society and issues of justice. Incarnational Theology played a significant role in Anglican identity, thinking, and history, and was written about and explored deeply by William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury from 1942 to 1944.

2 Centering Prayer: A method of quiet meditation in which a single symbolic word is used as a sign of one’s willingness to wait on God and be available to God’s presence. This word is used as a point of focus. The discipline involves setting aside twenty minutes or so for quiet prayer. This apophatic method has been widely taught and practiced in the Episcopal Church since the early 1980s. Thomas Keating’s Finding Grace at the Center (1978) encouraged the practice of centering prayer – An Episcopal Dictionary of the Church, A User Friendly Reference for Episcopalians, Don S. Armentrout and Robert Boak Slocum, editors.

3 "The labyrinth is an ancient pattern found in many cultures around the world. Labyrinth designs were found on pottery, tablets and tiles date as far back as 4000 years. Many patterns are based on spirals from nature…One feature they all share is that they have one path which winds in a circuitous way to the center… Labyrinths are currently being used world-wide as a way to quiet the mind, find balance, and encourage meditation, insight and celebration.” – Grace Cathedral Website, https://gracecathedral.org/our-labyrinths/

4 Trisagion Means “Thrice Holy”

5 Source: MeAndMaLeigh.Etsy.com

6 Community of the Transfiguration: www.ctsisters.org
   Acts 8 Moment at www.acts8moment.org