

COH Ministries include:

- Outreach to the parish
- Homebound
- Nursing homes
- Hospices
- Retirement homes
- Outpatient clinics
- Prisons
- Women's ministries
- Youth ministries
- Homeless and underserved
- Mission trips



A Brief History

The Community of Hope began in 1994 in the Pastoral Care Department of St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital in Houston, Texas, and has grown to more than 86 centers in 13 states. It was a response to the recognition that we live in a society where few people really listen to others. Those who are ill, suffering, lonely or in pain need someone to listen and respond appropriately to their spiritual needs, a critical role that can be filled by appropriately-trained laity. The Community of Hope program creates communities committed to pastoral care and equips lay persons to serve in a ministry of presence.

Community of Hope training is rooted in Benedictine spirituality, and based on the classic "clinical pastoral education" model used in many hospitals to train pastoral caregivers. The essential philosophy and training remain the same from center to center, while each is allowed to adapt the program to its specific needs. Training is not limited to Episcopalians, but is open to and enriched by the representation of many denominations. The lay pastoral caregivers are united in prayer and community as their ministries lead them to serve their congregation and the world.

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Resources & Affiliations

- The Community of Hope, www.thecommunityofhope.org
- Benedictine Sisters of Erie, www.eriebenedictines.org
- Camp Allen, www.campallen.org
- Contemplative Outreach, Ltd., www.centeringprayer.com
- Episcopal Diocese of Texas, www.epicenter.org
- Friends of Benedict, www.benedictfriend.org
- International Listening Association, www.listen.org
- The Order of St. Benedict, www.osb.org
- Spirituality and Health, www.spiritualityhealth.com
- Taize Community, www.taize.fr
- World Community for Christian Meditation, www.wccm.org

The Community of Hope

International



“... a school for God's service.”
 Prologue, [The Rule of St. Benedict](#)

Our Mission as The Community of Hope is to create Christian communities of lay volunteer pastoral caregivers united in prayer, shaped by Benedictine spirituality, and equipped for and serving in pastoral care ministries.

Volunteer Training

The Community of Hope training awakens volunteers to God's call in their lives. To help individuals discover and better understand their own spiritual gifts for ministry, each participant is encouraged to explore pastoral identity and a "rule of life," practicing sacred silence, Christian meditation, compassionate listening and lectio divina, all within the context of Benedictine spirituality. This experience becomes a "journey into wholeness," building community and developing spiritually-centered pastoral caregivers.



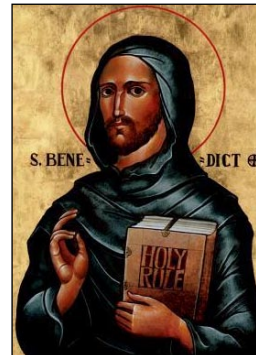
Curriculum

The 42-hour curriculum includes:

- **Introduction to the Community of Hope**
- **Theology of Pastoral Care:** Characteristics, goals and functions of pastoral care ministry and identification of the Lay Pastoral Caregiver's needs.
- **Benedictine Spirituality:** How the Rule of St. Benedict continues to be a relevant model for strengthening spirituality, building Christian community and caring for others.
- **Listening Skills:** Compassionate listening in caregiving and in community, especially as a reflection of the depth of spiritual life.
- **Prayer, Christian Meditation and Silence:** The value of silence, stillness and simplicity as spiritual disciplines, and the relationship of meditation and contemplation to a ministry of presence.

Curriculum, *continued...*

- **The Pastoral Visit, Boundaries and Pastoral Identity:** Developing the pastoral skills of observation, listening, sensitivity, compassion, prayer and privacy.
- **Confidentiality and Debriefing:** Learning to honor privacy and how to care for one another in pastoral ministry and within community.
- **Practice Visits**
- **Grief—Coping With Loss:** Understanding personal loss and grief as preparation for appropriate pastoral ministry to others.
- **Pastoral Care for Seniors:** Understanding the needs of seniors in living a fulfilling life and the spirituality of aging.
- **Exploring Your Spiritual Gifts:** Understanding yourself within the context of your relationships with others, and identifying your unique spiritual gifts and how these can benefit your pastoral care ministry.
- **Commitment to Ministry:** Sharing the experience of the training program, discussion of the Benedictine values of commitment, stability, perseverance, humility and obedience as essential to pastoral care ministry and community.
- **Quiet Day Retreat:** Finding God in the daily stuff of life.



St. Benedict of Nursia
c. 480-547

The Circle of Care

This is where the ongoing life of the Community of Hope is sustained. The Circle of Care is a monthly meeting for the support of pastoral caregivers that typically features continuing education, peer supervision and support, worship and community building.



"Care of the sick must rank above and before all else so that they may truly be served as Christ who said: 'I was sick and you visited me' (Matt. 25:36) and, 'What you did for one of these least of my people you did for me' (Matt. 25:40)."

The Rule of St. Benedict

About Benedictine Spirituality

St. Benedict was a saint from Italy, the founder of Western Christian monastic communities. Through his own experience, St. Benedict came to realize that we come to God with and through other people. In the words of Joan Chittister, O.S.B., "Benedictine spirituality is the spirituality of the twenty-first century because it deals with the issues facing us now—stewardship, relationships, authority, community, balance, work, simplicity, prayer, and spiritual and psychological development. Benedictine spirituality offers more a way of life and an attitude of mind than it does a set of religious prescriptions."

